

PERSONALIZING EDUCATION AT SCALE: Learning from International System Strategies

By **Amelia Peterson**



Education
Redesign
Lab



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was made possible by the generous support of the National Center on Education and the Economy.

ABOUT THE EDUCATION REDESIGN LAB

The Education Redesign Lab was founded and is led by Paul Reville, the Francis Keppel Professor of Educational Policy and Administration at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and former Massachusetts Secretary of Education. The Lab's mission is to engage in a research-informed design process to create a "new engine" for child and youth development. This engine will integrate an array of solutions that seek to mitigate the effects of poverty and level the playing field for all students.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The cases contained within this report were researched and written between June and December 2015.

© 2016 *The President and Fellows of Harvard College*

INTRODUCTION

Around the world, education system leaders are facing a complex challenge. The demands of advanced economies require young people to be more highly educated than ever before, while in many countries increasing income inequality is making it harder and harder for public education to deliver on the aspiration of equal opportunity. Education reform in the United States has tended to place this problem at the feet of schools; the role of systems has been to provide the data that exposes the “achievement gap,” and to create the higher standards to be met.

Meanwhile, many believe that delivering excellence and equity cannot be achieved solely through harder, smarter work at the school level, as important as this may be. Delivering on those goals will require not just improved education systems but *transformed* systems. In this vision, the diversity of challenges that create achievement gaps – and the diversity of potential that is waiting to be unleashed – means that each child’s needs and aspirations cannot be served by one organization seeing them through from age five to eighteen, from nine to three each day. Schools *cannot* do it alone, and they must be supported by a system that weaves their work into a wider array of supports and opportunities. This is the vision of personalized education at scale.



THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The Education Redesign Lab, based at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, was founded to address this challenge. Its goal is to identify, develop, and refine system-level strategies that can provide excellence and equity: to close race and class-based achievement gaps in the United States while providing a challenging education that will leave students prepared for the future. To this end, the Lab is focusing initially on developing supports around three design elements of a new system:¹

- Braiding health and social services into schools by creating an expanded model of education in which comprehensive health, mental health, and social services can provide the supports so that all students are physically and emotionally healthy, and ready to learn each day.
- Increasing access to quality out-of-school learning opportunities, so that all students can participate in activities that contribute to learning, enrich their lives, and build new skills and networks.
- Personalizing and extending learning, so that education meets students where they are and provides them with what they need to succeed.

In 2015, the Education Redesign Lab commissioned a search for international strategies that addressed one or more of these design elements. There is a long tradition in education of looking beyond national borders for ideas; the model of comprehensive high schooling that Horace Mann instigated in the mid 19th century was famously inspired by a visit to Prussia. Some of the policies and practices that can bring

to life the three design elements are already being enacted in other contexts. Moreover, as the Lab is concerned with system level redesign, it is necessary to look beyond U.S. borders to see what kind of system elements different versions of politics and governance have given rise to. This is not to presume that an element can be extracted from its political and social context, or to underestimate the difficulty of adaptation, but simply to acknowledge that design feeds off ideas and insight, and an international scan can generate a larger pool of each of these to draw from.

STUDY METHOD AND APPROACH TO THE CASES

The first stage of this study involved reviewing collections of educational innovations in different countries, and consulting international experts on promising cases. The search culminated in a long list of 20 approaches. From these, six were selected for deeper study by the Education Redesign Lab. Cases were chosen on the basis of system-level instigation or involvement, novelty of the strategy, potential for transformation, and indicators of success (although this was not as much of a priority as the potential for learning). Consideration was also given to securing a diversity of contexts with some level of relevance to the U.S. context.

The main body of this report is made up of the six cases seen to the right.

The cases are based primarily on interviews with key stakeholders in the focal jurisdiction. For several, it was possible to conduct site visits, and in all cases but Ontario the author

¹ <http://edredesign.org/about>

THE SIX CASES



CASE 1 **BRITISH COLUMBIA: K12 Innovation Strategy**

A partnership between the Ministry of Education and key professional associations to motivate and foster pedagogical innovation around the province, building on the new provincial curriculum.

CASE 2 **ENGLAND: Every Child Matters**

A policy agenda to integrate children's services towards the fulfillment of five child wellbeing goals, including new local government roles and structures.

CASE 3 **FINLAND: New Learning Environments**

An addition to the new national Core Curriculum to encourage municipalities, schools, and teachers to design more engaging, authentic learning.

CASE 4 **ONTARIO: OSSEMOOC (Ontario School and System Leaders Edtech MOOC)**

An online platform and community to induct leaders into open learning, building online professional learning networks and familiarizing themselves with the potential of new tools.

CASE 5 **RIO DE JANEIRO: Schools for Tomorrow**

A designation which entitled schools in violence-affected areas to new health services and learning opportunities both in and out of school.

CASE 6 **SCOTLAND: Getting it Right for Every Child**

A model of local government working, enshrined in a Practice Model and now in legislation, to bridge across different services for children and young people and promote a whole child approach.

had visited the jurisdiction in the previous 18 months. Further information was provided by compiling existing documentation of the policies and programs in question, including unpublished documents.

Each case is arranged into sections covering the origins of the strategy under study in order to understand the system conditions and political and social forces which gave rise to it; the process of strategy implementation, sometimes in several phases; its key policy or program elements; and any given challenges arising which provide opportunity for further learning. In the one case covering a strategy from the past decade – England’s Every Child Matters agenda – a final section covers its legacy.

The jurisdictions in these cases are all places that have been engaged in more or less concerted education reform efforts for some years. As such, each of the cases covers a strategy which is itself embedded in wider processes of reform. Although each case follows the structure above, each is

told as a narrative to allow for the fact that the strategies do not have clear-cut edges, and their development and implementation was not a clear-cut process. In particular, as the strategies differ in their longevity and complexity, these cases cannot hope to be exhaustive accounts. Where possible, links are provided to additional information.

LEARNING FROM THE CASES

The main body of this report is a summary of the insight perceived in the cases, arranged in two parts. The first section covers the general learning emerging from these deep dives, in terms of insights regarding innovation, implementation and scale, and the politics of reducing educational inequity. The second section describes specific and promising policies or practices relevant to the three design elements. Following these summary sections, the six cases form the main body of the report.

“Schools *cannot* do it alone, and they must be supported by a system that weaves their work into a wider array of supports and opportunities.”

DEVELOPING

INNOVATIONS

These cases track the development of new models and practices from their inception and showcase how ideas and opportunities come together into innovative programs or major policy agendas. While it is impossible to draw firm causal inferences from an exploratory case, the overlaps in themes give rise to some suggestions about how to spur change using a systems lever.



LOOK AT WHAT IS ALREADY HAPPENING

- In each of the cases, the focal policy or set of innovations could be traced back to several sources. In many cases, there were earlier experiences that had prepared the leaders and practitioners who were the first to take on the change. In Scotland, for example, experience with the New Community Schools had given Highland a taste of integrated work, and taught them a lot about what could and could not be sustained. By building on historical learning, major strategies can go much further, faster.
- These strategies varied in the extent to which they built on and incorporated existing policies, structures, or changes already taking place. In Ontario, for example, the OSSEMOOC creators worked explicitly to link their online offerings to the Ontario Leadership Strategy. In Rio de Janeiro, the Secretariat managed to redirect federal funds for an afterschool program towards extending the school day as part of Schools for Tomorrow.
- In some cases, large strategies were not fully integrated and practitioners may have felt pulled in different directions. Under Every Child Matters, schools were under pressure to deliver on new assessment-based targets, which may have limited their ability to attend to ECM's five broader wellbeing goals. In the case of Getting it Right, Scottish leaders hoped that the alignment of the policy with the Curriculum for Excellence and its focus on wellbeing would allow for it to embed more deeply in schools.

BRING IN OUTSIDE VOICES TO BUILD MOMENTUM

- Many of the leaders in these cases have found that giving permission to innovate does not necessarily result in change. Practitioners need convincing that a change is real, and they also need exposure to new alternatives. In Rio de Janeiro, British Columbia, and Finland, partners among NGOs and universities have provided some of this outside thinking and have received government support to work with schools.
- Under Every Child Matters, a Children's Commissioner had the role of working around the country to draw attention to children's issues. Although this was an unreasonably large task for one individual and a small team, this kind of role can be the rare voice to push for greater attention to children's perspectives in political and policy processes. Directors of Children's Services who took up the call to heed children's voices reported that involvement of young people in their council processes became transformative.

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES, NOT MODELS

- Although examples of new models can help to build ambition, model schools or projects do not seem to get very far as a centerpiece for system change. Leaders under Every Child Matters worry that too many resources were wasted on pilot projects that had no hope of scaling. They recommend saving on pilots to invest in professional development. In local implementations of Getting it Right, leaders found that multi-sector meetings or trainings give rise to new ways of working that can form the basis of personalized education.
- In both England and Scotland, the development of Children's Plans for local areas provided opportunities to bring people together and engage in thinking about provision for children across sector silos. In some councils, this involved considerable input from young people.
- In Rio de Janeiro, program managers found that merely bringing principals together from School for Tomorrow was transformative in how they thought about the program: many solutions were found just from their combined knowledge and experience.
- Goals and curricula also can create opportunities. In almost every case, some kind of curriculum renewal or new headline on child outcomes created the framework for change. While all leaders interviewed acknowledged that creating these entitlements was only the start, having clear, widely shared expectations seemed to help normalize innovation under a state-sanctioned banner.

“Many of the leaders in the cases have found that giving permission to innovate does not necessarily result in change.”

IMPLEMENTATION

AND SCALE

Education reform strategies are typically complex and involve multiple actors working across different organizations and different roles. Approaches to implementation and scale have to take account of the fact that no single plan will be suited to all contexts. Innovative strategies pose even greater challenges, as actors often need to be experimenting and adapting as they go, as opposed to following a single protocol. None of the strategies proceeded according to a set plan, and it would be more accurate to talk about “change management” rather than implementation.

Embedding new approaches across a system is typically framed as the challenge of “scaling,” but this term may itself be misleading. Education researchers have pointed out that the spread of a practice is ineffective if not coupled with “depth”: a deep understanding of the hows and whys of a practice which allow it to be fine-tuned to meet the needs of particular students, and evolve in the face of new conditions. Leaders in diverse systems emphasized that in bringing about a change agenda, most practitioners (and parents) came on board once they understood why something was happening.

The cases in this report highlight several ideas on how system leaders can improve the chances that new practices will deepen and spread across a system.



TAKE UP THE ROLE OF CHANGING PRACTICE, NOT JUST POLICY

- The deconstruction of key aspects of Every Child Matters following a change of government demonstrates that new structures may not last. Practice, however, can survive, and in some areas of England much of it has. System leaders in England wish the professional development strand of Every Child Matters had been as strong and ongoing as the efforts to develop new models of working.
- Schools for Tomorrow got results in its first years by introducing as many new supports in the schools as possible, drawing on whatever existing resources and programs were available. The full shape of the policy came later. Although political change means that policy may be discontinued, there are aims to provide a number of the program's practices to all schools.
- In Scotland, the government invested in Highland council to create a "Practice Model" for Getting it Right for Every Child. Legislation came several years later when many councils were well on their way to adapting the model for themselves (as opposed to just one year after the start of pilots in the case of Every Child Matters). Legislation has raised the public profile of Getting it Right and created more public questioning, but there are strong bases of practice and success the government can point to in response.
- A focus on practice helps ensure that sufficient time is invested in reaching all practitioners. In the second phase of Every Child Matters, the Secretary of State for Children, Schools, and Families saw it as a major part of his role to convey the vision of the agenda in person, again and again. This might seem repetitive from a leader's perspective, but it increases the chance that each practitioner has had an opportunity to engage with the thinking behind the policies. In Finland, members of the National Board of Education lead workshops on the new curriculum for municipalities around the country, and they use this as an opportunity to gather feedback as well as to convey their thinking.
- In Edinburgh, facilitators supporting the implementation of Getting it Right see the huge benefit of being able to invest in relationship building, and the exchange of knowledge that arises when people know and trust one another. They wonder how this temporary facilitator role can be sustained. Finding some way to measure rates of relationship or knowledge building might help justify investment in this work.

TRUST AND INVEST IN PLAYERS ACROSS THE SYSTEM

- Where they cannot reach everyone themselves, system leaders rely on existing webs of associations and networks to spread new models and information to practitioners. In Rio de Janeiro, the small central Schools for Tomorrow team found it was completely reliant on local coordinators, based in offices around the city. Even though this had some repercussions for variation in implementation quality, they trusted and worked closely with these teams.
- In allocating innovation grants or other resources, funding networks – as opposed to individual districts or groups of schools – explicitly make a commitment to scale. Government bodies in both Finland and British Columbia have supported teacher or school networks that already have a strong following. Additionally, in Finland they are currently attempting to create a new government-sponsored network made up of schools responsible for developing and spreading pedagogical practices in line with the new curriculum.
- In British Columbia, the Networks of Innovation and Inquiry (NOII) has been vital in exposing practitioners throughout the province to new ideas – sometimes from their own backyards, and sometimes internationally. NOII also introduces practitioners to an inquiry process that provides a platform to work through and embed new practices over time.

CREATE CHAMPIONS

- Scotland's new practice model and British Columbia's curriculum framework were created with the help of practitioners, many of whom have become leaders themselves in helping others understand and embrace the changes. Finland is trying to create such champion groups now through the development of the Lighthouse Network.
- In the education sector, teachers are key champions of practice change, but school and district leaders need the expertise to support them. In order to play this role, leaders themselves need the opportunity to deeply understand changes. OSSEMOOC aims to do just that by creating a space where leaders can become learners again and experiment with online platforms and open learning at their own pace.
- In other cases, the management level was sometimes neglected where scaling strategies ran directly from central government to practitioners. Local facilitators under Getting it Right for Every Child were surprised at the misconceptions some high level managers held, as training had all been directed at frontline practitioners. Under Every Child Matters, central government realized too late that there was no specialized pipeline to prepare the new Directors of Children's Services, and that even at their level of experience many wanted specialized professional development opportunities.

MANAGING THE POLITICS



Successful implementation and spread of practice requires time, and to give professionals this time, system leaders need to manage the politics of change. This may be difficult where strategies are directing resources towards particular groups and not others. Strategies to reduce achievement gaps almost always involve re-allocation of resources, whether it is time, money, or skill. Often, this re-allocation is focused on particular groups of children. Even where it is not, strategies may involve a re-allocation away from general priorities and toward more specific priorities.

This challenge is one of the fine lines between equality and equity. In education, it is common now to say that the goal of public systems is to provide *equity*: that all students have what they need to be successful. Yet the goal of equity can often be confused with the idea of *equality*: that everyone gets treated the same. Policies that provide different levels of resources to different students may make sense in the name of equity, but that does not stop some stakeholders – and indeed some public leaders – from opposing them on the grounds of inequality.

The leaders in these cases adopted particular approaches to manage this tension.

USE CLEAR CRITERIA TO GIVE MORE RESOURCES TO SOME

- In order to justify providing funding to specific schools or groups of schools, it is necessary either to have clear criteria of additional need, or to have an open and competitive process for innovation grants. In either case, developing the criteria for allocating funds can be challenging; however, it is vital to quell opposition to a program from both the public and within the government. Even when discussing their own strategies, some leaders had concerns about how to justify investments in some schools or areas over others.
- In Rio de Janeiro, program managers developed a statistical model to identify schools eligible for the Schools for Tomorrow program, in an attempt to reduce questions about unfair treatment. In Finland and British Columbia, development grants were awarded following an open and competitive process as a means to justify allocations.
- In Scotland, the Additional Support for Learning bill allows for the extension of special education needs definitions to cover any sustained and complex barrier to a child's learning, regardless of whether its origin is social or physical.

MAKE STRATEGIES FOR SCALE EXPLICIT FROM THE START

- The strategy of awarding grants typically results in a novel demonstration project in one setting, but very few ideas have scaled, even when they have gained international recognition. Without evidence that funded strategies can scale and benefit other schools, some system leaders are hesitant about pursuing a grant strategy. Identifying philanthropic resources for this work may be more viable in the U.S. than in the systems under study.
- In seeking to demonstrate how the benefits of grant-funded developments might extend to other schools or students, it is necessary to have clear explanations of what “scale” does and does not look like in education. Many of the systems under study have turned to networking and relationship building. A strategy for scale might mean focusing investment on creating teacher collaboration time and professional development around innovation and adaptation processes.

UNIVERSALIZE PROVISION FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS

- At the heart of two of the strategies – Every Child Matters and Getting it Right for Every Child – is an attempt to create universal service models that can attend to the needs of the most vulnerable children in society. This means preparing all professionals who work with children (or their parents) to be alert and responsive to signs of vulnerability, and understand their role in promoting every child’s wellbeing.
- A universal approach has advantages in that it moves towards culture change for all professionals, and avoids creating targeted services that might stigmatize particular groups. It also has disadvantages, in that it requires a lot of energy and resources for training for all practitioners in a system, when changes might apply mostly to a smaller proportion supporting children with the most complex lives.
- It may be politically desirable to maintain a universal agenda that is nevertheless designed for the benefit of the most vulnerable. Even within systems undergoing change, there are different perspectives about the main goal of integrating services. For some, it is to provide support for the most vulnerable children with complex needs. For others, it is about shifting professionals towards viewing children’s needs in a holistic way. These two agendas seem to be able to co-exist.

“Policies that provide different levels of resources to different students may make sense in the name of equity, but that does not stop some stakeholders – and indeed some public leaders – from opposing them on the grounds of inequality.”

**LEARNING ABOUT
THE THREE DESIGN
ELEMENTS**

Drawing from across the cases, what can we conclude about the opportunities and challenges in pursuing each of the Lab's three design elements? Each section below starts with an outline of challenges specific to that design element, followed by policies or approaches derived from the cases that could form part of a strategy to pursue that element.



BRAIDING

HEALTH AND

SOCIAL

SERVICES

Many attempts to braid health and social services into schooling have faced opposition because of the politics of giving more resources to some than to others.

In both Rio de Janeiro and Scotland (in the earlier strategy of community schools), the placement of health practitioners on sites did not last more than a few years. Even though system leaders saw the benefit of the approach, they could not justify giving this provision to only some schools in the long term. Notably, it was internal rather than public opposition that seems to have led to the deconstruction of the policy, in both cases in the name of spreading some kind of provision more widely. Closing achievement gaps will not be achieved by giving everyone the same services, but this runs counter to principles of public bureaucracy. The jurisdictions in these cases are still working their way towards the optimum balance on this front.

Bringing together health and social services with education also gives rise to the major challenge of integrating the work of professionals across sector lines. Education, health, and social services – not to mention police, housing, the voluntary sector, and others that agendas aimed to pull in – exert a strong pull on the behavior of employees in terms of their distinct professional cultures and organizational structures. In the jurisdictions that attempted considerable braiding, a solution to the challenges of integration was to make specific individuals assume the primary responsibility for joining up services. In one case, England, this was achieved via integration of services under new leadership roles. In another, Scotland, integration of services was achieved via new point people. In a third case, Rio de Janeiro, integration was pursued through co-location of services. The concrete approaches outlined below summarize some of the advantages and disadvantages of each approach.

INTEGRATE SERVICES AROUND CONCRETE NEEDS OF CHILDREN

- Integration of services may be most successful when it is driven by concrete needs, and when the needs of real children can be identified and targeted as levers of change. This was the case in Rio de Janeiro, where Schools for Tomorrow was driven by relating evidence about school performance to knowledge of health and social conditions in particular schools. Likewise, following the deconstruction of many elements of Every Child Matters agenda, schools that are now independent of local control are beginning to develop their own partnerships to commission health and mental health services for their students, driven by recognition of high need.
- In England, integration efforts focused on creating the new system leadership role of the Director of Children's Services. In Scotland, the point of integration is the "Named Person," a health worker and later member of school staff who is the receiving point for all relevant information about a child. Although this requires a great many people to assume some additional responsibility,

which has created some anxiety in the professions, the model seems to be working well. In England now, too, there is a move towards focusing integration efforts at the point of a child by ensuring that all complex cases for a family are handled by one point person.

- In two of the cases, the strategy for integrating health and other services into schools took the form of new structures at the local government level. Both of these strategies have been reinforced by legislation, creating new duties on local government to cooperate across services. In England, efforts to instantiate this duty in terms of new technology platforms for information sharing were never fully realized. A later inquiry found that, although some councils had developed effective new models of practice, councils were not systematically fulfilling the duty. In Scotland, the new Practice Model aims to provide a clear model of what integration looks like at the level of the child, and system leaders are keen to emphasize that information sharing needs to rely on professional action, not technology.



BRING PROFESSIONALS UNDER ONE ROOF

- Integration work is complex and gives rise to lots of grey areas where decisions need to be made on the fly. System leaders reflecting on Every Child Matters concluded that integration cannot be dictated by process or protocols, and therefore relies on relationships and expertise. In Scotland, multi-sector training sessions have been found useful for building relationships and awareness of the practices of other sectors.
- Integrating services appears to be most successful where services share a boundary: for example, where a set of schools are part of the same local jurisdiction as health and social services. In contexts where this was not the case, it was difficult for both schools and service providers to work with different sets of partners. In Highland in Scotland, the local authority eventually brought health workers responsible for schools into the council as employees, creating one organization where professionals work alongside each other.
- This model of bringing professionals in-house was also the approach in Rio de Janeiro, where the major innovation to increase performance in the most deprived schools involved placing nurse practitioners in each school. The practitioners had the advantage of being connected to the full health service, so could refer children when necessary, but they performed all simple checkups and procedures on site. Working out long-term funding agreements for this kind of provision (this short term fix was covered predominantly by education rather than health budgets) is a vital step for policy-makers. The optimum balance in trade-offs between building relationships on-site and increasing coverage through rotation will likely differ by context in relation to population needs and district size.

“Bringing together health and social services with education also gives rise to the major challenge of integrating the work of professionals across sector lines.”

PERSONALIZING

LEARNING

Strategies for personalizing learning take a variety of forms.

As with each of the design elements, there is the challenge of innovating and scaling simultaneously. For this design element, however, the task is more difficult than in the cases of integrating services. In that domain, professionals know what children need, but they struggle to work out how to get it to them. That is a resource distribution problem. The objective to personalize learning is a knowledge problem: while there are some demonstration projects, there is also a lot that is unknown about how to personalize learning for students. The consequence of this is that there is mixed demand for personalizing learning. While most schools would not turn down a new suite of laptops, fewer are clamoring for the opportunity to let it disrupt their pedagogy. Likewise, parents may want their children to have access to the latest technologies, but are more concerned that their children have the best teaching and learning. They want to know if and how technology will support that.

Leaders are therefore in the position of trying to spread both knowledge of and demand for change at the same time. Moving forward is an iterative process – developing models of practice and circulating them as much as possible, and hoping that this leads to more appetite for innovation. There have been signs that this approach can be successful

in Finland, where they have seen the quality of submissions to the development grants improve over time. Now they are tackling their problem of how to support and sustain all of the projects that have been started. This cannot be a job for central government forever, and in British Columbia and Finland there is recognition that building up leadership capacity and appetite for transformative change at the local level is key. To this extent, their strategy may be complementary with that of Ontario and OSSEMOOC.

The challenge of equity versus equality is particularly tricky for this design element. When resources are provided to support innovative developments such as integration of technology, as opposed to providing health services, they often go towards the most ambitious schools, which may not serve the most disadvantaged students. It may be hard to argue that such resources do not exacerbate inequity as well as inequality.

The challenge of motivating and supporting change while managing inequity remains unresolved, but the strategies in these cases entail several elements that could be successful long-term.



PROVIDE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS

- In Finland and British Columbia, a new core curriculum was a key lever to rebalance priorities in schools away from content coverage and towards promoting learning for each student. The core curriculum in these systems outlines not only content and skill standards (which they have tried to reduce in number) but pedagogical vision, which explicitly encourages teachers to explore more diverse teaching methods. (Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence, although not the focus of the case, also tends in this direction.)
- Personalized learning also receives a boost in the form of new outcome goals. These new core curricula include cross-curricular or “transversal” competencies, such as communication, critical thinking and social development. These goals point to the need for activities where students are engaging with each other around more complex activities, which will require more than textbooks and could benefit from online resources or communication platforms.
- Promoting personalized learning might be achieved through a curriculum for leaders, if not for students. OSSEMOOC familiarizes leaders with a particular kind of technology-enabled learning: self-directed, open, and networked.

RESOURCE INNOVATION GRANTS

- System leaders in British Columbia and Finland recognize that designing curriculum frameworks to support new pedagogy is only the first step. In order to stimulate the development of new pedagogies, both of these systems adopted strategies for competitive grant-making. Funds are awarded to a group of schools for an idea, and then administered by their district. Grants are made only where there is support from the district.
- In British Columbia, the K12 Innovation Partnership aims to spread both knowledge and demand. It provides an infrastructure of supports for schools that are developing ambitious practice, building on the potential of new technologies, a new curriculum framework, and new thinking about learning environments. Projects selected for the partnership are featured in an “inventory” of online cases, the aims of which are to populate the imagination of teachers around the province and spur further proposals.
- System leaders are finding various ways to tap into existing expertise on open and technology-enabled learning that typically outstrips in-house knowledge. In both Ontario and B.C., Ministries are starting to draw on the capacity of connected leaders, sometimes bringing them into formal leadership roles. One of the networks to receive a large development grant in Finland specializes in teaching coding and learning with digital tools.

HELP LEADERS MODEL OPEN LEARNING

- In Ontario, the means to spread knowledge and demand is to increase understanding of what technology can do at the leadership level, through the OSSEMOOC. Teachers increasingly have opportunities to try out technology in their classrooms, and in this area teachers are often ahead of leaders in their knowledge. Leaders cannot confidently manage the spread of technology-enabled learning if they do not feel confident in their understanding of what it can and cannot do.
- A major challenge for the strategy of starting with leaders is the subsequent expectation for them to push others along a road that is not yet clear. Supporting experimentation and integration with development projects, as in British Columbia and Finland, is vital to provide a picture of the potential of technology with different age groups and to support different goals.

“While most schools would not turn down a new suite of laptops, fewer are clamoring for the opportunity to let it disrupt their pedagogy.”



OUT-OF-SCHOOL

LEARNING

In promoting out-of-school learning, system leaders were faced with the challenge that realizing this design element is highly context- and school-dependent, and remains in all systems a secondary priority. The primary levers of accountability or monitoring are not orientated towards it, and so out-of-school learning is currently a “supererogatory” behavior: many teachers and schools appear to be supporters, but do not see it as a priority when there are many competing demands on their time.

There is considerable overlap in the strategies that were employed to spread personalized learning and the strategies system leaders hope will spread learning outside schools. The new curriculum frameworks in Finland and British Columbia are intended to enable more out-of-school learning. Leaders see that this practice is like a reaction with a high action potential: it requires a burst of energy to get going. Consequently, development or innovation grants were seen as necessary to motivate and enable schools to try new projects.

They are already finding, however, that the barriers to this element may be greater than introducing more personalized experiences in the classroom. Logistical issues around transportation and time to arrange off-site experiences are very real. Leaders in British Columbia even note that where schools were really pushing the boundaries in where and how they work with students, it is mostly happening “under the radar,” because teachers think they might be breaking rules. Education system leaders have work to do to create new policy frameworks that really enable more students to have the opportunity to engage in quality learning experiences outside school.

While the guidance on this element may still be nascent, the following points might act as design principles for a strategy to increase learning opportunities outside school.



DO NOT PROCEED WITHOUT OUTSIDE PARTNERS

- The barriers to learning outside school are such that providing schools with opportunity and funds may not be enough. In these cases, more concerted efforts were supported by partners, including both NGOs and universities. In Rio de Janeiro, Schools for Tomorrow could work with many outside partners, including an NGO that facilitated learning opportunities in the neighborhood, identified learning opportunities in the local community and the wider city, and tailored a program to each school's curriculum.
- In Finland and British Columbia, universities were playing important roles pushing schools towards more ambitious pedagogy outside of classrooms. This activity was not spread widely across universities, but specific faculty and research groups appear to play an important role in codifying practices around out-of-school learning and sharing these ideas more widely.

ALLOW LOCALITIES TO BENEFIT AND ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROVISION

- In Finland, the development grant strategy has resulted in some novel approaches, including the development of “cultural pathways” in a number of towns. This approach involves schools and cultural institutions in a municipality working together to develop a series of experiences for local students, spaced throughout their time at school. Cultural institutions benefit from the opportunity to induct students into their offerings. In Fiskars in Finland, the local curriculum exposes students to the particular trades and historic heritage of the town.
- In Rio de Janeiro, the Educating Neighborhoods program was inspirational in changing how school and favela neighborhoods related to one another. The NGO facilitating the program had goals for both educational and civic development, and took care of everything from making links with local businesses to sourcing funding for bus tickets into town.
- In British Columbia, the natural environment has provided a primary source of learning for a number of innovative course designs and a motivator to integrate subjects around particular topics and projects. Likewise in Finland, where one development project has created materials for teaching and learning math in the woods that is now available to others online. The approaches are popular with most parents.

INCREASE QUALITY USING THE PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

- In Finland, the notion of new “learning environments” encompasses both technology-based and out-of-school learning. This approach seems to be proving effective as a philosophy that can signal the direction of change, while providing potential routes for schools in many different kinds of situations. Due to their location, resources, and staff capacity, some schools will find it easier to take new steps in the direction of technology while others might be able to do more with learning outside school.
- Key principles can apply to learning outside school and to technology-enabled learning: how to facilitate more self-directed learning, and how to ensure new activities are tightly integrated with the curriculum. Highlighting these points of overlap provides an opportunity to move beyond training in one-off techniques or programs towards preparation that focuses on deepening practitioners’ understanding about designing effective, ongoing learning.

“There is considerable overlap in the strategies that were employed to spread personalized learning and the strategies system leaders hope will spread learning outside schools.”



CASE 1

British Columbia's K12 Innovation Strategy



Origins page 29

Implementation page 32

Policy Elements page 35

Challenges page 36

Next Steps page 37

Conclusion page 38

ORIGINS

This case provides an overview of ongoing efforts to transform the learning experiences of young people in the Canadian province of British Columbia to be more personalized, engaging, and connected to their wider culture and environment. As a story of education reform, British Columbia (B.C.) is quite different from other Canadian provinces. Where Ontario, for example, is known for tightly coherent agendas with cascading implications for teachers, principals, and system leaders, B.C.'s agenda has emerged gradually over time, pieced together from ongoing work in the province. Some in the B.C. Ministry joke they could not adopt a top-down approach even if they wanted to: in B.C., there are under 300 staff managing all of the central functions, while in Ontario, there are 1,700.

The province of British Columbia, covering the west coast of Canada, is home to just over 4.6 million people. The school system is “co-governed” by the Ministry of Education and the district school boards, and it serves around 650,000 students, about 10% of whom are in independent schools¹ with the rest in public. The province has no equivalent of a charter sector, and public schools are managed by school districts.

Superintendents are powerful actors in the system, closely followed – and sometimes dominated – by the teachers' unions. Each school district has a union, and teachers are all also part of the BCTF: the province-wide Teachers' Federation. The BCTF and the Ministry have a difficult relationship that stretches back decades. In the 28 years since teachers were granted the right to strike, there have been over 50 strikes

around issues of class sizes and teacher pay, which the government has sometimes tried to force an end to with the use of legislative powers.² In 2012, the government re-introduced legislation, first passed in 2002 but then ruled unconstitutional, which limited the BCTF's ability to strike over class size and composition. In response, the BCTF held a different form of job action: for almost a year in 2012-13, teachers were forbidden from speaking to their administrators, and in 2014 they held the longest teacher strike in Canadian history, leading to several weeks of missed school. It concluded in mid-September with a new six-year deal of moderate pay increases and a new fund for additional teachers and specialists in schools.

It is against this background of turbulence that teachers and the Ministry have together engaged in a multi-year process of redesigning the B.C. provincial curriculum. To understand how these two sorts of processes could happen simultaneously, it is necessary to look to the seeds of the redesign process.

THE THREADS OF A NEW VISION

Through the first decade of the new millennium, several factors stoked energy in B.C. to rethink the school experience. Many teachers were noticing the problem of student disengagement, concerned by signs that adolescents in particular were tuning out of school. Visits from outsiders, including John Abbott of the 21st Century Learning Initiative, prompted some B.C. education leaders to start considering alternatives to traditional approaches to classroom learning, subjects, and timetables. In addition, growing awareness amongst non-Aboriginal educators of First Nations perspectives was spreading a way of thinking about learning as a deeper, more social process.

Some schools had already started to experiment with changing their practice, developing courses outdoors, moving to BYOD (bring your own device) or other 1:1 programs, or adopting more ambitious curricula such as the International Baccalaureate Middle Years program. This activity was supported by a series of teacher-led networks in the province, which, having been founded in 2000 to develop practice around the provincial literacy and numeracy standards, later changed its focus to encouraging teachers to diversify their practice by listening to and designing for student needs.³

Leaders across the province – who were themselves networked for a while in an influential superintendent leadership program supported by the Ministry – were eager for something to spur on this activity. As the first decade of the millennium came to a close, an alignment of imaginative leaders in the Ministry enabled a shift in strategy, initiated by the new Superintendent of Learning, Rod Allen, with the support of a visionary Minister of Education, George Abbott. What began with breaking down silos in the “Learning Division,” the section of the Ministry responsible for curriculum and assessment, would turn into a new approach to reforming education, with far-reaching implications for the province.

TRANSFORMING THE CURRICULUM

B.C. has a province-wide curriculum that provides the foundation on which districts and schools design their teaching. It is formed of two parts, one covering all subjects grades K-9, and another outlining the requirements for the final three years of school, when students work toward their graduation diploma, or “Dogwood.”

The process of updating the provincial curriculum traditionally occurred in cycles, subject by subject. Each update would result in schools receiving sets of new binders, and each time the number of content standards teachers were expected to cover increased. As a new cycle of curriculum renewal approached, educators in the Ministry knew that they wanted to do things differently. They knew from their own experience and working with current teachers that the number of content standards made it difficult to aim for deeper learning, or to practice inquiry-based pedagogies. The existing shape of the curriculum was clearly at odds with academic perspectives circulating in the Ministry, such as those of U.S. educator L.H. Erickson.⁴

Erickson’s vision of curriculum – one that was shared by many jurisdictions outside North America – was of a framework for learning comprised not just of content standards but of a pedagogical vision. Educators working at the Ministry felt this kind of curriculum would help support teachers who wanted to focus on learning rather than coverage of content standards, but who knew that it was not their role to set the vision. Instead, they developed an initiative to gather perspectives from across the province. In October 2011, a website appeared and was promoted to the public.⁵ It announced the “B.C. Ed Plan.” Or rather, it announced that there would be a plan, and the Ministry would like everyone’s thoughts. The website featured a short, lively animation to provoke discussion, and several additional thought pieces.

Over the next year, on the back of the public responses, the Learning Division team began to develop a framework. Linking together the learning across subjects and years would be new cross-curricular “competencies”: communication, creative and critical thinking, and personal and social responsibility (this later evolved to include positive personal and cultural identity). These areas represented what parents, students, teachers, and employers thought important for young people to develop in order to be able to put their knowledge and skills to good use as citizens.

With the support of the BCTF as well as curriculum experts at the province’s Schools of Education, the development group began to write new, reined-in content standards, limiting themselves to one page per subject and grade. To further respond to the idea of providing a framework for ambitious pedagogy, these groups also set to work on coming up with a small number of “big ideas” in each subject and year. By agreeing on these ideas at the provincial level, they hoped to overcome the tension between local autonomy and ensuring all students developed key knowledge of science, math, language, and the province’s particular history and cultures.

In November 2012, all of this material was published online as a “first draft,” and the public was invited to give feedback. Over 100,000 people viewed the curriculum drafts in the first four months, and the feedback process generated written responses from over 900 people. The Ministry also travelled around the province gathering more in-depth responses from over 400 people representing different educational contexts

and concerns. There were many specific revisions on the back of this feedback, including greater specification of the competencies and greater concentration of the big ideas.

TOWARDS THE INNOVATION STRATEGY

By late 2014, the redrafted curriculum was close to complete and set to become the official entitlement for students beginning in the Fall of 2016. The consortium that had worked together to design the curriculum now had the task of ensuring that everyone had the necessary support to translate its aspirations. They were keen to find ways to populate the province’s thought space with visions of what it could mean.

The Ministry knew that the curriculum’s potential would only be fulfilled if it was embraced outside of government; the message was that rethinking pedagogy was not – and could not be – the Ministry’s problem to solve. B.C. teachers are very proud of their high levels of autonomy and competence, so there was a need for an approach that would respect that and ensure that they were really using it. Given this, system leaders in the province decided to develop an initiative to spearhead the challenge of rethinking pedagogy in line with the curriculum – an initiative that would invite and support ambitious thinking. Thus, the “K12 Innovation Partnership”⁶ was launched in January 2015.

IMPLEMENTATION

GETTING GOVERNANCE RIGHT

At the heart of the Innovation Partnership is the Innovation Partnership Working Group (IPWG), who oversees the funds and activities of the partnership. The IPWG is made up of representatives from all the key professional associations, including principals and vice principals, superintendents, and the Teachers' Federation. Although the Ministry provides all of the funds for partnership projects, they recognize the necessity of a shared governance model in order to ensure the sustainability of the infrastructure and its legitimacy out in the field.

The partnership was designed around this working group to ensure that it remained free of political needs related to other government agendas. Governments around the world increasingly associate education with skill and employment agendas, even in the face of evidence that governments have a poor track record with human resource planning. The Ministry felt it was key that the Innovation Strategy was focused on *learning*, and wanted to provide the opportunity to build long-term activity and knowledge around that focus, free from the priorities that distract governments.

In line with this focus, the working group is comprised of educators, as opposed to stakeholders in education such as parents, school boards (known as trustees), and civil society groups. These broader stakeholders are represented instead in a group that sits over the working group, getting first oversight of decisions and the first opportunity to provide input.

This leaves the IPWG as an *expert* group of educational practitioners. It represents those who are responsible for the classroom (and out of classroom) practice that will determine whether the fullest aspirations of the curriculum can be fulfilled. The partnership's designers wanted it to be clear that decisions about learning opportunities needed to be in the hands of educators.

The working group's process carefully reflects a balance of power between the different associations. Initially, they held meetings on rotation, moving between different offices. Gradually, however, they found that the group is happy to meet in the government offices, for ease. Similarly, while intending for administration to run through the Principal's and Vice Principal's association (BCPVPA), the group's administration has fallen mostly to a particular excellent Ministry staffer; again, decisions are made and trust is allocated on the basis of individuals, rather than organizations. For those inside the Ministry, the fact that things have happened this way is helpful, as it allows them to keep some oversight on what is happening.

The one thing that is still held at arms-length from the Ministry is the money; CA\$500,000 was allocated for the first round of projects and is held by the BCPVPA. The BCPVPA is also the first port of call for project submissions, and does the first round of screening. An "Innovation Inventory," which will hold project ideas, is being built there.

There are three factors in particular which allow this governance model to work:

Focus on Learning

The partnership's focus on learning is not something dreamt up overnight. Since the launch of the B.C. Ed Plan, educators committed to improving the learning experiences of students have found that this goal can build bridges across political differences. Even in the midst of a job action, or a government-BCTF court case, there have been matters around the curriculum that the Ministry and union leaders agree on. On questions of *learning*, they seemed to be on the same page, so that was clearly the page to stay on.

History of Trust

The Ministry remained true to their word to be responsive to feedback on the curriculum. This has given them greater legitimacy in the eyes of the profession, and allows association and union leaders to make the case to their members that it is worth giving the Ministry a chance. Rod Allen, who led the curriculum process in the Ministry, has now left to return to a post as a district superintendent. He remains part of the partnership, however, as a representative of the superintendent's association, and is a bridge between the Ministry and the profession.

Built on Relationships

In designing the partnership, some key choices were that each association should be represented by its president, and that the group should be kept small. In doing so, each association has harnessed themselves to this strategy and agreed that it will succeed or fail collaboratively – there is no chance of

dissenting voices offering contradictory messaging to distract schools. In practice, this also allows that in the privacy of the group, association leaders to give up any grandstanding and focus on the task at hand.

Along with Allen, the group benefits from the participation of long-standing players who have built up good relationships over time. The current President of the BCTF, Jim Iker, has managed to walk a fine line by remaining hard on government around negotiation while also cooperating with the Ministry's learning agenda.

TIMING

The factors above suggest that the partnership's potential lies in its strong foundations. According to partnership members, this collective approach would not have been possible a year ago, when relations between the Ministry and the BCTF were still too tense. It would not have been politically feasible for all of the partner associations to join a strategy with government, and at the leadership level there was not sufficient trust to make it work.

There are additional reasons why the strategy is well-timed. As part of the new curriculum, assessment and reporting are changing which, in turn, is changing perceived barriers to rethinking how and what schools teach. The schools participating in the Innovation Partnership will be the ones who get the first "hall pass" to test out new approaches to assessment and reporting.

Another key piece of timing is that the strategy has coincided with the arrival of a new Education Minister, Mike Bernier, offering the opportunity for renewed relationships between

the government and the profession. Thus far, it appears he may be the strong voice the Ministry needs to see through some of the reporting and assessment changes coming down the line. Bernier has five children who have, between them, experienced various parts of the B.C. education system, and he has a good sense of its strengths and its opportunities for change. Also a factor is that former Education Minister, Peter Fassbender, still sits in the cabinet as the Minister of Community, Sport, and Cultural Development, and is a strong supporter of the transformation agenda.

SCHOOLS LEADING THE WAY

The implementation of the strategy would have come to nothing without districts and schools stepping up with serious proposals. The following provides two examples of the projects that have been accepted to the partnership in the first round, both using multiple levers for change.

Rick Hansen Secondary School (RHSS) is in the large metropolitan area of Abbotsford, up the Fraser River from Vancouver in the mainland of the province. Starting from this year, RHSS is transforming itself into a “School of Science and Business” in order to provide a more engaging and challenging environment for a diverse student body.⁷ The new model starts with 9th grade and will slowly roll up the school. All 9th grade students now bring laptops to school, and RHSS is working with a technology partner to try to secure ongoing access to affordable laptops for those who need to purchase new ones. Students in the new model

will take part in two new courses: Foundations of Inquiry and Applications of Digital Literacy. The school is currently working on new integrated science and business courses for later years.⁸

The project will draw on a change of practice across the school as a whole, where they are moving to inquiry- and project-based pedagogy, supported by a shift to outcome-based grading. They have allocated a professional development budget to send teachers to the Buck Institute’s PBL (project-based learning) workshops,⁹ and to visits at leading project-based schools including the High Tech High schools in San Diego¹⁰ and TAF Academy, a 20-year-old STEM school in Seattle.¹¹ They are also sending teachers to the Portland Assessment Conference and bringing in a local assessment expert, Myron Dueck, who has worked with many schools on “student-friendly” assessment. The school is partnering with the University of Fraser Valley to support their change efforts and develop additional measures to evaluate their progress.¹²

In presenting the school’s new direction to parents, many of whom are first and second generation immigrants from Southern Asia, the school is able to draw on the work occurring elsewhere in the province. As they say: “Education in B.C. is evolving toward problem-based learning through experiences, and Rick Hansen is leading the way.”

West along the Fraser River, on the north side, another school admitted to the partnership is the Eagle Mountain Middle School. Eagle Mountain opened as a new school in 2014-15 in the Coquitlam school district, a large district of 70 schools

and over 30,000 students. The school opened with the goal to create a range of new pedagogical opportunities for students and teachers. They created a schedule with blocks for “integrated studies” and time within the week for teachers from different subjects to plan collaboratively. Part of the school week is given over to student inquiries in the form of “exploration blocks,” where students develop an individual project around a shared theme.¹³ Eagle Mountain has established a “bring your own device” (BYOD) model; it is looking to extend this to embed self-directed learning more fully across all types of learning blocks, and to develop more courses outside of the classroom based on the local environment.¹⁴

Like RHSS, Eagle Mountain feels confident that it is by no means alone in its direction. Many schools in the Coquitlam school district, like many in B.C., have a strong tradition of inquiry-based learning; for example, Montessori programs are popular and are present in nine schools in the district. Other middle and high schools are now moving toward alternative realizations of inquiry-based learning, and the district is proud to call its schools “innovative.” In 2015, the district initiated the Inquiry Hub Secondary School, a new school model that allows students in grades 9-12 to learn through group projects and individual, computer-based activities.¹⁵

POLICY ELEMENTS

SUPPORTING AND MOTIVATING INNOVATION

The Innovation Partnership provides an infrastructure that allows schools to receive support from the Ministry and a range of partners to pursue ambitious pedagogical designs. Support might take the form of financial resources – the Ministry has allocated a shared pot of CAN\$500,000 in funding – but could also be the opportunity to work with particular research or technology partners, or to receive waivers from particular system requirements. The Innovation Partnership Working Group oversees a competitive submission process and then leverages the support for winning applicants.

The application process invites applicants to propose radically innovative ideas, with a relatively open remit. Applicants are not required to focus on particular themes, to address particular goals, or to include particular features such as technology or new environments. Instead, applicants have to commit to engage in a particular kind of *process*. They have to describe how they undertake each of the following in designing their new approach: partner with researchers, include their community, integrate Aboriginal perspectives, rethink structures of school, and learn from experience and take risks.

The partnership is open to a variety of actors, including groups of schools, principals, or individual teachers. One key condition is that any teacher or school must have the written support of their district superintendent, in recognition of the fact that this support would be vital to the feasibility and sustainability of any genuinely ambitious approach. The superintendent’s approval is also an indicator that there is willingness in the district to work on spreading a pedagogical approach if it developed successfully.

THE INVENTORY

Once accepted to the partnership, projects form part of an inventory designed to communicate innovative practice to the rest of the province.¹⁶ The first round of projects has recently been published, covering a wide range of grades, approaches, and locations. Predominant themes include inquiry-based and experiential learning, multi-grade classrooms, and approaches targeted toward vulnerable groups. There are also specific projects on approaches for developing the core competencies and new assessment methods.

Many of the projects are combining several new levers for change, including the new curriculum, 1:1 devices, and the B.C. First Peoples Principles of Learning.¹⁷ The theory of the partnership is that having the time and space to weave these together is what is needed to enable much deeper and more effective practice.

CHALLENGES

RESPONSE FROM THE FIELD

The partnership is currently relatively low profile. Up until the first round of selections were made, it had received little attention and there was not full awareness of it even within the organizations represented. This in itself was a bit of a problem in drumming up a full range of applicants, but now there is a risk that in raising its head further above the parapets, there will be more questions about its design and process.

Questions as to whom to select for the partnership are not uncontroversial. When the goal is to stimulate ambitious innovation, it is difficult to have clear success criteria, and during the period of the selection process, the leadership group was conscious that others might disagree with their choices. British Columbia – particularly the innovative end of it – is a close-knit community of educators, and there is a lot of risk in terms of being able to stand behind decisions.

GROUP DYNAMICS

The partnership strategy relies on collaboration and trust among the IPWG. The biggest risk, therefore, is that this group disintegrates. So far, the reliance on relationships seems to be working, but a future challenge will be when the association presidents reach the end of their terms and are replaced. The first exchange will be within the Principals and Vice Principals associations, while there are a couple more years before the group has to tackle the most complex change: the handover of power in the BCTE.

The IPWG also has to consider the wider dynamics as schools, researchers, and other partners are invited into the partnership. They are conscious of the challenge of maintaining a collaborative enterprise, which will not be poached or usurped by individuals looking to claim credit or build a reputation off it. The oft-repeated mantra is “keep the focus on learning.”

SUSTAINABILITY

Another challenge on the horizon is to decide about the future of funding. B.C. educators have traditionally been skeptical about corporate social responsibility funding in education, feeling it is at odds with their particular ethic

of public education. The working group recognizes that the government cannot be expected to fund the strategy indefinitely, particularly when they are staying so far out of the process. Currently, most of the partners are unwilling to accept business sponsorship, but if it becomes a decision between that or greater government oversight, they may reconsider.

MANAGING RISK

In the first round of submissions, proposals were about the level of ambition and quality that was expected, but not what might have been hoped for. The IPWG recognizes that there was a quick turnaround between the initial announcement and the submission, and the timing meant that it coincided with the end of the school year, when too many schools may have been distracted. They also feel they have work to do to demonstrate that the ask is real. As Rod Allen says:

There are structures and schools that are still not brave enough to put their hands up, because [they fear] bad people will come in dark suits and make it stop.

This fear is not totally unfounded. One of the challenges the strategy will face is whether parents are ready to rethink education. Likewise, while the Ministry has committed to granting exemptions from certain policies as part of the support grantees get, they still have a duty to ensure that “no child will be harmed in the making of innovation.” When it comes to challenging certain policies or bureaucracies, the battles are only just beginning to make areas of the Ministry understand that the long-promised educational transformation is now actually here.

NEXT STEPS

The core of the strategy for building up ambition and awareness is the inventory, which will provide a window into partnership projects, and initially features school and classes in the province that are already doing transformative work. The group is also going to visit applicants, who had promising ideas in this first round but did not quite get through, to work with them on developing their proposals.

The IPWG is coming to recognize that for the strategy to succeed, there may be a need for intensive work with superintendents to build up their appetite for and capacity to manage the risks of change. While there are many outstanding – and pedagogically ambitious – superintendents in the province, many are cautious. Superintendents are the ones who stand to lose out first if parents decide they do not want new pedagogies. Superintendents are hired on personal services contracts by school boards, and can be let go at any time. As Rod Allen points out, this is a dynamic that tends toward conservatism:

The Darwinism of how superintendents are hired and fired has led to fewer who think their job is to go out and shake that tree.

Recent appointments may be less courageous than the old guard, perhaps too conscious of the fragility of their position. It has also left a group that is relatively “green”: currently 64% of the members of the B.C. Superintendent Association have been in their roles for less than four years.

CONCLUSION

It is early days for the B.C. Innovation Strategy. Now that the first wave of projects has been selected, the group can focus on implementation support. So far, the collaborative model appears to be working – dividing work by task, rather than by organization. Working on the principle of “individuals, rather than organization,” the associations and ministry are proposing to “donate” staffers with particular skills as and when needs arise, seeing this relational approach as the only way to manage uncertain change. If they continue to make this work, and if even some of the inventory projects fulfill their ambitions, it will be an impressive conversion of limited resources into a real footprint of new pedagogy.



British Columbia's K12 Innovation Strategy **TIMELINE**



OCTOBER 2011

The Ministry of Education launches the B.C. Education Plan in the form of a website to garner ideas from the public about the vision of transforming learning.

DECEMBER 2011

A Curriculum and Assessment Advisory Group, with representation of all major stakeholders, begins to meet to create a draft curriculum framework.

FEBRUARY 2012

The Ministry begins four months of travelling sessions presenting the draft framework around the province and gathering feedback.

JUNE/JULY 2012

Subject experts in core subjects begin meeting to draft the content of the curriculum.

AUGUST 2012

Enabling Innovation is released, a publication summarizing the recommendations from the Advisory Group and the regional sessions. The Ministry issues "an invitation to innovate" to school districts, encouraging them to focus on personalizing learning.

SEPTEMBER 2012

The Ministry begins consultations around the province on a new graduation program for grades 10-12.

JANUARY 2013

The initial design of the framework for the K-9 curriculum is released for public review, along with a set of draft definitions of the new cross-curricular competencies. Groups of teachers and researchers begin work on developing continua to go with the cross-curricular competencies, and example inquiries to illustrate the flexibility of the new content framework.

NOVEMBER 2013

Full drafts of the K-9 curriculum are released for core subjects, initiating several months of public feedback and dedicated work with groups around the province.

JUNE 2014

The Advisory Group on Provincial Assessment issues its first report to outline how changes to assessments and reports across the province can support the new curriculum.

SEPTEMBER 2014

The school year starts late due to an ongoing teacher's strike. Upon returning, some teachers begin designing learning around the new curriculum.

NOVEMBER 2014

The revised K-9 curriculum is published in full, to become official in Fall 2016. The documents continue to be open to minor revisions (revised social studies documents were issued in April 2015). Draft versions of the 10-12 curriculum are released.

JANUARY 2015

The Ministry and key educator associations launch the K12 Innovation Partnership.

OCTOBER 2015

The first wave of projects to be supported by the partnership is announced.

REFERENCES

- 1 Ministry of Education Transformation Plan 2013-14. https://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/pubs/tt-plan/2013-2014_bced_tt_plan.pdf
- 2 “Timeline of the long and troubled bargaining history of B.C.’s teachers and the provincial government,” *The Vancouver Sun*, May 21, 2014. http://www.vancouversun.com/business/Timeline+long+troubled+bargaining+history+teachers+provincial+government/9864912/story.html?__lsa=7f56-6f29
- 3 <http://noii.ca/>
- 4 *Stirring the Head, Heart, and Soul: Redefining Curriculum, Instruction, and Concept-Based Learning* (3rd edition, 2008).
For a list of references that influenced the shaping of the B.C. curriculum, see <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/pdfreferences.pdf>
- 5 <http://www.bcedplan.ca/>
- 6 <http://k12innovation.ca/>
- 7 <http://k12innovation.ca/projects/recalibrating-to-a-new-normal/>
- 8 <http://rickhansen.sd34.bc.ca/science-business/faq>
- 9 http://www.bie.org/services/pbl_institutes
- 10 <http://www.hightechhigh.org/>
- 11 <http://techaccess.org/>
- 12 <http://rickhansen.sd34.bc.ca/about/school-plan>
- 13 <https://www.sd43.bc.ca/middle/EagleMountain/About/Principalinformation/Pages/default.aspx>
- 14 <http://k12innovation.ca/projects/teaching-and-learning-strategies/>
- 15 <http://www.inquiryhub.org/>
- 16 <http://k12innovation.ca/innovation-inventory/>
- 17 <https://firstpeoplesprinciplesoflearning.wordpress.com/background-and-current-context/>

CASE 2

Every Child Matters: Integrating Children's Services in England



Origins page 43

Implementation page 48

Policy Elements page 52

Challenges page 54

Legacy page 57

Conclusion page 60

ORIGINS

In 2003, the UK Treasury published a Green Paper entitled *Every Child Matters*. The foreword, signed by Prime Minister Tony Blair, set out the paper's origin and aspirations. It was a response to a national inquiry into a local tragedy: the death of a young girl, a recent immigrant to the country, who had gone unaided by Local Authorities – the local government layer responsible for schools and children's services. The paper outlined child service reforms meant to reduce the risk of any further cases, but it also aspired to do something much more. As the Chief Secretary to the Treasury wrote in his introduction: "We have to do more both to protect children and ensure each child fulfills their potential. Security and opportunity must go hand in hand."

With this belief, a response that might have focused narrowly on child protection became the platform for an agenda that would stretch throughout the next seven years of the Labour government, encompassing a wide range of strategies that sought to address everything from children's democratic voice, to the treatment of young offenders, to opportunities to play safely outside. In particular, it instantiated a set of broad goals – entitlements almost – for all children to be safe, to be healthy, to enjoy and achieve, to make positive contributions, and to have secure economic wellbeing.

In 2004, the *Every Child Matters* Green Paper was converted into a bill and then an act. Parliament thus approved a set of structural changes and new duties for children's services to work together to fulfill the five goals for all young people. The 2004 Children Act was introduced to the nation in a

series of policy strategies from different departments, led by a group optimistically referred to as, "The Ministers responsible for coordinating the delivery of services for children, young people and families" – including a list of thirteen Ministers across departments from Health to Trade and Industry. The agenda was meant to touch every service sector in the country.¹ At the top of the list of Ministers was the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, representing the central role of schools in fulfilling the Act's aspirations.

This case cannot detail all aspects of this agenda and the efforts to implement this legislation. Instead, it aims to provide an account of how it emerged and spread, how it linked with efforts to tackle child poverty, and how it increased the integration of local services. In particular, it describes how it did and did not impact on the work of schools, and it details the role of politics, leadership, and professional culture in determining its outcome.

Every Child Matters (ECM) did not come out of the blue, but it did mark a shift – or rather an expansion – in Labour's agenda for children. When Labour leader Tony Blair was elected Prime Minister in 1997, he came to power saying that his priorities were "Education, Education, Education." The first years of his tenure saw major innovations in school policy, including specific national targets around literacy and numeracy attainment, and the introduction of school league tables that ranked schools according to 16-year-olds' examination results. But school policy was not the only focus: Blair had also campaigned on commitments to end child poverty. The government was increasingly aware that "the gap" in outcomes between poor and other children was

increasing, and there was a need for services to address the additional social challenges some children experienced. In 2000, three years into the Labour government, an extreme example of this need came to national attention.

THE LAST STRAW: THE DEATH OF VICTORIA CLIMBIÉ

Most histories of Every Child Matters are unequivocal about its origin: the shocking and tragic death of eight-year-old Victoria Climbié in London on February 25, 2000. The case prompted an inquiry led by Lord Laming, a crossbench (bipartisan) peer in the House of Lords who had formerly been a social worker and local Director of Social Services. The inquiry concluded in January 2003. Every Child Matters was launched later that same year, and was explicitly framed as a response to the inquiry. As the circumstances of Climbié's death were so central to emergence of the agenda, it is necessary to provide some details.

Climbié's case came to public attention during the trial of her great-aunt, Marie-Thérèse Kouao, and Kouao's boyfriend, Carl Manning, who were being tried for the torture and murder of the deceased eight-year-old girl. Climbié had suffered from repeated physical abuse in the months up to her death, evidenced by the 128 injuries and scars that were found on her body. This finding was described by the examiner as the worst case of child abuse she had ever encountered.

Among the many reasons why Climbié's death provoked such a strong response was the apparent lack of communication between the many social service organizations who had contact with Climbié during the year preceding her death. During the year she lived in England, her great-aunt had

extensive contact with local services to seek housing benefits. Climbié regularly attended these meetings and staff noted she looked frail, but no action was taken, and no one noted Climbié had never been placed in school. Later, a relative anonymously phoned social services about her case, but the call did not lead to action. Climbié was seen by staff at the National Health Service (NHS), her local church, and the NSPCC, a national children's charity. In each case, it appears the individual was either not sufficiently sure that anything was wrong, or did not take sufficient action on their suspicions of child abuse.

The case is frustrating and tragic, and it is easy to see how it provoked disbelief in the way services could lack what might seem like basic communication. Unfortunately, however, it was not the first instance of avoidable child death. In order to understand how this case sparked such a huge response, it must be set in context of other ongoing reforms.

SURE START

The Labour government had already initiated a major innovation in children's services in the form of "Sure Start," a program based on the American Head Start program. It involved the provision of local centers and services for parents of babies and children up to pre-school age. Sure Start centers were intended to fill in the missing link in the welfare state: "the big gap" between NHS support at birth and when children start school at age five.

The approach emerged from the Treasury as the result of the Comprehensive Spending Review on Services for Children under Eight conducted in 1998 by chief micro-economist

Norman Glass. The team included Ed Balls, later Secretary of State for Children, Schools, and Families (and subsequently shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer and deputy leader of the Labour party). Naomi Eisenstadt, with a background in children's charities, and now an Advisor to Scotland's First Minister, became the first director. It was a strategy with policy heavyweights behind it, and it gained the approval of both Blair and Gordon Brown.

At the local level, Sure Start centers were under the control of a Local Authority. Centrally, the initiative was established under the auspices of the Ministry of Health as a child development strategy. This caused some consternation at the Department for Education and Skills, where it was thought that the program instead should be a universal provision focused on school readiness. For Glass and his team, however, it was important that Sure Start centers were set up with priority for lower-income communities, to provide a safe and supportive place for parents – single mothers in particular. This was key to the vision of Sure Start as a means to tackle inequality “at source.” Initially, with this important remit, it was administered by a secretariat that reported directly to the Cabinet Office and to Blair.

The points of contention that arose during the early debates about Sure Start were similar to those that would appear during the years of Every Child Matters: the tension between designing targeted or universal services; the overlaps between the responsibilities of Health, Education, and Social Care; and the pattern that, for a strategy to get priority, it needed a route to report directly to “Number 10” – the Prime Minister's headquarters. The other recurring theme was

that no solution could go unaccompanied: the arrival of Sure Start would soon be followed by other changes.

CHILDREN'S TRUSTS PATHFINDERS

The Treasury was not the only central department coming up with new ideas about children's services in the early years of the new millennium. In October 2002, Alan Milburn, the Health Secretary, told the National Social Services Conference that he intended “to create specialist children's trusts to jointly plan, commission, finance, and, where it makes sense, deliver children's services.”²

Children's Trusts were to be local organizations linked to Local Authorities that had the aim of cutting across the boundaries of council, schools, and the NHS. Trusts were presented as a route to greater personalization: they would be able to commission from a wider range of providers and offer children and their families more options. As Milburn put it: “It is all about putting the users of services centre stage.” The speech focused on the expansion of choice – an important goal of New Labour.

The speech was followed by a call to councils that December to take part in a pilot scheme, and in July 2003, it was announced that 35 councils would establish a pilot Children's Trust. Seventy-five of 150 Local Authorities in England had bid to be part of the program, indicating the appetite to trial integrated work – or to have a slice of pilot money. The 35 pathfinders each received £60,000 – £100,000 for each of the three years of the project. True to the path-finding nature of the projects, each of the participating Authorities made different choices in setting up their trusts, and their priorities illustrate some of the variety that would appear under Every Child Matters.

One key decision faced by councils was who to appoint to run the new integrated services. In Hammersmith and Fulham, a diverse borough in North-West London, the role went to the council's Assistant Director for Children's Services and Social Care, Andrew Christie. Christie therefore took on full responsibility for Children's Services, leaving his senior to manage adult social care. At that point, there remained a separate Director of Education responsible for schools. Christie, whose background was in child social cases, prioritized work on how coordinated services might better support the most vulnerable children, particularly children in care. He also focused on specific projects with schools, trying to improve provision for children with special educational needs.

Another council involved in the pilot, Telford and Wrekin, appointed the role to their Director of Education, Christine Davies. Telford and Wrekin was a council that was newly formed in 1998 (in one of several waves of redistricting), and had intentionally set about piloting innovative approaches to service integration. Davies recalls their eagerness to join the Children's Trust pilot and test processes around information sharing and multi-agency teams of social and health workers wrapped around schools.

Both Christie and Davies would go on to serve among the first Directors of Children's Services (DCS) under Every Child Matters, bringing together responsibilities for Education and Social Care. Both would be successful: Christie is now the Executive DCS for three large London boroughs, and Davies became Chief Executive of a central agency. The fact these two leaders approached the purpose of the Children's

Trusts in different ways is illustrative of the way Every Child Matters as a whole would be open to a wide range of interpretation.

THE LAMING INQUIRY

In January 2003, Lord Laming published the outcome of his inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié. The report had been long awaited and redirected the focus of efforts in children's services reform. It highlighted several weaknesses in services for children, but above all, interviewees recall the inquiry for its sense of frustration at not being able to assign responsibility for the death: no individual teacher, leader, or social worker had done more than ignore worrying signs. They simply had not added together their information in a way that would have made it obvious that something was very wrong. Climbié seemed to have literally fallen through the cracks.

The Laming inquiry prompted a shift in children's services reform to focus on this problem of gaps between services. Where before reforms had introduced new services – primarily Sure Start – that were intended to tackle inequality, now it became more about integration *between* services and between professions.

As previously noted, the first paper to bear the title "Every Child Matters" was a Green Paper produced by the Department for Education and Skills in September 2003. The paper was an explicit response to the Laming Inquiry, but also

established a much broader basis for children's services reform by setting out five goals – to provide for all children so that they can:

- stay safe
- be healthy
- enjoy and achieve
- achieve economic well-being
- make a positive contribution

Months of consultation followed. In March 2004, the government published *Every Child Matters: Next Steps*, setting out what had been agreed on as the essential elements of reform. This included new processes for information sharing, and a new senior role within local government, a Director of Children's Services, to oversee schools and social care for children. On the same day, the key proposals were introduced in a bill to parliament.

FROM A BILL TO AN ACT: THE APPEAL OF EVERY CHILD MATTERS

In 2004, the bill passed through the House of Commons and House of Lords and was signed into legislation as the 2004 Children Act. It was passed with the help of the strong Labour majority in the House of Commons, but it was also met with a largely positive reception from Local Authorities and the government.

There are several reasons why Every Child Matters was met with such support. One of the key strengths of Every Child

Matters was its appealing ideological foundation. As Charles Clarke, the Secretary of State for Education who signed off the Children Act, puts it:

The central philosophy... was that every child has the possibility to fulfill themselves, and the role of the state is to try and enable that to happen.

While this is not a belief that all necessarily share, few would explicitly disagree with it. By making this belief central to government policy, Every Child Matters was legitimating a much broader scope of responsibility for schools and local services, and this seemed to mesh with the desires of the majority of the public.

More specifically, Every Child Matters was popular because it made explicit the need to work across services to fulfill its goals. After five years of concerted focus on standards of teaching, it was evident that schools alone could not overcome the challenges of inequality. In 2001, the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit had published a review of education in England, which concluded that, despite signs of strong improvement, "our education system is still failing many of those who need it most."³ David Albury, an Advisor in the Strategy Unit at that time, reflects that it was just becoming widely agreed that "for children really to succeed, particularly vulnerable children, there needed to be some attention to what we'd now call social and emotional learning... and what social services provided." For those in central government, therefore, Every Child Matters could initially be accepted as a continuation of existing strategies – all part of the Education, Education, Education agenda.

The belief in the importance of multi-service integration was matched at the local level, albeit in more patchy ways. For Christine Davies, at least, who had been part of the team that developed the Green Paper, the Children Act was a huge boost to her council's efforts. To understand how it did this, we turn next to elements of the Act, and how the legislation intended to promote integrated services and child wellbeing.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the 2004 Children Act took some time; indeed, some would argue it never finished. Every Child Matters was a central government strategy, but it relied entirely on Local Authorities to make it work. Integration of services was simply too complicated to micro-manage, and without accountability levers, there was little the government could do to drive efforts from the center.

A second difficulty was that it was not clear to everyone what was meant to be happening. Damian Allen, the former Director of Children's Services in Knowsley, believes that the main misstep was to see Every Child Matters as a set of policies to be implemented, as opposed to what it was: a national innovation project that required councils to come up with entirely new ways of working across service boundaries. Allen tried to view his role from a change management perspective, but unlike in the Children's Trust pilots, the center did not provide a level of support that implied they understood the enormity of the task at hand.

Lacking that support, there were several key challenges that led to variability in implementation across the country.

FINDING THE RIGHT DIRECTORS OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The main structural change initiated by the 2003 Every Child Matters Green Paper was the establishment of the role of Director of Children's Services (DCS). This represented a major change to council organization, removing the separate Director of Education and creating one role responsible for all aspects of children's education and social care. This new set of roles was intended to serve several purposes. Charles Clarke, Secretary of State for Education and Skills at the time and one of the originators of the idea, believed that children's social services were "very much a Cinderella area" and would get "higher priority tied to education." Likewise, at the local level, policymakers hoped that conjoining provision of schools to that of children's social care would mean better services for the most vulnerable children, who too often were seen as a "resource-draw" for schools.

Local Authorities had two years to appoint a Director of Children's Services, and many places took the full amount of time, as it was difficult to find individuals prepared to take on responsibility for both school oversight and children's social care. To this day, most DCSs only have deep experience of one profession, with their background training either in teaching and school leadership or in social work and child protection. Despite the cases where these domains overlap, they remain distinct services and professions for the majority of people who work in them, and it is perhaps not surprising that leaders might struggle to gain the respect of professionals in the other domain.

Those who have a background that straddles both education and social care are unusual. Ashley Ayre, DCS for Bath and North Somerset, is one such example, having started as a graduate trainee in a London borough, and spent three years in the social care department before working for another three years in education. He knows this experience was uncommon. Ayre is now one of almost 60 DCSs who have had to adapt yet further, taking on additional responsibilities for adult social services as part of cost-cutting measures within councils.

A second difficulty was that, once appointed, DCSs could be short-lived. Placing so much accountability in a single individual came with dangers, and some only lasted a couple of years before exhaustion or poor outcomes would bring them down. Of over 150 Directors of Children's Services introduced in 2005-6, fewer than ten still hold their posts. In recent figures on turnover (July 2013-14), one third of DCSs had left their post within a year. A number have lost their jobs in particularly ignominious circumstances; Victoria Climbié, unfortunately, was not the last tragic child death. Although some cases have been clear failures, it is questionable the extent to which every such incident really can be avoided. For better or worse, however, many DCSs I spoke to agree that a great deal of time and energy goes into trying to avoid these rare events. Even the country's Chief Inspector, Michael Wilshaw – usually not opposed to removing leaders in the name of standards – has stated publicly that the turnover of DCSs is too high.⁴

In hindsight, Charles Clarke remains torn as to whether abolishing the separate role of Director of Education was the right choice:

I won't say what we did is necessarily the right thing, but the ambition [of breaking down barriers between services] is absolutely the right thing.

Perhaps the problem was that the idea of the DCS was never seen through to its fullest extent. What was lacking was a pipeline of leaders with experience of integrated services and, in particular, of working both with education and social work professionals. During the later phase of Every Child Matters, in 2009, the National College of Teaching and School Leadership was briefly renamed the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services, and began providing leadership programs specifically for DCSs and aspiring DCSs. The switch lasted only until the change of government, and in 2011 reverted to its original title.

WEAK ENGAGEMENT FROM SCHOOLS

An ongoing challenge in information sharing was the relationship between schools and other services. For Charles Clarke, Every Child Matters had been about placing schools at the center of responsibility for children's wellbeing. He saw schools, as a universal service, as the best hope for early intervention on issues such as mental health and addiction that otherwise risk being lost "on the interface between health, social services, and education."

A small number of schools managed to coordinate effectively with other services around those issues, but by 2007 there was a feeling that schools were far less central than had been hoped. Some commentators believe that the decision to allow

schools out of the duty to cooperate was a huge mistake, and meant that Every Child Matters forever remained a side priority for most schools. It is questionable whether this would have inevitably been the case regardless of whether there was a formal duty or not.

PILING UP STRATEGIES

A key difficulty in attempting to further integration across services was that Every Child Matters was not the only policy agenda on the block. Government departments and centralized services agencies continued to put out their own initiatives and strategies, which were more or less aligned with ECM. In 2004, for example, plans were published on: commissioning alternative provision, health and social care standards, child poverty, parental separation, “confident communities,” the next five years for the Department for Education and Skills, local area agreements, missing children, nursing and midwifery, youth unemployment, maternity services, 14-19 education, and making healthy choices. All of these documents are referenced in a guide to Every Child Matters as being relevant to the initiative, and many referenced it in turn, but they also had their own sets of changes to propose.

Each service therefore had specific strategies to make sense of, while also coming to grips with what everyone else was doing for the sake of children’s outcomes. Cross-cutting reports – such as a report on the findings of the “pathfinder” Children’s Trusts, or a National Service Framework for Children, Young People, and Maternity Services – might have helped, but they were produced in such quick succession without a strategy for embedding them that they may have only made things worse.

In their efforts to provide sufficient guidance, the government departments may have ultimately stripped local practitioners of the time needed to make sense of the changes. It may have been better to hold back on strategies until DCSs were in place to lead all of the change, or perhaps for many, that would have stretched their skill set too far.

PHASE 2: THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, SCHOOLS, AND FAMILIES

By early 2007, Tony Blair was preparing to hand over the office of Prime Minister to his Deputy Gordon Brown, and Labour’s inner circles began planning for the changes a new leader might bring. Ed Balls, who was senior advisor to Brown at the time, recalls a concern as to how the leadership transition could best be used to “focus the government... on issues which really mattered.”

One of the ideas proposed was about “re-energizing” Every Child Matters. A group of central advisors – including Gavin Kelly and Nick Pierce, who would go on to lead in major think tanks, and Ed Miliband, who would go onto lead the Labour party – believed that if schools were to really engage with broader goals for children, the merging of Education and Children’s Services needed to be reflected right from the top. Thus, they decided to replace the Department for Education and Skills with a Department of Children, Schools, and Families (DCSF), bringing all responsibility for policy on children and families into one place. When Gordon Brown took office as Prime Minister, Ed Balls was appointed the first Secretary of State for Children, Schools, and Families.

THE CHILDREN'S PLAN

Between late May 2007 and the end of that year, the new DCSF carried out a large-scale consultation on the state and future of children's services. In December this was published as *The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures*. The document was explicitly based on the goals of Every Child Matters, with a new shift toward universalism. Opening with the goal to make England "the best place in the world for our children and young people to grow up," it refocused the purpose of children's services as promoting wellbeing and holistic development for all children.

The plan built on a wave of policy development that had taken place in a somewhat parallel process to Every Child Matters, and had been led by the Treasury during the time Balls worked there. While the Green Paper and Children Act had focused primarily on professionals and Local Authority structures, these papers focused on parenting and families. In 2005, the Treasury, together with the Department for Education and Skills, published *Support for Parents: The Best Start for Children*. In 2006, Brown initiated a policy review building on this paper that resulted in the 2007 report, *Aiming High for Children: Supporting Families*. It was these agendas, as much as the original phase of Every Child Matters, that provided the background for the Children's Plan.

To accomplish the goals of the plan, several agreements were made with other departments. For example, children's health was written into the operating framework of the NHS; Ed Balls formed an agreement with the Secretary of State for Justice, Jack Straw, to assume some responsibilities for the

treatment of children in custody; and with the Department for Culture, Media, and Sports, they formed a strategy to improve all children's opportunities to play.

DCSF's key power was a substantial budget. Ed Balls describes how cooperation from other departments was eased by the fact that DCSF could provide the lion's share of funding for any given project. Another power was that children's wellbeing had risen on the public agenda. In 2007, UNICEF released a report placing the UK at the bottom of a league of rich countries for child wellbeing.⁵ For his part, Balls exerted much effort on championing the government's role in providing for children's holistic wellbeing. Where some government ministers might balk at announcing a "play" strategy, he embraced the notion of a Department for Children. As such, DCSF adopted a rainbow as its logo and changed its departmental type face to universal lower case.

2007 was undoubtedly a high point for the aspiration of holistic children's services. Andrew Christie, for example, sees Every Child Matters as an agenda more associated with Balls' tenure than those who first ushered it in, describing him as "quite inspirational." It came at a cost, however. The unashamed focus on wellbeing, play, and learning outside school left the department ripe for criticism in the wake of narratives about falling educational standards. This, and an unfortunately timed and drawn out case of another tragic child death, meant that by the time of a national election in 2010, Every Child Matters may have been past its peak.

POLICY ELEMENTS

Every Child Matters entailed a large set of inter-connected changes to children's services in England. To provide an entry point to the case, this section introduces the key elements of change.

As an overview, the complete list of elements introduced by the 2004 Children Act is as follows:

- *a Children's Commissioner to champion the views and interests of children and young people;*
- *a duty on Local Authorities to promote cooperation between agencies and other appropriate bodies (such as voluntary and community organizations) in order to improve children's wellbeing (where wellbeing is defined in reference to the five goals), and a duty on key partners to take part in the cooperation arrangements;*
- *a duty on key agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children; a duty on Local Authorities to set up Local Safeguarding Children Boards and on key partners to take part;*
- *provision for indexes or databases containing basic information about children and young people to enable better sharing of information;*
- *a requirement for a single Children and Young People's Plan to be drawn up by each Local Authority;*
- *a requirement on Local Authorities to appoint a Director of Children's Services and designate a Lead Member;*

- *the creation of an integrated inspection framework and the conduct of Joint Area Reviews to assess local areas' progress in improving outcomes; and*
- *provisions relating to foster care, private fostering, and the education of children in care.*

The sections below detail the three key elements of Every Child Matters.

DIRECTORS OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

As Balls reflects, just as Sure Start came to be synonymous with Children's Centers, Every Child Matters was initially represented in the public sector by the new role of the Director of Children's Services. The DCS was responsible for not only for Education and Children's Social Care, but aspects of other areas that affected children, such as health, sports, culture, and juvenile offenses. This represented a major change to council organization. Consultation on the Every Child Matters Green Paper indicated that some councils were unsure about having one role to manage such a span of services. The Children Act therefore provided for a second role, "Lead Member for children's services," which allowed councils flexibility in whether they formally combined the Departments of Education and Children's Social Care by placing responsibility for political leadership on children's issues with another person.

Many interviewees saw the main purpose of the DCS to be the “system leader” or “one key person” to bridge responsibility for children across services. Those who had held or are currently in DCS positions saw this as an active, galvanizing role, “to bring services and agencies together around the needs of children and families.” Part of their power seems to come from their lightning-rod status: this is the person responsible for ensuring there is not another Victoria Climbié. It seems that having a senior figure in a council with ultimate responsibility for safeguarding children allows for much greater attention to that area from Chief Executives – with some add-on effect for attention to children’s services in general.

The role of DCS is not only to serve as a bridging point, but also to rethink priorities. Some interviewees believe the most important aspect of the role is to reorient a council toward preventative rather than crisis services. Thus, in some areas a range of agendas – from early child care, to family support, to “team around the schools” – accelerated in the first years of Every Child Matters.

DUTY TO COOPERATE

A second key piece introduced by the Children Act was the creation of an explicit “duty to cooperate.” This meant that Local Authorities were responsible for making “arrangements to promote cooperation,” and children’s services professionals had a duty to “cooperate to share information relevant to a child’s wellbeing.” These efforts were served by the introduction of a central database of information on children with protection orders, initially called ContactPoint, and by the creation of a new multi-agency tool for assessing children’s needs: the Common Assessment Framework (CAF).⁷

The thinking behind all these elements was simple: if services were all sharing information, they would be more likely to know about problems before they got serious and be able to prevent crises. In linking this duty to the goal of wellbeing, however, the policy created the potential for much more expansive interpretations, such as a requirement to commit to integrated work in the name of children’s broader outcomes.

This potential was to be limited, however, by a decision not to formally extend the duty to cooperate to schools. Teachers had already dealt with the introduction of league tables in secondary schools, major national strategies in primary schools, and would soon be facing a change to the inspection system, so there was a sense they were already facing too many pressures. Moreover, the influential thinking on school policy at the time was that anything that wasn’t a laser-like focus on numeracy, literacy, and exam results was a “distraction.” This thinking could largely be traced to the head of the government Delivery Unit, Michael Barber, a former lead civil servant in the Department for Education. In a move that was a concession to both teacher unions and internal advisors, Tony Blair himself decided that schools should be left out of the obligation.

A CHILDREN’S COMMISSIONER

Most of the aspects of the Children Act were either structural changes at the Local Authority level, or changes to the procedures of frontline services. Many felt, however, that if children’s wellbeing was to get real traction, children would need a direct representative within central government. There had, in fact, been a long-term lobby for such a role. In 2004,

England was one of the last countries in Europe without a representative for children – a commissioner or ombudsman – within the government.

The role of Children’s Commissioner would go to Al Aynsley-Green, formerly of Great Ormond’s Street Hospital, who had been a self-described thorn in the government’s side for several years, pushing for greater attention to children’s needs in the National Service Framework of the NHS. When the post was created and he was appointed, there was some hostility from those who felt the role was unnecessary. For others, however, a voice for children within the highest levels of government was exactly what was needed to overcome the “invisibility” of children’s issues.

Aynsley-Green selected certain issues to focus on in order to expend his efforts and minimal budget efficiently. He prioritized youth justice and the treatment of children in the immigration system. He was also part of larger initiatives to increase the opportunities for “children’s voice” in decision-making at local and national levels, championing national parliaments. The impact of this work was somewhat dependent on cooperative councils, but those certainly existed. In Knowsley, one of the most socio-economically deprived parts of the country in North-East England, the Director of Children’s Services, Damian Allen, took the opportunity to push for new youth-led forms of decision-making in and around schools.

CHALLENGES

In 2010, one of the first acts of the new Conservative government was to revert DCSF to a Department for Education, focused solely on schools. One of the first actions of the new Department for Education, leaked in memos, was to phase out all language of Every Child Matters. Specific elements were also withdrawn: the government stopped all the work around the ContactPoint database and the development of an electronic version of the Common Assessment Framework, and lifted the duty on services to cooperate.

For schools, there has been a definitive break with the principles of integrated services in the form of efforts to take schools out from Local Authority control. Nationally, almost 60% of public secondary schools have converted to independent “Academies,” up from 6% in 2010. These schools are responsible for their own budgets, but are detached from other children’s services. The number of primary schools that have converted to Academies has been slower to rise, as the schools are typically much smaller and rely on centralized budgeting. However, this number has reached 16% and is increasing, aided by the growth of “Academy chains.”

What made Every Child Matters vulnerable to this deconstruction?

UNMEASURABLE

Many of the interviewees, in reflecting on Every Child Matters, commented on the perennial challenge of measuring the five outcome goals. In an era where there was increased pressure on assessments and measurable targets, unmeasured goals

were always open to the threat of being crowded out by other priorities. Considerable effort did go into developing key indicators for each goal, and using “statistical neighbors” to hold Local Authorities accountable.⁸ This development took some time, however, and was not in place for the first years of the agenda. Moreover, while the government Delivery Unit was chasing down specific targets around student’s examination results, there was apparently never the political momentum to do this for targets related to Every Child Matters. Consequently, public awareness of these indicators was never very high.

This is not to say that DCSs do not use measures. Andrew Christie lists a range of indicators they still use in his boroughs to understand if they are meeting children’s needs. These include all school attainment measures, the proportion of children who are entering care, the difference between their outcomes and those of other children, and the number of young people who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET). The latter, in particular, was a measure that was introduced during the Every Child Matters era, and is specifically related to the outcome goal around achieving economic wellbeing.

Without clear outcome measures, it was difficult to demonstrate whether Every Child Matters was achieving the progress it intended. There were fears that too many Local Authorities, pressed by other priorities, had “obeyed the word of the legislation but not its spirit,” and not really changed anything about how they worked with children other than appointing a DCS. Ultimately, it was too easy to criticize Every Child Matters as amorphous because it was difficult to point to

exactly what it was, either in terms of means or ends. ECM was neither embodied by a specific set of practices (such as the GIRFEC practice model in Scotland) nor a set of hard measures. Unquantifiable entitlements are not inherently problematic, but they are when they also cannot be identified by any concrete procedures.

UNTARGETED – OR TOO TARGETED

As an agenda with such broad goals, Every Child Matters was always going to be caught between competing priorities. On the one hand it called for improvements to universal services, such as rolling out children’s centers to more areas, or encouraging all teachers and social workers to approach their work with children in a more holistic way. On the other hand, there was a focus on deepening service provision in particular areas and for particular children. This included the efforts to join together services around the most vulnerable children and to make greater provision in schools for children with special emotional or academic needs.

Charles Clarke sees the original priority of Every Child Matters as removing barriers to achievement, and this necessarily meant focusing more on some children rather than others. This kind of approach can naturally lead to questions of fairness:

Obviously a central issue in Every Child Matters is you’re giving resources to the less achieving children in a major way. ...If you’re focusing on those needs, is less resource going to the more academically able kids? I’m not at all sympathetic to that argument myself, but distribution of resources in a school ... became a big issue.

One of the ways to overcome questions about competing interests was to road-test new ways of working in just a few areas, supplied by additional funding. But this led to “the problem of the pilot”:

...people say, “That’s a pilot, it’s got a separate set of funding.” ...[W]e had some pilots that were successful but then it wasn’t practical to roll out.

The reliance on pilots meant that there was not as large a footprint of new practice as might have been hoped. There was not enough to point to and say, “This is what it looks like.”

UNSUCCESSFUL?

The aspiration of Every Child Matters was to initiate a shift in universal services for children. The momentum to establish it, however, had emerged from a crisis that was an example of breakdown in acute services for the most vulnerable children. It was therefore always caught between its universal aspirations and the reality that what really motivated political will was a means to avoid further tragedy. When push came to shove, the efforts to improve the wellbeing of all children came second to the processes of child protection – and on this front, ECM suffered a high profile failure.

In August 2007, just as the effort to re-energize ECM was getting underway, news reports emerged of the death of a one-year-old boy whose mother had previously been investigated by social services. During the mother’s trial in 2008, the story of the child, known as Baby P, became national news. Details emerged of the number of the times the boy had been seen by social services or local hospitals. It became known that DCSF had received a letter six months prior to Baby P’s death warning them of failings at Haringey council. The council’s

Director of Children’s Services was fired (though she later pursued this decision to Supreme Court and won compensation for unfair dismissal).

Lord Laming was called in to carry out another inquiry, which was published in 2009. It concluded that not all councils were implementing the Children Act as required, in particular the elements about information sharing. In the same year, a national newspaper revealed details of an internal Serious Case Review carried out by Haringey Council, laying open its workings for public disapproval.

The drawn-out affair had a big impact on the orientation of children’s services. David Albury recalls working with groups of DCSs from 2008 to 2010 – groups made up of leaders who were recognized as the best in the country – and even they felt that child protection “dominated their agenda.” They knew they could have excellent systems, but if one child slipped through, it would be mean the end of their career. Thus by 2010, for both system leaders and the public, the wider aspirations of Every Child Matters had faded somewhat in comparison to the focus and scrutiny on improving child protection.

THE RESPONSE TO THE END

The move away from the language and specific pillars of Every Child Matters primarily has been perceived as political or part of cost-cutting initiatives. Not all of the changes are viewed as a loss at the local level, however. Andrew Christie reflects the mixed feelings prompted by the phasing out of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF):

Some of my managers still see it as the absolute gold standard we should be pursuing, others regard it as compromised and a bureaucratic process that never worked.

In his Local Authorities – the tri-borough area in London – they are trying to move beyond the CAF in effective ways by shifting away from prescriptive or procedural forms of social care toward care that is more relationship-based. Their current drives are all around building up the professionalism of the workforce in terms of judgment and skill that is not reliant on tools like the CAF. As he puts it, “You can’t make people take responsibility by telling them they should do a CAF.” On the other hand, he fully emphasizes that, specifics of the CAF aside, the general orientation of the approach was the right one:

Having a coherent, integrated approach to a vulnerable young person in a universal setting, that brings together people, and has a plan and a set of outcomes and maybe somebody who is the lead professional to make sure that is coordinated...that still holds good.

It is uncertain to what extent this orientation remains in Local Authorities without the continuity of leadership Christie brings.

Other aspects of change are more harshly criticized. Christine Davies thinks that dropping the duty to cooperate was a “big mistake.” She refers to several serious case reviews since the decision which highlighted that information sharing was missing. Serious cases may be where the cuts bite, but other DCSs point to the unknown harm done by the dropping of preventative services. Ashely Ayre notes that as a council, they have had to reduce the children’s service budget by a third, meaning that children’s centers now open only when they are delivering targeted services. Likewise, the youth budget has been reduced by half, so they have stripped back much of their more general programming. Perhaps this will lead to

better and more efficient targeting, but it is difficult to see how a targeted approach could encompass broad goals like those of Every Child Matters.

LEGACY

In countries with active democracies, few government agendas outlast the leaders who develop them. The real test of Every Child Matters and the approach it took is whether it has created changes that still persist, and have the potential to realize future improvement.

THE DCS AND LOCAL STRUCTURES

The clearest legacy of Every Child Matters is the roles and structures that still exist across the country, representing the aspiration to shape services around children. Directors of Children’s Services and Children’s Trusts still exist in many councils. These structures have become, if anything, more important as more schools have become “Academies” and become independent of Local Authority control. In the councils I spoke to, it appears that the DCS or equivalent system leader still acts as a key connector, linking both Local Authority schools and Academies to other necessary services, such as mental health or alternative provision.

Despite the difficulty in turnover of DCSs, and the ongoing uncertainty as to whether that role can really bridge different professional cultures, the position still seems to be an important representation of a commitment to collaboration.

Christine Davies reflects on the importance of this role after perceiving its absence in her work with Australian state governments:

Their schools and child protection are all operating in isolation, and they had nobody who had any responsibility or influence. It's all about influence, to bring people together ... At the local level the good will is immense, people want to work together, so there [needs to be] someone given a clear mandate to bring people together.

GOALS

Another, more ephemeral but perhaps more widespread legacy is the notion of services working toward holistic outcomes for children. Ashley Ayre believes that schools really have changed in how they view their responsibility to children:

It made them realize, it's not just about 9:00-3:30pm, and it's not just about academic achievement. That's been a big shift, and the schools in my authority have risen to that challenge.

Within councils, too, there is clearly a strong institutional memory of what Every Child Matters represented, particularly its outcome goals for children. Andrew Christie describes a feeling that may be shared by many of the professionals whose careers traverse this period:

...[T]o this day we still use it. We may not describe it as Every Child Matters but we still focus on the same outcomes – I can even recite the language, and everybody still can – every child must achieve economic wellbeing, and every child must stay healthy... I don't think anybody

to this day would say that wasn't a good mantra, from which you can create some very good understandings about what are the outcomes we are trying to achieve.

CONSULTING CHILDREN

One of the important features of Every Child Matters was the extent to which it took seriously the need to consult with children about the issues facing their lives and how they perceived children's services. This was a theme that ran through the appointment of the Children's Commissioner, the idea of local Children's Plans, and – at the individual level – the tools that accompanied the Common Assessment Framework.

Many councils still work from a Children's Plan informed by consultation. Ayre describes this process in Bath and North Somerset, where every three years they talk to over 500 children, young people, and parents. They also hold annual "parliaments" with representatives from all schools to check on the progress of their plan and alert them to particular needs, such as improving disabled access or increasing provision for adolescent mental health. The council is hungry for all kinds of opportunities to learn from children. Ayre points to examples such as a piece of research done by an individual social worker, showing that children under child protection orders agreed they made their life safer at much higher rates when they perceived the social worker had treated their parents with respect. They treat this kind of information as highly valuable.

Every Child Matters cannot receive all the credit for spreading this kind of learning orientation – local governments around the world have been working to become more responsive to public feedback – but for many system leaders in England, ECM does seem to have been an important part of shifting how they approach thinking about children’s needs and how they serve them.

INTEGRATION VIA INTERVENTION

Some of the key principles of Every Child Matters – a focus on prevention before crisis, and the need to work across services – are evident in some specific projects that developed in the coalition government from 2010 onwards. In 2011, the Department for Communities and Local Government launched a program focused on “Troubled Families,” seeking to develop strategies to meet the needs of around 100,000 of the heaviest social service users in England. Troubled Families took as its focus the need for working across services and providing families with one contact point, reflecting the thinking behind the Common Assessment Framework and its related processes. The main difference between this project and ECM is its more targeted approach. For children, the main goal of the project is to ensure children with difficult home lives are in school. There are therefore many types of child wellbeing that would not come under its purview.

In 2013, an independent charity named the Early Intervention Foundation⁹ was founded with government support to collate and generate evidence on the most effective approaches to avoiding cycles of disadvantage within families. Much of their initial work has focused on making the financial case for early intervention, but they have also collated evidence on what

works for intervening to help children. These interventions are divided according to their target outcome, such as preventing substance abuse or supporting children’s mental health. As they acknowledge, there is some room for overlap.

This strategy to disseminate discrete programs aimed at improving specific outcomes is quite different from the ECM agenda of integrating universal services with the goal of improving children’s wellbeing. However, this may be a false dichotomy. Christine Davies, who is a trustee of the Early Intervention Foundation, believes that the press for evidence-based interventions may lead back to a focus on integration:

...[A]ll of the evidence is that the only way to address the needs of vulnerable children and families is through multi-disciplinary work. And the problem is that while everybody knows that to be the case, there isn’t actually a particularly good evidence base on what constitutes effective multi-disciplinary, integrated working.

This kind of integration might look somewhat different, however, from the integration implied by linking together educational and social services within a council. There is a case to be made that the most important point at which services need to be “joined up” is directly at the interface with the child. This means that it is case workers who need to be able to collaborate with multiple services, rather than everyone in two or more entire services with different professional cultures.

Others see the legacy of Every Child Matters in a more general agenda to develop decentralized strategies that link economic outcome goals with social policy within particular areas. Some of these approaches – such as giving more power to mayors, or creating local economic partnerships – may be

traced to integration projects in the final years of the Labour government, where there were attempts to develop stronger area-based approaches through pilots of local area agreements or a program known as “Total Place.” This direction is applauded by those who view economic development as a key missing link in Every Child Matters. David Albury recalls conducting evaluations of education strategies in towns that had been hit by industrial change, and having little answer for teenagers who saw no point in getting proper educational qualifications when the only jobs in the area did not require them. This critique is a pointed one to be addressed by any fully-fledged integrated strategy.

CONCLUSION

HALTING PROGRESS TOWARD INTEGRATION

Every Child Matters was trying to achieve something very, very difficult. As Charles Clarke put it, in bringing together education and children’s social services under one leader, “you are talking about a fundamental change of culture.” Beyond those two services, full integration was even harder:

Collaboration with the health services was always a big issue, if you look at some of the school issues – bullying, drugs – they are a very low priority in health.

That prioritization has the potential to change with the creation of more health oversight at a local level in the form of Health and Wellbeing boards and local health commissioning groups (CCGs), and some councils are experimenting with different ways of linking these boards to Children’s Trusts. This seems to depend somewhat on

whether CCGs share the same area coverage as a council. This is the case in Ashley Ayres’ council, and they have been able to work very effectively together, with his team taking responsibility for children’s health commissioning. In other areas, overlapping borders with multiple councils mean integration is logistically much more difficult.

The picture on schools is yet more mixed. Many interviewees reflected on the extent to which schools are now encouraged to see themselves as independent organizations, responsible for student’s academic achievement and little else. Both Ayre and Christie describe working hard to stay in good contact with their schools and make sure they have what they need to meet the wider needs of their children. Ayre describes how, in response to a recent student suicide, the council paid for counselors to go into the schools, even though Academies are supposed to manage all additional services through their budgets. Ayre believes it is important to maintain cooperative and reciprocal relationships: “Our schools support us because we support them.” Nevertheless, there are a few schools in the area who still do not engage.

Despite this picture of struggle, in some areas there are signs of renewed commitment to the principles of integrated working. In the city of Birmingham, school principals from both Academies and Local Authority schools came together in 2013 to form the Birmingham Education Partnership.¹⁰ The partnership covers the entire city, encompassing the largest Local Authority in England. Currently, a pathfinder project is underway to test methods of partnering with other services, including a “0-25 years Mental Health Service” and

a “School Health Advisory Service.” In many respects, this is the Every Child Matters agenda coming full circle: the pathfinder has many of the same goals as the original Children’s Trusts. The key difference is that this time schools are leading it.

If Every Child Matters was ultimately too big to succeed, one may wonder if a more piecemeal approach could have achieved more over time. David Albury suggests it suffered from the “one size fits all policy trap.” Local Authorities are all very different, with different strengths and challenges. Every Child Matters allowed no flexibility about the structures

imposed, but perhaps allowed too much flexibility in terms of how councils interpreted its goals and what monitoring and measures were in place. A more strategic approach might have given councils and schools a wider remit to develop a set of structures that made sense based on the resources and capabilities at their disposal. Or perhaps Every Child Matters ultimately aimed at culture change: a change in how professionals working with children see the purpose of their work. In that case, as long as there are people in the system who take its goals seriously, its mission may still be rolling toward fruition.



CASE 2

Every Child Matters: Integrating Children’s Services in England **TIMELINE**



FEBRUARY 2000

Death of Victoria Climbié. The inquiry begins in April 2000.

OCTOBER 2002

The Minister for Health, Alan Milburn, makes a speech to a local government conference proposing the establishment of Children’s Trusts, new local bodies responsible for commissioning children’s services.

JANUARY 2003

Publication of *The Victoria Climbié Inquiry – Report of an Inquiry* by Lord Laming.

SEPTEMBER 2003

Launch of the Green Paper *Every Child Matters*, which set out five outcomes to aspire to for all young people. Consultation on the Green Paper begins.

OCTOBER 2003

ODMP published *National Procurement Strategy for Local Government* – including recommendations for integration and efficiency.

MARCH 2004

Publication of *Every Child Matters: Next Steps* on the day the Children Bill is introduced to parliament (with a foreword by the new Minister for Children, Young People, and Families, Margaret Hodge). In the following months there is consultation on several aspects of the bill including Integrated Inspection and the Common Assessment Framework.

NOVEMBER 2004

The Children Act is passed, legislating sections of Every Child Matters. Later that month guidance is published for consultation for those in the new roles of Director of Children's Services, and "Lead Member."

DECEMBER 2004

Publication of several key documents under the heading of Every Child Matters concerning schools, social care, criminal justice, health, maternity services, and voluntary organizations.

MARCH 2005

Al Aynsley-Green is appointed the first Children's Commissioner.

NOVEMBER 2006

The deadline for enacting key parts of the legislation: each local authority was by now required to have appointed a Director of Children's Services, and established a Children and Young People's Plan for the local area, cutting across services.

MAY 2007

Tony Blair steps down as Prime Minister and Gordon Brown begins his government. Ed Balls is appointed Secretary of State of the newly formed Department for Children, Schools, and Families.

DECEMBER 2007

Publication of The Children's Plan (national-level) including new strategies on parenting, play, and children's health.

“After five years of concerted focus on standards of teaching, it was evident that schools alone could not overcome the challenges of inequality.”

NOVEMBER 2008

The deadline for all 150 local authorities to establish Children’s Trusts. Trusts by this point have taken a variety of forms of local commissioning arrangements, involving different breadths of services.

Tracey Connolley, Stevan Barker, and Jason Owen are found guilty of manslaughter for the death of “Baby P,” Connolley’s son. Two days later, the Secretary of State for Children, Ed Balls, order an inquiry into the role of the local authority, health service, and police in the death, initiating a re-focusing on child protection.

APRIL 2010

Section 12A of the 2004 Children Act comes into force (though it was never enforced). As specified in government guidance, this section would require schools and colleges to become “statutory partners” in Children’s Trust arrangements, including them in the duty to cooperate to improve children’s wellbeing.

MAY 2010

A national election marks the end of the Labour government. On May 11, a new coalition government comes to power. The Department for Children, Schools, and Families reverts to become the Department for Education.

AUGUST 2010

An internal Department for Education memo is leaked, specifying the requirement to drop all language of Every Child Matters for government publications. Over subsequent months the government winds down efforts to enforce the duty to cooperate, the use of the Commons Assessment Framework, and the spread of Children’s Trusts.

REFERENCES

- 1 <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DfES10812004.pdf> (p.2)
- 2 http://www.gov-news.org/gov/uk/news/time_to_break_up_old_monolithic_social_services/29463.html
- 3 <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100125070726/http://cabinetoffice.gov.uk/medial/cabinetoffice/strategy/assets/education.pdf>
- 4 <http://www.lgcplus.com/news/services/childrens-services/wilshaw-turnover-of-childrens-service-directors-is-ridiculous/5067371.article>
- 5 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk/6359363.stm>
- 6 <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/dfes/1081/2004>
- 7 <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20090608182316/http://dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/strategy/deliveringservices1/caflcafframework/>
- 8 <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110809101133/http://education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STA/r000712/nfer-2007rept.pdf>
- 9 <http://www.eif.org.uk/about-us/>
- 10 <http://www.bep.education/>

CASE 3

**New Learning Environments in Finland:
The Finnish National Board of Education and the 2015/16 Core Curriculum Reforms**



Origins page 67

Implementation page 69

Policy Elements page 72

Monitoring page 76

Challenges page 78

ORIGINS

This case focuses on the work of the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) and its efforts to diversify the learning environments in the public school system. It covers the latest cycle of reform of the national core curriculum, managed by the Board, and a separate strategy to promote the development of innovative learning environments through targeted grants.

The educational context in Finland is one of decentralized control. The Ministry of Education and Culture sets a national framework for education policy, implemented by the Finnish National Board of Education in the form of a national core curriculum and certain support strategies. Provision of schooling in line with this framework is the responsibility of the 336 municipalities, along with a handful of alternative education providers (mainly for specialist schools). Municipalities provide around 75% of the funding for schools, with the remainder coming from central government.¹ Ninety-nine percent of schools at the basic education level are publically funded and there are very few private schools. The number of individual institutions has fallen over the past five years, as around 600 small schools have closed.² Just under 60,000 students start school each year at age seven, and remain in basic education until 16, and upper general or vocational education until 18. There are currently 1.89 million students in the system.

To understand the anticipated reception of the new curriculum, and the strategy the Board will take in seeking to realize its aspirations, it is necessary to understand the role of curriculum in the Finnish education system.

THE NATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION AND THE CORE CURRICULUM

Finland's first Board of Education was founded in the late nineteenth century. Under various names, it has existed ever since as the main body responsible for designing the framework for public education in Finland. The organization now known as the Finnish National Board of Education was constituted in 1991, bringing together the original National Board of General Education and National Board of Vocational Education.

In the early 1970s, Finland underwent considerable reform of its education system to move from a two-tiered vocational and academic system to a comprehensive school model up to age 16. As part of this move, the first national curriculum was published by the National Board in 1970. In the subsequent decade, there were moves to decentralize decision-making from the center to local authorities, and the 1985 and 1994 reforms of the curriculum decreased the central prescription and left more room for teacher and school decision-making.

In 2002-2004, the curriculum was revised again, establishing a pattern of ten-year cycles. This revision reflected a slight move back towards central prescription. Legislation in 1998 had instituted national sample-based assessment, which revealed considerable variability in performance across the country. In response, the 2004 core curriculum was framed as an entitlement for students, seeking to reduce variation in implementation.

Come 2012, FNBE was preparing to embark on another cycle of revisions, but this time in quite a different atmosphere.

A CURRICULUM WITH WORK TO DO

Since the early 2000s and the publication of the first Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) by the OECD, Finland has risen to international attention for the quality and equity of its education system. Despite being less resource-rich than some of its Scandinavian counterparts, Finland is the highest performing European country on a range of international student assessments, with a smaller than average disparity between students by socioeconomic status.³ Consequently, Finland has found that its latest cycle of curriculum development has been carried out under an international spotlight.

Additionally, the new curriculum is under some pressure from within the country to correct a perceived slide in the quality of education. In December 2013, Finland suffered a blow when the release of the 2012 PISA results showed that Finnish students were performing worse than their international counterparts in 2001, particularly in mathematics. This was not exactly a shock – national assessments and an earlier study by the University of Helsinki⁴ had already drawn attention to this decline⁵ – but it created a moment of attention in which the then Minister of Education and Communications, Krista Kiuru, was prompted to make public commitments about the response and proposed an inquiry to secure improvements to the system.

In early 2014, a working group was convened under the title, *Basic Education of the Future – Let's Turn the Trend!* The group was made up of 45 academics and thought leaders with expertise on different education topics. They

were invited to make proposals and contribute ideas, which were synthesized in a process overseen by a steering group led by the Minister herself. The group also included representation from each of the eight parliamentary parties, the teachers' union and principals' association, the parents' league, children's ombudsman, and the association of local authorities – in other words, most of the key stakeholders in education. (Business and third sectors were not explicitly represented, but Sitra, a public fund established by the Bank of Finland in 1967, convened the New Education Forum with a broader group of stakeholders in December 2014, which published an output with a similar vision in June 2015.)⁶

The Ministry's working group's conclusions were released in March 2015, in a thought piece entitled in English, "Tomorrow's Comprehensive School."⁷ It focuses on the need for continuous improvement of the education system to take account of changes in the wider world. The implication is that there had been little focused activity between 2001 and 2012 to maintain the quality of the education system. That would now change, albeit without disrupting the valued decentralization of the education system.

Those at FNBE emphasize that this endeavor was by no means a knee-jerk reaction to PISA results. They are concerned that those particular results be set in context, because they have been troubled by inaccurate interpretations. Petra Packalen, councilor for FNBE, voiced concern that early responses erroneously implied the results were being "blamed" on lower scores among immigrants.⁸ They believe this interpretation is not correct, and ascribe the drop to a combination of factors, including student disengagement.

Nor did the ideas in the thought piece come out of the blue. Two successive Directors General of the Finnish National Board of Education, Timo Lankinen and Aulis Pitkala, have focused concertedly on the need to adapt Finnish Education to the future for some years. For example, as part of an international collaborative of system leaders, they had talked about substantive rethinking of education as early as 2011.⁹

When the latest cycle of curriculum reform began in 2012, therefore, there were already ideas in the air as to how it might be different. With the core curriculum design finalized in 2014, it was time to put those ideas into practice.

IMPLEMENTATION

While teachers had reasons to be prepared for change, FNBE members know they cannot assume widespread preparedness to realize the fullest aspirations of the new curriculum. The focus on learning environments bears some lofty ideals. The Board does not take lightly the challenge of translating these into practice, but in a decentralized system that values teacher autonomy, their options to enforce change are limited. Moreover, there are reasons to expect that a learning environments strategy is inherently beyond the control of central planning. Instead, one can see their strategy as a series of wedges, opening up opportunities for schools to pursue the desired direction.

WEDGE 1: DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

Juho Helminen has one of the nicest and hardest jobs at the Board: he is responsible for giving out money. As is typical of

all the board employees, however, his dedication to his work and his desire to do what is in the best interest of all Finnish children make this a difficult task.

The development grants are pots of money allocated to municipalities for particular projects. The Board has been administering funds in this way for as long as employees can remember, but this work took a more strategic direction in the early 2000s when education in Finland was gripped by the national agenda to become an “Information Society.” As a relatively resource-poor but highly-educated society, Finland staked its growth on benefitting from the technological revolution, and between 2003 and 2007 policymaking across a number of departments was linked with this agenda. In this period, development grants were heavily focused on providing hardware and support for software and digital learning development.

After a number of years there was a backlash, and in 2007, the Board switched the focus of the grants away from ICT (information and communications technology) and towards “learning environments.” In the same year, a popular book that translates as *Environments That Support Learning* was released by FNBE, introducing the concept to teachers.¹⁰ For a few years development projects would go to anything other than hardware acquisition. It was in this space that some of the earliest out-of-school learning projects came to the fore.

These projects have taken on a variety of forms, from developing math curriculum for teaching in forests, to working with a university to develop biology and geography curricula aligned to local ecology. One of the most popular initiatives has been the idea of “cultural paths,” which are designed by and for a

particular locality. The cultural path is a set of experiences aligned to students' developmental stages, to ensure that all students in a town experience the richness of their local culture over the course of their time in school.¹¹ Many municipalities were funded to develop cultural paths, and the Board estimates that around 12 are still in action.

One of the most striking projects was developed in the historical Fiskars village to allow students to learn in the local artisan workshops. The Board provided funds for the initial development and the creation of tools to codify the "Fiskars Model." The work caught the eye of the OECD, who featured it as an example of an "innovative learning environment" in an international set of case studies.¹² The museums and workshops in the town are indeed inviting and engaging, but the model is highly reliant on its particular context. The town can invest in sustaining the museums and workshops that provide environments for the curriculum because tourism is now its key industry, but it would take a creative municipality to create something similar elsewhere.

While Fiskars and the cultural paths have generated international interest, Helminen is not so sure about their impact within Finland. The contextual specificity of many of the projects makes it difficult to scale, and individual municipalities often cannot support an effort past the end of the grant. One sign that ideas at least are surviving is that the quality of applications has risen enormously since 2007. Helminen reviews all of the proposed projects, and is encouraged that in the past few years it has been increasingly difficult to make the decisions. He hopes that the reason for this is that

schools and municipalities have seen the examples of previous projects, which are all featured on an open portal of best practices hosted by the Board.¹³ The ideal is that projects build on each other, but there are still substantial challenges in getting the details of ideas to travel between municipalities.

In response to this challenge, there has been a shift of emphasis towards scalability: developing designs, tools, or materials that can be used by any locality. All projects must now include some strategy as to how they will have national relevance. This creates its own problems, however. Helminen estimates that in the last round of funding, around 30 of the proposals were strong, but of those, only ten had sufficient plans for national scaling. For the most part, the municipalities will work with others in their region, but they do not have the capacity – or the inclination perhaps – to strategize around national scaling.

Consequently, the Board is taking a new direction with development grants. They are increasingly focused on awarding larger sums to existing networks of municipalities, who have already demonstrated the ability to achieve national reach. This year, for example, *Innokas*,¹⁴ a network of municipalities and schools that has formed around an interest in technology in schools, has been provided with €300,000 to develop methods and materials to teach coding.

This strategy is driven by having less human resources and funds to focus on dissemination. The Board therefore hopes that networks can take on that role. Additionally, funding larger projects, and fewer of them, cuts down on administration costs. For example, whereas in the past a municipality

might be given €3,000 for a proposal from one school, now the Board aims to focus on grants around the €90,000 level. The reduction in human resources is typical of what municipalities, too, will be face as the country faces a period of austerity.

WEDGE 2: INTEGRATIVE STUDIES

The new core curriculum goes beyond promoting conceptual thinking about learning environments. A more structural change that may provide an opening for alternative learning environments is the introduction of the entitlement to “integrative” studies. Integrative, or “thematic” studies – the translation is still being determined – are periods of learning that connect different disciplines. In the new curriculum, each student must have at least one such experience per year. This might take the form of a single extended project or multiple shorter blocks. It could be provided as a half day a week over four weeks, or one day a month. Part of the rationale for this entitlement is that it reflects the centrality of the new “transversal competencies” in the curriculum, in creating time that is particularly suited to practicing skills such as creativity and collaboration.

Indicating the extent to which Finland is now in the international spotlight, this introduction to the curriculum caused a minor stir when education journalists got wind of it. In March 2015, a misinterpretation of the idea led to a flurry of news reports, first in the UK *Independent*¹⁵ and then on numerous online news sources, that Finland was “dropping subjects.” The Board issued a correction,¹⁶ stressing that subjects were not being abolished, but noting that “education providers...may develop their own innovative methods” and that in the new curriculum “periods of phenomenon-based

project studies are emphasized.” It was a notable re-endorsement of the commitment to innovative pedagogies.

A further aspect to the entitlement, also reinforced in the March statement, is that teachers are encouraged to discuss the design of the offering with students. Some schools in Finland already practice this kind of project, but for many, particularly at the secondary level, it will be new.

By allowing flexibility in how schools meet the requirement, Jorma Kauppinen, Director of General Education at FNBE, believes any school should be able to make it work for them. For many schools, he hopes the time might be used for off-site experiences. Because the integrative time will need to be set out as part of the school’s yearly plan, this creates an opportunity to create such experiences well in advance and design learning that will lead up to them. Kauppinen emphasizes, however, that the integrative blocks need not entail going off site. For some localities, particularly those facing difficult economic circumstances, it is not possible to hire transportation. In such cases, they will look to parents to step in. Otherwise, they hope the digital world can provide.

WEDGE 3: NEW SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

Outside of the development grants, there are several other supports to help municipalities and schools make the most of the opportunity to rethink learning environments. A school building agenda has seen new schools built with more flexible classroom options. Although tightening of budgets has prevented any very large investment on this front, the board has provided some financial support for a project to demonstrate how old school buildings can be renovated relatively cheaply to come closer to these new models.

The demonstration project – which took place at the *Normaalikoulu* (the school used for teacher training) of the University of Oulu¹⁷ – involved opening out classrooms into corridors, and placing tables and mattresses in corridors so that students can use those as independent learning spaces. The project was documented and has been disseminated to other schools.

WEDGE 4: PROMOTING NETWORKING

School and teacher networks are popular in Finland, but are largely informal and outside of government control. Sometimes, as in the case of Innokas, they receive funding from FNBE. In recognition of the demands of the new curriculum and the goals behind “Tomorrow’s Comprehensive School,” FNBE has recently taken the step to set up and fully support a new network that will focus on innovation in schooling.

The network is named *Majakka* (“Lighthouse”), and is made up of 38 municipalities and 180 schools. Each participating group will work on a project related to one or more of the ten development themes. These themes encompass all the facets of schooling that represent sticking points or might be rethought in coming years: student wellbeing and motivation, pupil participation, pedagogy and teaching methods, joint teaching, teacher competencies and wellbeing, learning environments, structure of the school day, school culture, technology, and leadership.

Each school will work towards particular development goals, and the theory is that in doing so they will act as pathfinders

for others. Schools and municipalities in the network have a responsibility for sharing their work with others, but the Board is also collecting best practices and experiences to disseminate.

POLICY ELEMENTS

THE 2014 CORE CURRICULUM

The core curriculum in Finland is the framework document for the pedagogy and learning that will take place in schools; it represents the national position on the basic requirements for all children’s schooling. It is then the duty of municipalities and other education providers to ensure that each of their schools develops a *school* curriculum that is in line with this core. This process in itself can look different according to place. In some areas, the municipality creates its own municipality-wide curriculum based on the core, which schools will then adapt and add to for their purposes. In other areas, each school develops its own curriculum based directly on the core.

Although it is only a starting point for a cascade, the 2014 core curriculum aims to be a game-changer. It comes with a commitment to driving forward a future-oriented vision of education. As such, it departs from previous core curricula, or at least amplifies a trend that was started in 2004 of increasing guidance on a pedagogical vision. The Board has defined more precisely the desirable nature of a school culture and operational culture, and prescribed a set of

“cross-subject” or “transversal” competencies that teachers should seek to develop through subject teaching and additional activities. In current translations, these competencies are:

- *Thinking and learning to learn*
- *Cultural literacy, interaction, and expression*
- *Taking care of oneself, everyday life skills, safety*
- *Multi-literacy*
- *Digital competence*
- *Working life skills and entrepreneurship*
- *Participation, influence, and responsibility for a sustainable future.*

As part of this vision, the curriculum includes an added chapter on learning methods and learning environments.

The concept of learning environments has been circulating in European educational theory for many years. Finns trace the notion back to the educational thinker Matti Koskenniemi, whose influence they compare to that of John Dewey in the U.S. Koskenniemi oversaw the development of the 1952 Finnish curriculum. Later, his writings on teacher education were a major influence on the reforms of the 1970s, particularly the decision to focus more on the selection of candidates for teacher training. The direction of his ideas all stem from his early empirical work focusing on social psychology in classrooms, examining the influence of the social and situational context on learning.

In explicitly promoting the consideration of alternative learning environments at the national level, Finland is an outlier internationally. While there is much talk of the need to rethink the relationship between learning and classrooms, Finland is among the first nations to write into national guidelines an

explicit requirement for schools to rethink how, where, and why students learn. Kauppinen describes their aspirations as giving a push: while the decisions about pedagogy must be made at the school level, FNBE’s aim is to alert teachers and education providers to the breadth of options they might have in making those decisions, as opposed to defaulting to what they have always done. In planning for any given topic or content area, teachers are invited to ask: what kind of learning environment is best suited to this topic and this group of students?

BACK TO THE FUTURE

The focus on learning environments has to encompass two strong currents of thinking in Finnish education. On the one hand, the alternative physical environments entailed in outdoor learning, museum pedagogy, and cultural paths are increasingly popular, drawing on a long tradition in Finland of interweaving learning and play, and placing high value on both nature and culture. On the other, national economic strategy – and increasingly the interests of students – tend towards technology-based learning, and the potential of online environments.

As in many countries, Finland’s education leaders are facing pressure to accelerate the incorporation of digital technologies into schooling. The new government has put its weight behind digital learning as a focus, and this is reflected in the latest articulation of the Board’s strategies. Already, the biggest financial investments over the past few years have been supporting the digital shift.

Part of the motivation for this focus is an imminent major change to the Finnish baccalaureate (the matriculation exam

that students take at the end of general upper secondary). Starting in the Fall of 2016, subjects in this exam will be taken on computers, and by 2019 all of the subjects will be computer-based. In many schools, there is a mismatch between their past technology acquisitions (primarily tablets) and those required for the matriculation exams (laptops or computers). While some at the FNBE question whether it should be a central government role to purchase hardware for municipalities, in tightened economic times many municipalities have a strong case that they cannot afford to do it themselves, causing the Board to step in. Municipalities can now apply for specific grants for technology acquisition.

The new matriculation exam is not the only thing motivating schools towards equipping themselves technologically. The new core curriculum features robotics and coding as entitlements, and there are already development grants underway to create pedagogy in those areas. There is a strong view at the Board that schools should be focusing on these learning areas at the forefront of technological development. As they see younger and younger students bringing their own devices to school, they recognize that schools will soon have two roles with regards to technology: stretching the high levels of technological facility many students come to school with, and ensuring that those without access to technology at home can catch up as quickly as possible.

As represented in the new curriculum, the learning environments concept encompasses the effort to prompt providers, schools, and teachers to consider digital opportunities *and* out-of-school opportunities as alternatives to the classroom, recognizing the fact that some of those may be more applicable and accessible to different age groups and contexts.

WHY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS?

The Board's central rationale for the focus on alternative learning environments is that school and the outside world are out of step. Kauppinen describes the Board's feelings that "many young ones say they don't like school, it is old fashioned." The Board has been influenced by research on learner motivation as well as by global debates about teaching and reaching millennials. It also has its own information to go on that engagement is a problem: alongside the aforementioned analyses of motivation variables in PISA, a large-scale survey of students aged 13 and 14 carried out in 2013 found that just under half of students reported they were "usually bored at school."¹⁸

It would be easy to see increasing technology use as the sole answer to this problem – and as one that simultaneously satisfies the national focus on digital skills and the need to equip schools for the computer-based matriculation exams. In this context, the promotion of alternative physical environments might be seen as an unnecessary add-on. Kauppinen disagrees: it is central to the Board's efforts to ensure that both students and teachers are remaining deeply engaged in learning and teaching, and he explains why this is so.

A primary reason for taking children out of school is the opportunity to engage with different adults. As Kauppinen puts it, "If they go to a museum, there might be a museum pedagogue, and she or he is a new person for the pupils, and it's a different kind of relationship for them." They are interested in how these kinds of alternative teachers can allow visits to be more extended and more meaningful. Of particular interest are visits that motivate students through exposure to future prospects: "If they go to an enterprise and somebody

is explaining how the factory is working, it's totally different from the teacher explaining that in the school.”

The push to expose students to more of the wider world also creates new roles for parents: “There are different kinds of parents working in industry and military that could give a different kind of picture of economic life, of working experiences, and to make pupils think, ‘Okay, this is interesting, this is something I might do as an adult.’” Kauppinen believes that parents are a resource that has not been used enough, and hopes that the focus on outside school concerns might motivate more networking of parents between schools to maximize different experiences for students.

The emphasis on engagement as a rationale extends to teachers, too. Kauppinen, who was a secondary school history teacher and a principal before he joined the Board, sympathizes with teachers who say they get bored always teaching the same subjects and issues. He hopes that although utilizing different environments takes some time for planning and organizing, it might be attractive to teachers looking for a way to refresh their practice.

This type of refreshment, ultimately, is thought to be good for student learning. As Kauppinen puts it, “If I do it differently I have to really think, ‘Okay, what are the objectives, and what is the content, and what is the learning method, and which are the learning environments.’” From this perspective, learning environments become the disruptive force that opens schools up to new sorts of pedagogies. Into that space – the Board hopes – will flow not only student engagement, but the kind of transformative learning that develops the transversal competencies.

DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING OF NEW LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

To see how alternative learning environments might be the piece that links content learning and personal development, it helps to see them through the eyes of the university faculty that have been working closely with projects that take students out of schools. Kristiina Kumpulainen, a Professor of Education at the University of Helsinki, has been writing about learning outside school for around ten years.

In Finland, the universities are a key source of support for schools. Faculty of Education have a major focus on teacher education, and it is rare that professors are not engaged in educating teachers. This creates a constant flow of knowledge between universities and schools. Kumpulainen is one of a number of faculty who have developed the pedagogical theory to help teachers see off-site visits as real learning opportunities as opposed to novelty one-off experiences for students.

Between 2007 and 2009, Kumpulainen was the lead investigator on a project entitled Learning Bridges,¹⁹ a partnership between schools in the municipality of Helsinki, several major cultural venues in the city, and the Ministry of Education and Culture, who provided the funding. The project focused on how to create the scaffolds that link off-site experiences to students’ understanding of subject matter and of themselves. This work is situated in a constructivist and socio-cultural understanding of education that descends from Koskenniemi, whereby students’ learning is enhanced by connecting subject matter to their own lives and environment.

This work led to the creation of models for how to embed an off-site visit into a longer curriculum plan. A later project, translated as “OmniSchool” (or “school everywhere”), was

initiated in 2011 and advanced the study of the pedagogies and tools that support learning outside school.²⁰ It is still around off-site learning experiences (as has been the case in Fiskars, described below), but the hope is that that will grow. Antti Rajala, a former teacher and researcher who works with Kumpulainen, describes teacher and school networks across Finland that are keen to put these ideas into practice in their schools.

The implication of this line of research is that the impact of the learning environments agenda may depend on how deeply teachers and schools engage with it. Kumpulainen believes that off-site learning must be about more than student engagement: many things might engage students in the sense of entertaining them, but the full potential of extended learning environments is not realized unless the environment is somehow helping a student to make stronger (cognitive) connections between academic learning, the wider world, and their own sense of identity. When those links are strengthened, that is when one would expect to see a payoff in terms of academic learning and in the holistic growth of the student. To this extent, the choice of a learning environment should be driven by what will be most meaningful for a particular student or group of students, and most help them to make meaning about particular content.

While this goal might sound beyond the reaches of a public school system, in the Finnish context the planners seem to be on the same page as the academic community. In presentations on the new curriculum,²¹ the head of curriculum development Irmeli Halinen uses a quote from U.S.C. faculty Mary

Helen Immordino-Yang: “Help kids know how to make meaning and sense of what they are learning so they can see who they are.” Kauppinen uses similar imagery in describing learning environments as the opportunity to connect the lives of students with the world of their subject learning. Setting his hands apart he says, “It may be that students’ lives are here, and school learning is here. The school’s meaning and purpose is to somehow connect that.”

MONITORING

FNBE is aware that moving from the ideal to the reality of diverse learning environments will be complex. On the one hand, they are committed to the principle of local decision-making and recognize there is consequently only so far they can go in ensuring the aspirations are realized in each locality. On the other, consistency of great practice across the country is a key concern, and they are deeply committed to doing what they can to increase it.

FORMAL FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

FNBE has several sources of information that provide a picture of whether schools are fulfilling their responsibilities to provide the entitlements in the core curriculum.

The first relies on the school curriculum documents that are created by each school or local authority. In this cycle, for the first time, some of these school curricula will be created using a shared online tool called the eCurriculum, which allows schools or municipalities to build their own curriculum on a central platform already populated with all the core objectives. This tool was finalized in the spring, somewhat behind

schedule, so most schools are not using it this year. Once it has had further trials and refinements, however, the Board hopes it will become a commonly used tool, allowing for quick oversight of the different interpretations of the core curriculum across the country. For this year, they will carry out a manual analysis of the school and local curricula from around the country, and publish an evaluation from that.

This review of documents can give a picture of a school's intentions, but some at the Board clearly yearn for more of a window into practice. As Helminen puts it, "We cannot see over." One indicator of whether schools are fulfilling their aspirations is outcome data. At each level of the system, leaders are responsible for collecting data and identifying problems. For the most part, members of the Board believe this works well at the school level, but could be improved at the municipality level. Many municipalities are still dragging their feet on publishing full data of how students are doing.

To supplement that information, a national assessment center (now separate from the Board) carries out sample-based assessments of learning outcomes in math and mother tongue. Around 10% of the age cohort is covered by these assessments, and they provide the most comparable picture of the performance across the country. Consequently, Kauppinen says they "know the average picture quite well."

INFORMAL FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

The second source of information is informal feedback, and in the Finnish context this might be the most important. The level of contact between schools and the Board – even at Kauppinen's level – is striking. He describes a typical interaction:

My email every day is full of questions from local directors, principals and teachers, sometimes parents. And they are asking, "Is it okay that they are doing this in this school? Is it legal? Can you say something?" Quite often it's not our task to say that it's wrong or right – it's one person's opinion – so often we say "Thank you for your email, the law says like this, the curriculum like this, discuss it with your local...". We try to organize it that way. So I think we get quite a good picture and people are honest.

Kauppinen ascribes this interaction to the high levels of trust and lack of hierarchy in Finland. Teachers and principals will write with questions and ask for support, confident that nothing drastic is going to happen if they have been doing something wrong. In this way, the Board takes the role of a benevolent parent: it keeps the stakes low for schools so that schools have no fear in coming to them with problems. They prefer to know so they can step in to help, rather than to try and force compliance.

For Kauppinen and his team, their role as an information source is a key way they can try to influence the improvement of schools. At conferences as well as via email communication, they seek to connect schools facing similar problems, to direct people towards certain publications or examples, and to offer ideas themselves.

In doing so, they are enabled by the fact that they are not only the curriculum development organization, but also a key in-service training commissioner and provider in the country for principals, municipality leaders, and teachers. On the one hand, they commission universities to develop particular professional development programs aligned with curriculum

areas. They also provide their own conferences and seminars around the country that introduce new aspects of the curriculum. Some of this is in the form of supplementary training that can be paid for by municipalities. When I met with him, Kauppinen was about to fly to the north to give a presentation. He and his colleagues also frequently present internationally, which is an additional source of revenue – and of knowledge sharing – for the Board.

CHALLENGES

Trust in the teaching profession and strong communication channels create confidence that things will progress, but as the new curriculum gets under way, the Board is alert to a number of key challenges that will mediate the extent to which the aspirations for alternative learning environments become a reality.

RELYING ON LOCAL DISCRETION

Both the National Board and the academics working with teachers are aware of intrinsic challenges in scaling an agenda based on making meaningful learning environments. There is no one-size-fits-all answer to what makes an effective learning environment, so the strategy relies on the judgment and skill of individual teachers. Fortunately, this is one resource in which Finland is rich. The Board is conscious, however, that it is not evenly distributed, and in some cases the skill may be present without the will to prioritize planning for alternative learning environments. On this front, their only option is to trust in the power of the wedges, and in the judgment of

teachers. As Kauppinen puts it, their intention is never to have teachers using alternative environments for the sake of it: the ultimate question is always “what makes sense for learning.” Here there may be a problem in conflicting goals: what makes sense for covering math content may not be the same as what makes sense for developing creativity, or inspiring a student about their future job prospects. Teachers will have to employ expert judgment in balancing these priorities.

MUNICIPALITY CAPACITY

The in-house capacity of municipalities to make good on the aspirations of the curriculum varies dramatically. For example, the biggest municipality, the City of Helsinki, has over a hundred schools and many people working in its central office. Meanwhile the smallest has about 800 inhabitants, and perhaps just one person dealing with education. Kauppinen explains that in those cases, which aspects of the curriculum that will be realized fully can depend on the priorities of that person and the nature of their skills and background in education.

The Board tries to support municipalities and education providers in a variety of ways. The professional development and Lighthouse network are two ways, but there is also a strategy that applies to all education providers that requires them to set out a development plan focused on how they will pursue improvement in line with the national 2011-16 development plan.²²

FAIRNESS AND REACH

In its bid to support as many schools as possible, the Board is challenged by limited funds. In particular, in deploying the development grants, Helminen and his team struggle to balance nature of learning environment development with

the Board's role as a national funder. Their goal is to fund projects where the outputs can have national relevance and be used by multiple schools. This goal is easier to achieve in the case of a development of an online platform, and less so in the case of something like a cultural learning path, or in supporting schools to develop curricula with a particular local museum. In each case, the question they struggle with is, as Helminen puts it, "What is the 'model' here that is not location specific, and is that model of any use in the next municipality?"

In cases such as Fiskars, there were efforts to develop materials aimed at other municipalities and school leaders, which might support them to develop something similar. For the most part, however, transferring such approaches between contexts cannot rely on simple tools. This is a concern for the Board members who want to ensure the maximum number of children benefit from their investments. Helminen describes an incident to illustrate a frequent dilemma: "A mother called me and said, 'How can you fund a project where one classroom gets equipment and my daughter is in the other classroom where they use paper? How can you do that as a government official?'" Helminen feels that she had a good point. All he can say is that the decisions as to how funds are allocated – and how tricky decisions about who gets what are made – are left to municipalities. Yet clearly there is discomfort in egalitarian Finland with the decision-making involved in experimental development.

EFFICIENCY, EVIDENCE, AND IMPACT

As described above, the development grants strategy is challenged by limited human resources. FNBE's core team of six to eight has been reduced, as has the number and

availability of subject specialists who used to take an interest and advise on projects. In the past, the team was able to offer support to ensure projects reached their potential, and capture some process and outputs.

What concerns them most is that they do not feel well positioned to evaluate or learn from projects to thereby ensure they are using funds efficiently. Periodically, they have been able to hire researchers to review sets of projects, but that too requires funds. Petra Packalen is hopeful that the Board is moving towards greater emphasis on evaluation and being strategic in their decision-making – in part driven to do so by more restricted funds – but laments that opportunities for learning may have already been lost.

RESOURCES AND TIME

In considering the challenges for out-of-school learning, both Kauppinen and Kumpulainen reflect that a major concern for schools and teachers is resources: doesn't it cost money? Kumpulainen acknowledges that transportation can be a logistical constraint, but not an insurmountable one. Likewise, Kauppinen believes that in conversation, the greatest barriers are often a lack of inventiveness or willingness to do things differently, rather than an actual lack of funds. If planned in advance, school budgets are designed to be able to accommodate extra activities, and if a municipality is really struggling, that is where parents or the board need to step in.

Instead, the challenge that usually emerges as the greater barrier is lack of time to do the kind of planning that makes an activity possible. Here he thinks the Board can help by shifting schools away from their past focus on covering "old

objectives and content, trying to get through it all.” He is emphatic that their role at the Board is to try to support Finnish teachers to try new things, even though it might not work very well. He thinks that because their teachers take their work very seriously they are often afraid to try something new. His goal is to help them prioritize “the joy of learning.” He acknowledges with a smile that the phrase sometimes draws a laugh, but he really believes in it. “You can’t win without that. If you just keep trying to do everything, to cover everything, and to motivate the learners all by yourself, you can’t win.”

Kristiina Kumpulainen believes that many teachers receive this message; for those who have started engaging and experimenting, time does not seem to be a pressure. Where in many systems we might expect teachers to feel conflict between out-of-school learning and in-class learning, in terms of conflicting goals, the new curriculum may help to calm that. As Kumpulainen puts it, the new curriculum creates space for out-of-school learning because it emphasizes student agency and identity development alongside “epistemic or knowledge-based goals.” Teachers need not feel a conflict in designing activities aimed at students’ broader growth. Those, she says, are “two sides of the same big coin.”

The Board’s prioritization of the experience of learning over content coverage is reflected in their attitude toward testing. They remain opposed to more frequent forms of testing because, as Kauppinen explains, as soon as you introduce testing, teachers begin teaching to it, and other important education qualities are left out. This would compromise the integrity of the national curriculum as the key quality document:

Our big picture of curriculum and learning and teaching is more holistic... we have here the values, we have the ethos of the school, we have how to support the growth of the human being... These are some things you can’t test.

The Board will be sticking to trust, therefore, as the final piece of their strategy. The curriculum has been built. The supports are in place. And they trust the teachers will come and make the most of it.



New Learning Environments in Finland **TIMELINE**



2007

Learning environments become a focus of work at the FNBE, including the publication of a book for teachers, *Environments That Support Learning*.

DECEMBER 2009

The University of Helsinki publishes the output from the Ministry-funded project *Oppimisen Sillat* (“Learning Bridges”), looking at teaching practices at the intersection of formal and informal learning environments.

APRIL 2011

Finnish leaders present on innovation in education at an international learning event.

JANUARY 2011

Koulu Kaikkialla (OmniSchool), a five year project studying learning outside school, is initiated by the University of Helsinki, with funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture.

JANUARY 2012

Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) embarks on a revision of the national core curriculum, following a pattern of ten-year revision cycles.

DECEMBER 2013

Results are released from PISA 2012, showing a drop in real terms in Finnish students’ attainment on the math assessment.

MARCH 2014

The Ministry of Education and Culture convenes a working group to develop ideas on the “future of basic education,” coordinated by a steering group representing all key education stakeholders, including all political parties.

AUGUST 2014

FNBE establishes the *Majakka* (“Lighthouse”) school network, made up of schools working on innovative teaching and learning projects.

DECEMBER 2014

The finalized national core curriculum is published.

MARCH 2015

The Ministry of Education and Culture publishes *Tomorrow’s Comprehensive School*, produced by the “future of basic education” working group.

MAY 2015

Finland forms a new government following a national election in April. The new government makes education central to its strategy of sustainable job growth and life-long learning.

AUGUST 2015

Municipalities and schools begin creating their local curricula in line with the core curriculum.

AUGUST 2016

Schools begin teaching to their new curriculum.

REFERENCES

- 1 http://www.oph.fi/download/163140_funding_in_pre-primary_and_basic_education_supports_equity_and_equality.pdf
- 2 http://www.stat.fi/til/kjarj/index_en.html
- 3 <http://tbelearningcurve.pearson.com/index/index-ranking> or <http://www.ncee.org/2015/01/statistic-of-the-month-education-performance-equity-and-efficiency/>
- 4 http://www.helsinki.fi/ceal/fin/Docs/Oppimaan_oppiminen_2001-2012.pdf and summary in England: <http://pasisahlberg.com/news/new-study-finnish-students-achievement-declined-significantly/>
- 5 https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/jarelevalve/krista_kiuru.pdf
- 6 https://www.sitra.fi/julkaisut/Muut/A_land_of_people_who_love_to_learn.pdf
- 7 http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Verkkouutiset/2015/03/tomorrows_school.html?lang=en
- 8 e.g. <http://uutiset.helsinki.fi/2013/12/10/how-can-the-pisa-survey-help-us-build-better-schools/#.VgLYSo9Viko>
- 9 <http://www.innovationunit.org/sites/default/files/Lankinen%20presentation.pdf>
- 10 Manninen, J., Burman, A., Koivunen, A., Kuittinen, E., Luukannel, S., Passi, S., & Särkkä, H. (2007). Oppimista tukevat ympäristöt. Johdatus oppimisympäristöajatteluun. Helsinki: Opetushallitus [‘Environments that support Learning: introduction to Learning Environment Thinking’]
- 11 Kuoppio Culture Path, OECD ILE Case study, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/49750409.pdf>
- 12 <http://www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/49930659.pdf>
- 13 <https://hyvatkaytannot.oph.fi/etusivu/>
- 14 <http://www.inmokas.fi/en/about/>
- 15 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/finland-schools-subjects-are-out-and-topics-are-in-as-country-reforms-its-education-system-10123911.html>
- 16 http://www.oph.fi/english/current_issues/101/0/subject_teaching_in_finnish_schools_is_not_being_abolished
- 17 <https://nk oulu.fi/>
- 18 http://gelponline.org/sites/default/files/members-documents/learning_engagement_workshop_1_finland.pdf
- 19 <http://www.oppimisensillat.fi/>
- 20 <http://omnischool.fi/>
- 21 http://www.oph.fi/download/158389_general_aspects_of_basic_education_curriculum_reform.pdf
- 22 <http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2012/liitteet/okm03.pdf>

CASE 4

Ontario's OSSEM00C: Preparing Leaders for Digital Learning



Origins page 85

Implementation page 88

Policy Elements page 90

Challenges page 93

Conclusion page 94

ORIGINS

This case details the development of “OSSEMOOC,” a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) designed for the Ontario School and System leaders (OSS) to learn about Educational technology (E). The MOOC was developed by members of OSAPAC, the Ontario Software Acquisition Program Advisory Committee, and was commissioned by the Ontario Ministry of Education. The case describes the context in Ontario that led to the idea of the MOOC, and the features of the design and networking strategy that have aimed to make it successful.

OSSEMOOC is the brainchild of two Ontario educators, Mark Carbone and Donna Fry. They recognized that while there is an increasing number of resources available to support teachers in implementing technology-enabled learning in their classrooms, there is a danger that school and system *leaders* are remaining out-of-the-loop.

To understand the strategy of OSSEMOOC and its potential for success, it is important to set it in the context of other education movements in Ontario.

A DECADE OF REFORM IN ONTARIO

For over a decade, the province of Ontario has been engaged in intensive system-wide strategies to improve public school provision. This work, initiated under Premier Dalton McGuinty in 2003, has been documented extensively by both insiders and outsiders. The first phase focused on building teacher capacity to improve outcomes on literacy, numeracy, and graduation. It also engendered a province-wide

focus on education leadership. In 2005, a paper entitled *Leading Education* set out a province-wide leadership strategy, focused on building both principal and district-level leadership. This strategy was formalized in 2008, and included a provision for a universal appraisal system, systems of mentoring, and training in change management. In the following two years, over 4,000 principals and vice principals received support from a mentor.

In 2010, a government-commissioned case study¹ of the process of reform identified personalization as one of the outstanding challenges in further improvement. For students still not getting to graduation, the study suggested, it might be that the complexity of their lives and learning needs could not be addressed by a centralized and standardized strategy. The case also reflected the fact that technology had, so far, played hardly any role in Ontario’s improvement strategy. The province had established an e-learning platform to allow students to take certain courses online, but there was nothing by way of system-wide support for practices that utilized technology.

In the following years, that began to change. In 2012, Michael Fullan – who had acted as Special Advisor to Premier McGuinty throughout the phases of system-wide reform – published a new book entitled, *Stratosphere: Integrating Technology, Pedagogy, and Change Knowledge*. Fullan, who had previously downplayed the role of technology in improving education, now saw technology as both a vital piece in transforming learning environments, and an opportunity to enable much more personalized and engaging learning. In the same year, Curriculum Services Canada submitted a report to the Ministry on a year-long pilot study carried out in 46 school districts to experiment with digital pedagogies.²

In 2013, Fullan’s new perspective became a government position. The “Fullan Report,” published by the Ministry as McGuinty was reaching the end of his tenure, set out a vision for a new phase of “sustained improvement” coupled with “focused innovation.”³ The report’s title, *Great to Excellent*, created a case for change for Ontario to keep moving with reform by playing on the title of a widely shared 2012 McKinsey report, which identified Ontario as a model system for moving from “good to great.”⁴ In the next envision shift, digital technologies would play a central role. Fullan wrote that “Ontario now has the capacity to make pedagogy the foundation in learning through the use of technology and new digital resources.”

These tools would take on greater importance to meet the new kind of learning goals Fullan set forth. He articulated these goals in terms of six “C’s” – character education, citizenship, communication, critical thinking and problem-solving, collaboration, and creativity and imagination. These C’s – which represented a rendition of the by-then familiar “21st century skills” – were presented as forming the basis of “student and society wellbeing.”

In Fall 2013, the Ministry responded to this call with a convening of key education stakeholders. The group’s output culminated in a new strategy, *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario*.⁵ This document, which is featured on the front page of the Ministry website, sets out the commitment to “invest in the technology, design, and infrastructure required for the classrooms of the future” and “invest in innovative teaching practices...enabled by technology.”

This commitment has been realized in a number of ways, notably in the Technology and Learning Fund that has provided CAN\$150 million in funds over three years to each school board in Ontario, specifically for acquiring and experimenting with technology.⁶ However, administering funds is one thing, but spreading the skills to support technology-enabled learning at scale is another. Here, the Ministry has adopted a more diffuse strategy.

THE ED TECH CAVALRY: THE MINISTRY BRINGS IN SUPPORT

As part of this new strategy, the Ontario Ministry of Education began looking for ways to expand its support for digital teaching and learning. One of the organizations they turned to was OSAPAC, the Ontario Software Acquisition Program Advisory Committee. OSAPAC is a longstanding part of the Ontario Education system: an independent body funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education to provide advice about large-scale technology acquisition. Its members are elected into their roles biannually on the basis of their experience with technology in education, and typically have backgrounds (and day jobs) as principals, school board members, or district and Ministry supervisory officers. They include some of the province’s earliest adopters of technology in education, and have extensive experience as educators and digital enthusiasts.

OSAPAC was established to form a bridge between centralized software purchasing and schools. Traditionally, the committee’s work has involved surveying teacher needs in the province, reviewing software, and then recommending what licenses should be purchased and made available to schools. This

activity gave them reach into schools, and a good sense of where schools were in their familiarity with and notions of digital learning.

From the end of 2013, OSAPAC members worked with the Ministry to develop new offerings focused on digital technology. The first was a framework to illustrate different levels of technology integration.⁷ The framework offers teachers and school leaders a quick guide to different ways of utilizing technology in the classroom in order to support student learning. The second was a set of resources for educators to learn – both for themselves and in preparation for teaching students – about digital citizenship.⁸

While both of these resources are well-designed and freely available, they lack in interactivity. Many educators – particularly leaders who are not daily grappling with classroom pedagogy – do not have sufficient motivation to seek out such resources. A few members of OSAPAC recognized that they needed to provide something that would reach out and draw leaders into learning more about technology-enabled learning and teaching. Carbone and Fry stepped up to fill this gap.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR LEADERS: TOWARD A CONSTRUCTIVIST MOOC

Schools and system leaders in Ontario – as anywhere – represent a wide range of ages and levels of experience. They have in common a shared professional status as being well educated and highly competent. Carbone and Fry needed to offer something for users with different levels of experience with technology, but also avoid patronizing

anyone. They began to dream up something designed on constructivist learning principles to scaffold users toward quickly producing their own content and making their own sense of what they're learning.

Also informing the design were two contemporary studies looking at the workload of elementary and secondary school principals and vice principals.⁹ These studies were based on surveys and focus groups with principals across the province, amounting to over 3,590 respondents. One of the biggest complaints received was that leaders have little dedicated time to focus on their own school improvement efforts, meaning that those leaders would be unlikely to give up their time to attend school leader professional development events or workshops held outside of their schools or districts. A MOOC, therefore, seemed like the ideal format to allow for distance learning. But the survey also demonstrated that leaders have many unpredictable draws on their time: large amounts of leader time are taken up in responding to student, staff, family, and community needs. The offering would need to be bite-sized, allowing for flexibility in when and how leaders engaged.

The decision therefore was to make one, non-password-protected website that would act as a portal for all of the informal learning occurring online amongst small circles of educators in the province. It would be something that could grow organically, bringing together existing content and new posts, with the possibility of additions and interactions 24/7, to work with leaders' unpredictable schedules.

Starting from a simple WordPress platform, OSSEMOOC launched in January 2014.

IMPLEMENTATION

A PEOPLE-POWERED PLATFORM

Since OSSEMOOC is so reliant on the energy and strategy of two individuals, understanding its strategy and potential for success requires understanding a bit about Mark Carbone and Donna Fry.

Both Carbone and Fry began working in education in the 1980s as secondary school teachers; Fry went onto become a principal. Both have been looking at e-learning since the 90s, and are fully immersed in thinking about it as a different kind of learning, not simply classroom activities on tablets. That background experience already prepares them well for leading this work, but it is complemented by the way they have positioned themselves to reach large numbers of leaders through informal and formal networks. Alongside co-chairing OSAPAC (a role they pass on this year), each has a collection of roles that give them reach across the Ontario system.

Carbone's current primary role is as the Chief Information Officer for the Waterloo Region District School Board, one of the larger districts with over 100 elementary schools and 16 secondary schools (there are 73 public and Catholic school boards in Ontario, the vast majority of which oversee less than 100 schools; seven boards have between 100 and 250, and the city of Toronto district is an outlier with over 500). His work in creating technology-focused professional development for staff at Waterloo Region school district was featured as a "Future Ready" case study by the U.S. DOE's Office of Educational Technology.¹⁰ His "Computers Across

the Curriculum" approach involves taking teachers through a self-directed learning experience over the summer.

Carbone is also Director of the Ontario Association of School Business Officials (OASBO), the province's main association for professionals working with districts and schools to improve their business practices.¹¹ In 2014-15, he was President of ECOO, the Educational Computing Organization of Ontario.¹² ECOO acts in a similar way to OSAPAC: as a liaison between teachers and the Ministry, focused the integration of computing technologies into the provincial curriculum (ECOO was founded in 1979 and may be working itself toward obsolescence as digital technology becomes more immersed in the daily lives of schools and educators. Its work is now focused on periodic events and an annual conference).

Carbone's expertise in facilitating adult learning has been fostered by acting as a coach with Powerful Learning Practice (PLP), a U.S.-based professional development provider that operates as a network of consultants and facilitators. Their main offering is the year-long "Connected Learning Experience."¹³ Over the course of a year, PLP facilitators work with 20 teams of educators to coach them, online, through an action research process around a learning need of their choice. Interspersed throughout this process are learning cycles devoted to specific topics, such as network literacy and using inquiry-based strategies. There is a face-to-face event at the start and end of the year, and teams meet periodically at a local school. The Connected Learner Experience is not focused specifically on technology in learning, but shares some design features with OSSEMOOC in terms of scaffolding participants toward engaging with their own online network.

Fry also serves as a Director for ECOO, but her primary job is as an Education Officer with the Ministry of Education. She has recently been appointed the Provincial Lead on *Leading Technology-Enabled Learning and Teaching*, a role that makes official all her networking activities.

In this role she will be working alongside others ushering the next phase of supporting technology-enabled learning. The Ministry is gradually shifting from a focus on e-learning to more emphasis on blended learning.¹⁴ The role of the “e-Learning contact” (eLC), a full time position in each district since 2006, is now focused on blended learning rollout. This work may build on new tools, or on the online courses and resources the Ministry provides through the Ontario Educational Research Bank and a Provincial Learning Management System (Desire2Learn). The endorsed descriptions of blended learning entail a shift to a more connected or open learning model – using a wider variety of online tools which are free and do not require the intermediation of the Ministry or districts.

Some of the other people involved in OSSEMOOC are also part of this work in the Ministry. One regular contributor, who also maintains her own blog, is Brenda Sherry.¹⁵ Sherry is part of OSAPAC and ECOO, and an Education Officer with the Ministry’s “21st Century Learning Unit.” The Unit is focused on developing new technology-enabled teaching practices by working with schools that have received grants for new technologies. For Connected Educator Month (October 2015), Sherry hosted a series entitled “What do we mean by learning anyway?” in collaboration with OSSEMOOC.¹⁶

SPREADING AWARENESS AND BUILDING A COMMUNITY

As an optional online offering, OSSEMOOC can only reach those who look for it. In order to ensure it reaches the widest audience possible, Fry and Carbone spend a lot of time attending events or engaging online to interact with new educators and “drive leaders to this resource at every opportunity.” As they are targeting leaders rather than teachers, they can focus their activity more concertedly, and try to maximize their impact.

In their first year, they feel they have gotten a much better sense of “the complexity of factors that impact principal practice.” They have informally mapped the many inputs a principal faces in terms of professional learning, whether formal or informal, from full-on training programs to district initiatives and engaging with colleagues. They approach this systematically, in terms of the yearly calendar. With any event or opportunity, they think: “Who are the learners, and what is the most effective way to reach them so they know they have this support available?” They relentlessly link digital learning and OSSEMOOC to “everything that goes out to principals,” whether it’s advice on literacy and numeracy or student safety. Their goal is that leaders do not see digital learning as an add-on but rather see it in relation to all of the rest of their priorities.

In this, they benefit from their close links to the Ministry and other associations. Due to their long-standing roles in the province and profile as digital leaders, they regularly provide presentations and seminars to school boards, or workshops on how to learn from Twitter. In doing so, they always include information on OSSEMOOC. They have

several ways of engaging more widely: hosting internet radio broadcasts or book study groups, positioning booths at conferences, and leaving cards (with QR codes to the site) around at functions. For them, it seeps into all parts of their “day job”: Fry describes bringing up digital learning perspectives whenever possible in Ministry meetings.

Once leaders are aware of the site, the goal is to keep them engaged and move them toward a position where they themselves become active participants and content producers. The goal of OSSEMOOC is that it is a community, not a course. “We’re asking other leaders to take the lead in providing the opportunities for learning,” says Carbone. A priority in this effort is ensuring its sustainability, ensuring that new leaders coming in will have sources of support from slightly more experienced leaders.

POLICY ELEMENTS

There are three design features that make OSSEMOOC an attractive and promising offering for building digital learning capacity among educational leaders: it provides multiple points of entry, it is aligned to a wider leadership strategy, and it is self-sustaining by spreading a philosophy of open learning.

DESIGN FEATURE 1: DIFFERENTIATED

In deciding how to commission and select content, Carbone and Fry kept to the design principle of meeting diverse needs. There are multiple entry points to the learning opportunities.

The main source of content on OSSEMOOC is the central blog, alerting users to current or upcoming opportunities and providing short reflections. Users can follow this blog and receive posts by email. Additionally, there are links to a range of blogs featuring longer posts and reflections from Ontario educators. Both Carbone and Fry are active bloggers and Twitter users, and through these activities they can connect users to a network of technology-engaged educators who are constantly supplying locally relevant, experienced reflections.

For those who want to engage in real-time interaction, there are consistent offerings at a regular time and place. These include the Tuesday night discussions that run throughout the school year, and periodic “mini-MOOC” sessions introducing different tools or pieces of thinking. Both of these are hosted on Blackboard Collaborate, and then recorded and posted as YouTube videos for anyone to access afterwards.

Likewise, for those who want a more personalized service, they can fill in a brief online form specifying a particular question or learning need, and be matched with another educator who has experience in that area. It may not be an option many users take, but it is a signal of the commitment to personalizing the learning experience of users. This commitment is only fitting for the kind of personal transformation OSSEMOOC is trying to initiate. Carbone describes the thinking behind the sites’ multiple options in this way:

There is not just one way. Being a flexible digital and virtual learner is something you have to shift in your own being. That in itself creates a new you, and new opportunities. It makes every day exciting.

As the site got up and running, Carbone and Fry sought advice from current principals and district leaders about the design, and repeatedly heard that – in line with the workload studies – time was the key factor. The danger of a platform is that it can become something that leaders always *mean* to turn to but never do, safe in the knowledge that it is always there. Carbone and Fry therefore put together a one-shot month of learning – just 30 days of small inputs and activities to try to kick start engagement. Each activity is designed to take ten minutes, and lead the user toward building a professional learning network primarily based around Twitter. It also goes through the steps of setting up a blog as a portfolio, and introduces the notions of digital storytelling¹⁷ and digital leadership.¹⁸

More recently, in honor of Connected Educator Month (October 2015), OSSEMOOC hosted another series of mini-MOOCs on using Twitter, ranging from “Twitter for Absolute Beginners” to “Leveraging Twitter for Rich Professional Learning.”¹⁹

DESIGN FEATURE 2: ALIGNMENT

OSSEMOOC was developed to align with the latest incarnation of the Ontario Leadership Framework. The framework – really two frameworks, one for principals and one for supervisory officers in districts – has been a lynchpin of the provincial leadership strategy. The first framework was developed in 2008 by the Ontario Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL), an arms-length organization created by the Ministry in 2006 with representation from Ontario’s principals’ associations, supervisory officers’ associations,

councils of directors of education, and the Council of Senior Business Officials.²⁰ IEL created the framework based on the work of Kenneth Leithwood, a professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University in Toronto. Leithwood’s research focused primarily on the impact of principals on student learning, but is also influenced by the system and change management orientation of fellow faculty in the leadership division of OISE.

In 2012-13, the frameworks were revised. They now include a new section on personal leadership resources, and more emphasis on the nature of system leadership (typically referring to the superintendent role).²¹ The current strategy places great emphasis on the role of the leader in “creating the conditions for change.”

OSSEMOOC provides guidance on each of the five strands of the framework through a digital learning lens, which are posts re-appropriated from Fry’s blog.²² More broadly, OSSEMOOC is orientated toward the role of leaders as creating the conditions for change in its emphasis on the leader as model learner. Carbone believes that the framework provides a helpful way to focus on the more diffuse aspects of what is needed to move change at a *system* level, by highlighting components such as using strong relationships to build broader trust in a system. He has used it effectively in his work with his school board.

The effort to align the guidance and content of OSSEMOOC with the framework is both pragmatic and politic. OSSEMOOC is indirectly funded by the Ministry so it should be clearly aligned with this key government strategy. Carbone and Fry also believe that this alignment helps convince leaders that

engaging with technology is part of their core work and important professionally. Principals and leader performance evaluations are based on that framework, and so if OSSEMOOC can help them meet those standards, they are all the more likely to engage.

Carbone and Fry believe the framework itself could go further, however, in explicitly promoting technology-enabled learning. As they reflect,

[It is] about leadership, but maybe in the year 2000 not 2015. I'm not sure personally that a leadership document today can leave out the digital component.

Other commentators, such as popular connected learning speaker George Couros, have reflected that the revised framework falls somewhat short of reflecting a vision of school and system leadership in line with the possibilities of new technologies and platforms.²³ Blog posts by Couros and Fry attempt to explicate some of the leadership strands through a connected learning lens.

DESIGN FEATURE 3: MODELING OPENNESS

A key principle that was central for Carbone and Fry is that the OSSEMOOC is a chance to role model a new way of learning. They describe this as modeling openness: the willingness to share one's thinking and learning on public forums.

For Carbone and Fry, role modeling digital learning is about demonstrating how to connect with others, and how to make thinking and learning visible through online blogs or curations. They see sharing as a key strategy and part of creating a

school or district culture in 2015. Consequently, as well as relentlessly modeling themselves in terms of sharing their thinking online, they also provide links to the blogs of other leaders around the province who are doing the same.

The site therefore acts as a gateway into the world of Ontario educators online. Along with Carbone and Fry's websites, there are links to blogs of 24 other Ontario education leaders, a mixture of principals, superintendents, and the Assistant Deputy Minister of Education for the Province. Not all of these blogs are updated regularly, but they still provide a sense of a living community outside the walls of the site. The strategy trades neat coherence for organic growth: the linked content may not all put forward exactly the same message or be of the same quality, but it is all authentic, and it shows leaders in a process of change.

In emphasizing open learning, Carbone and Fry are part of a larger movement against closed content and one-stop portals owned by particular companies. Other jurisdictions have opted for closed, password-protected sites to offer learning opportunities to educators. This approach is understandable when sustainable funding is an issue. The OSSEMOOC approach is only possible when supported by highly-skilled and dedicated professionals like Carbone and Fry who are willing to invest significant amounts of their personal time in building and sustaining a learning community. Similarly, not everywhere has a sufficiently well-developed network of educators who are already online, happy to share their blogs and curations, or to participate in Twitter chats and webinars with novice users who are still engaged.

CHALLENGES

The Ministry has signaled that technology-enabled learning is a priority. Nevertheless, OSSEMOOC – in particular its emphasis on open learning and perviousness to outside voices – might raise questions from a Ministry that has focused on coherence of system-wide strategies. Yet Carbone and Fry say they have had no significant pushback on their approach. They have been given a lot of freedom to design and deliver the project in the way they felt would be most effective. This is not to say that the entire Ministry has caught up with their wavelength – they note that many conversations still assume that technology-enabled learning will be primarily content rather than student-driven – but they remain supported.

With the Ministry behind them and momentum in the province on their side, Carbone and Fry have been able to overcome common barriers such as red tape or lack of profile in their effort to spread open learning. Instead, they find themselves battling a more diffuse enemy: fear. They see fear manifest in both leaders themselves and in parents and teachers. Often these are phantom fears, but this makes them no less challenging initially. The next challenge, therefore, is to overcome these fears and make digital learning the “new normal.”²⁴

FEAR 1: LOOKING STUPID

The deepest fear, Fry suggests, stems from fixed mindsets and the belief that not knowing something is a sign of weakness or even stupidity:

People are afraid to show that they're dumb. They're afraid to make their learning open and visible because they are afraid to show what they don't know.

This fear is exacerbated by the “evaluative culture” in education, where eyes are turned toward promotions and other forms of career progression. Coupled together, fixed mindsets and the feeling of continuous evaluation mean that all but the most confident leaders do not want to take risks.

Carbone and Fry have identified two ways in which they might shift more leaders toward being visible and open about their learning and risk-taking. On the one hand, as more leaders – particularly successful, respected leaders – model how they learn, others start to embrace the idea of sharing what they don't know. On the other, they are actively communicating the evidence base that leaders are more effective when they present themselves as learners. That evidence has been collated by the Ontario Institute for Educational Leadership. More broadly, IEL is helpful to the open learning movement in advocating learning networks for leaders, and the idea that leaders should be the “lead learners.”²⁵ They therefore promote the idea that being a leader is about being and *looking* like a learner.

FEAR 2: PRIVACY AND SECURITY

Discussions of open learning frequently lead to concerns around privacy and security. OSAPAC's work on digital citizenship addresses one aspect of the privacy concerns that stem from infusing education with technology: educating

teachers and students about what it is appropriate to share and when. A separate problem is that some useful tools or online materials cannot be accessed in schools due to stringent content-blocking. Norms are shifting on this question but in Ontario, as across the U.S., there is a concern that internet filters are still a barrier to learning.²⁶

Beyond access limitations, there are other ways that the ethos of open learning comes up against barriers that stem from security concerns. OSSEMOOC encourages teachers and leaders to be public about what they are trying and what students are learning, but participants feel limited in what they can share. So far, there has been no voluble parent opposition in relation to privacy concerns in Ontario, but there is uncertainty about regulations on sharing video footage, for example. These fears create a barrier for sharing ideas, but also for building up an evidence base on approaches to and impact of digital learning. Currently there is no system in Ontario for linking student achievement data to different approaches being tried.

CONCLUSION

Mark Carbone and Donna Fry believe that they are seeing a real “culture for change” in Ontario that has developed in the last few years. Still, whether the rate of change is as rapid as it could or needs to be is a perennial subject for them. The transition to digital learning has not been fully achieved anywhere in the world, so there is no clear roadmap as to how long it should take, how much to push or force it, or whether it’s best to stand back and wait for others to take ownership.

Carbone reflects that while there has been talk for some time about leadership as enabling change, that doesn’t always play out in practice. Leaders need to do more than simply give permission for teachers to integrate digital tools and thinking in their practice, they need to be working alongside them to promote and demonstrate what that looks like.

It’s more than waving the green “go ahead” flag... when people are saying they’re supportive of teaching with all the tools that are now available to us, that has to be more than high-level gloss.

Leaders who espouse the merits of digital learning may not always walk the walk. He would like to see more of them actually modeling the benefits by asking:

Have you leveraged social media tools to inform your perspective? To challenge and grow your own thinking and your practice?

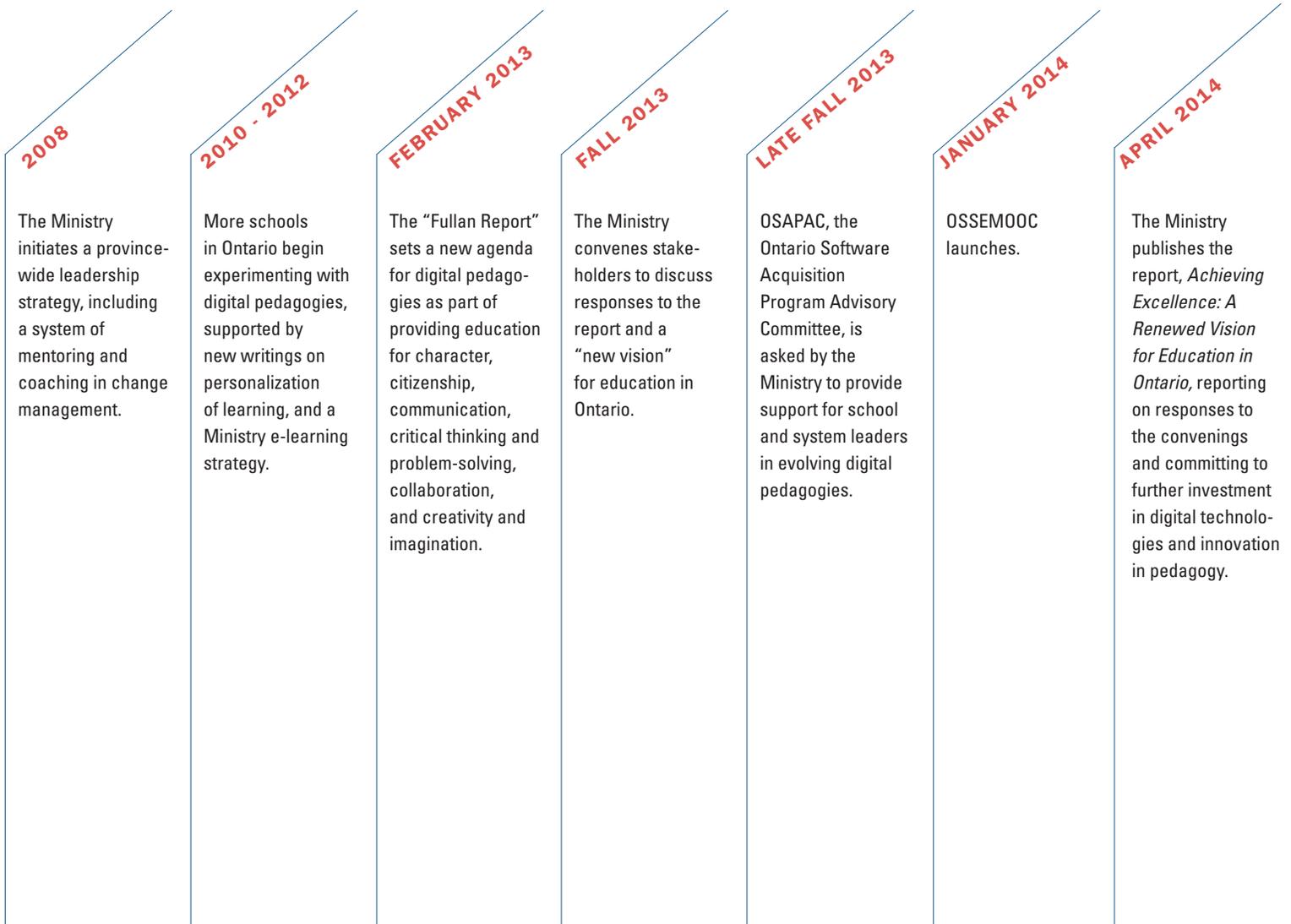
An important part of this shift is changing how leaders think about professional development for their teachers. One aspiration of OSSEMOOC is that more leaders start to take online professional learning networks seriously as a source of learning for teachers. If convinced, there are structural changes leaders can introduce to make it easier for teachers to learn in a self-directed way, including freeing up time that might otherwise be given to broad, standardized professional development that takes teachers out of classrooms but has little demonstrable impact on student learning.

As noted above, that level of flexibility would be a step away from the strategy that had made Ontario “great”: the firm emphasis on coherence and system-wide simultaneous

capacity-building. On the other hand, it might provide just the space school leaders and teachers require to innovate their pedagogy – and get some space from the government. At the timing of writing, Ontario elementary schools are threatening rolling one-day strikes and commentators are struggling to put their finger on the cause.²⁷ If the prospect of technology-enabled learning is really going to take off in Ontario, the province will need a strategy that creates a space for teachers to shake off old disputes and focus on learning. OSSEMOOC has provided school and system leaders a space to focus on learning; the hope now is that the message of “walk the walk” has gotten through, and those leaders will do the same for those they serve.



Ontario's OSSEM00C: Preparing Leaders for Digital Learning **TIMELINE**



REFERENCES

- 1 http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/bb4e/Ontario_CaseStudy2010.pdf (p. 15)
- 2 https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/research/Shifting_LandscapeE.pdf (p. 7)
- 3 http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/FullanReport_EN_07.pdf
- 4 http://www.mckinsey.com/client_service/social_sector/latest_thinking/worlds_most_improved_schools
- 5 <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/renewedVision.pdf>
- 6 <http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/CODE-TLF/index.html>
- 7 <https://osapac.ca/ccpal/samr/>
- 8 <https://osapac.ca/ccpal/dcl/>
- 9 https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/memos/nov2014/ExecutiveSummaryOct7_EN.pdf
- 10 <http://tech.ed.gov/case-studies/>
- 11 <http://www.oasbo.org/>
- 12 <http://ecoo.org/>
- 13 <http://plpnetwork.com/connected-learner-experience-2014-15/>
- 14 <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/elearning/blend.html>
- 15 <https://bsberry.wordpress.com/>
- 16 <http://www.mindsonmedia.ca/home/what-do-you-mean-by-learning>
- 17 <https://ossemooc.wordpress.com/2014/11/30/ten-minutes-of-connecting-day-28-digital-storytelling-for-beginners/>
- 18 <https://ossemooc.wordpress.com/2014/12/01/ten-minutes-of-connecting-day-29-digital-leadership/>
- 19 <https://ossemooc.wordpress.com/2015/09/28/twitter-for-absolute-beginners-starts-today/>
- 20 <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/leadership/IELQuickFacts.pdf>
- 21 https://iel.immix.ca/storage/6/1380680840/OLF_User_Guide_FINAL.pdf
- 22 <https://fryed.wordpress.com/ontario-leadership-framework/setting-directions/>
- 23 <http://georgecouros.ca/blog/archives/4869>
- 24 <http://meefen.github.io/public/files/chen-2014-digital-learning-ontario.pdf>
- 25 <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/leadership/OLS2012MovForward.pdf>
- 26 <http://ww2.kqed.org/mindshift/2015/09/30/are-school-internet-filters-the-forgotten-equity-battleground/>
- 27 <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/canadian-politics/rotating-strikes-loom-over-ontario-public-elementary-schools-and-no-one-can-explain-why>

CASE 5

**Whatever It Takes:
Combating Disadvantage in Rio de Janeiro Through the Schools for Tomorrow**



Origins page 99

Implementation page 101

Policy Elements page 103

Challenges page 106

Conclusion page 108

ORIGINS

This case focuses on a large-scale school support program initiated in 2009 by the Education Secretariat of the city of Rio de Janeiro. Existing case studies provide an overview of the features and impact of Schools for Tomorrow.¹ This case deepens the story by discussing the political challenge of introducing and maintaining the program, how a small team managed to keep the running for five years, and what can be learned from its success and its demise.

Rio de Janeiro – which is the largest city in the state that shares its name – has a population of around six million people packed into just under 500 square miles. The Secretariat is responsible for all basic education (*Ensino Fundamental*), while the state is responsible for most high schools. There are over 1,000 primary schools in the city that serve children from age six to 14.

The city is characterized by dramatic social inequality: alongside some of the most desirable beach fronts and shopping streets in the world, there are many square miles of *favelas*: communities of ill-structured housing that are home to over one million people. The favelas are known for violence. Although in recent decades there have been intermittently successful efforts to “pacify” favela areas with new police stations and lighting, many remain places that are avoided by others in the city, including public service professionals. The communities living there are underserved in terms of education, health, and social services.

THE CASE FOR CHANGE

In 2009, Claudia Costin came to office as Secretary of Education for the city of Rio de Janeiro. Costin came to her position with an impressive resume: a former Secretary of Culture for the state government of Sao Paulo, home to Brazil’s capital; holder of several university positions in public policy; and Vice President of one of Brazil’s largest foundations focused on education, *Fundação Victor Civita*. Costin had experience, therefore, not only in leading large government departments, but also in school innovation.

During her first months in office, Costin and her team in the Secretariat carried out an evaluation of schools in the city. They drew on the data from the Brazilian Education Quality Index (IDEB) – the standardized tests that had been introduced across Brazil in 2007 – and broke down results by area in a way previous administrators had not. The findings were not good: 30,000 4th - 6th grade students were practically illiterate, and these students were mostly concentrated together in schools in the favelas. In one part of the neighborhood of Ipanema, they saw that a school with an average score of 1.8 was just *half a kilometer* from another school where the average score was 5.4. The difference between them was that one was just inside the favela, while the other was just outside.

It was clear that there was some relationship between school outcomes and being situated within violence- and conflict-affected areas. The Secretariat team knew anecdotally that the environment impacted the attendance of teachers and students in those areas. Moreover, everything they knew about child development suggested that the environment must be having a major impact on students’ social and emotional – as well as academic – development. Therefore, for the first time, the Secretariat decided that those schools

needed special attention, and that a typical school improvement approach was not going to work. Consequently, with the unofficial slogan “a different look at education,” Costin and her team began seeking out ways to provide students, teachers, and parents in violence-affected areas with different types of support.

Fortunately, they were not the only ones who recognised the need for extra support. There were hundreds of NGOs working across Rio, many with an interest in serving the most disadvantaged communities. The Secretariat began to pull these organizations together as partners. In December 2010, what had started as a set of sporadic efforts from within the Secretariat became an official program, with additional funding and oversight from UNESCO. Thus “Schools for Tomorrow” was born.

GETTING UP AND RUNNING

The central structure of *Programa Escolas do Amanhã* (Schools for Tomorrow) was simply the name: once a school was designated a School for Tomorrow, it received access to a range of programs and offerings from partners resourced by the Secretariat. The lion’s share of the funds for programs came from a budget that had been allocated from the federal government to provide afterschool programs. This was designed to provide for around 150 schools, and thus it was decided that there would be 150 Schools for Tomorrow (later increased to 155), and in the place of generic afterschool activities, they would focus on providing services most impactful for the identified communities.

The Secretariat knew which schools they wanted to target – those that were low performing on the IDEB and in areas affected by violence and disadvantage – but they did not initially have formal criteria as to how schools should be selected. From the beginning, there were more schools that might fit the bill than could be funded. Initially this was not a problem: schools that were eligible did not leap at the chance to be part of a program that labeled them as failing and violence-ridden. As the advantages attached to the designation became clear – including, in particular, the new science labs and health workers – many more schools wanted to join.

During this start-up phase, the program was managed by whomever Costin could find time from in the Secretariat. They relied heavily on the Secretariat’s regional coordinators. These ten (later 11) coordinators, each leading a small office, were responsible for administering all the Secretariat’s policy, not just Schools for Tomorrow. Each regional coordinator oversaw 100-150 schools, so the division created manageable units. It also created variation: regional coordinators developed relationships with certain schools that resulted in some favoritism in the allocation of opportunities. In the case of Schools for Tomorrow, which schools ended up amongst the lucky 155 emerged partly from those relationships. There were upsides and downsides to this: on the one hand, it meant that the program did not waste time on schools that were not prepared to engage properly with the Secretariat. On the other, the lack of transparency in selection caused some disgruntlement that would trouble the program in later years.

In hindsight, it is a considerable regret of later program coordinators that the selection of schools was rushed, particularly in regard to later possibilities of evaluation. The over-supply of eligible schools could have allowed for the creation of matched control groups or even randomized allocation, but at the time the sense of urgency had taken over. Samantha Barthelemy, who joined the program team later as a secondee from UNESCO, explained: there was such concern for the dramatic disparities and terrible conditions in some of their target schools that the overriding idea was, “We have to do something now.” Thus, just six months after Costin entered office, full implementation began.

IMPLEMENTATION

COLLABORATION WITH SCHOOLS

Initially, the elements of Schools for Tomorrow were implemented on a somewhat ad-hoc basis, with the Secretariat team and regional coordinators trying their best to match programs to needs. Nevertheless, the program had had impact: by 2011, Schools for Tomorrow were catching up with higher performing schools in the city, with an average 33% improvement in performance on the IDEB, compared to a city average improvement of 22%.² The schools also saw a 38% reduction in dropout rates. Reports from the ground were extremely positive, but efforts at more thorough evaluation repeatedly stalled.

In 2011, new staff came to the Secretariat, seconded from UNESCO. They found a project that was well underway, but

messy. No one seemed sure if programs were being deployed efficiently or which ones were working best.

In December of that year, the team embarked on two months of collective planning to create a more coherent shape for Schools for Tomorrow. They brought together all regional coordinators and principals of program schools, listened to everything they had to say, and then together came up with short-, mid-, and long-term plans for the Schools for Tomorrow based on the collective priorities. This was the first time the central team had really engaged with all of the schools; before then, they tended to focus on those with the most urgent needs. As a result, this process – during which each school conducted a “SWOT” (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis – revealed some striking shared interests between schools:

We had schools that were 80 km apart, in completely different worlds. But getting these schools to meet for the first time [they saw that] that “my problem is their problem.”

Moreover, they found that many of the schools had been grappling with the same problems for years, and between them they also had a lot of solutions:

We were bringing in all these things from outside but we didn't need to...the best teachers were there, they just needed help to put their ideas together for someone else... It was really interesting to see that the [schools within the] program [are] the richest thing we have.

Out of this process came not only a plan for the following two years of work, but also a new way of working. Subsequently, programs were not allocated but rather introduced to schools as opportunities that they could opt into. The central team

consulted with schools on decisions wherever possible and worked to maximize the exchange of ideas between schools.

Barthelemy reflects that the process really shifted how many of them thought about the design and purpose of the program:

We don't know half of what we think we knew. We did know these schools were faring worse than other schools, and the socioeconomic situation is really important and the violence is a reality, but we didn't have the solutions and we didn't know – we couldn't know – what would work best for each school.

In the future, Barthelemy would take the knowledge already existing within the schools much more seriously: “Obviously today people say you have to work together, but it wasn't obvious then.” The reflection is a reminder of how easily other priorities can take over in government, and make collaborative work between government, schools, and partners difficult.

TOWARDS SCHOOLS FOR TOMORROW 2.0

By 2013, the partnership with UNESCO was in its third year, and the team was eager to ensure that Schools for Tomorrow was being fully embedded into schools. An unpublished update for a case study report, prepared in 2013, reflects that:

There is still limited knowledge of the Program, its pillars and main objectives by the students and their families... a strategy could be developed in schools in order to make clear the impact of the aims and intention of the Program.

There were signs that Schools for Tomorrow did not have a firm position within the school system, in terms of parental

recognition and support. The team already foresaw that it might not survive without Costin and UNESCO's support.

In order to build sustainability, for 2013 there was an extensive set of plans to provide more training for schools and Secretariat staff in methods relevant to the program, and to form stronger partnerships with other government departments. Additionally, there was a plan to develop a full monitoring and evaluation strategy to gain more information about what was working well and what was not. When Fabio Campos was appointed manager of the Schools for Tomorrow project in May 2013, he recalls the feeling that they were building “Schools for Tomorrow 2.0,” streamlining aspects of the program and embedding others, to make it sustainable for the future.

The timing of this new wave of activity could not have been worse. On May 12, teachers in Rio went on strike. The strike lasted on and off for the following three months, with intermittent bursts of violent protest that left relationships between teachers and the public very frayed. It was now very difficult for anyone from the Secretariat to engage with schools as teachers would not talk to managers. Principals became the only channel of information, and many of them were understandably distracted with the effort to simply keep their school doors open.

There were additional strikes in October 2013, increasingly linked and merging with waves of protest related to wider discontent in Rio. Brazil was due to host the FIFA World Cup in 2014, a huge event for the country as a titan of soccer, but one that was causing a lot of unrest as communities were displaced to build stadiums, as public spending spiraled, and as timelines for construction extended.

In December 2013, just as the strikes were finally coming to an end, so did the term of the agreement with UNESCO. The small team in the Secretariat – who were still officially UNESCO employees – had to leave. For the next six months, Campos kept the program going as best as possible on his own. He left the Secretariat in June 2014, when it was clear that the program would not survive Costin’s departure. The current mayor of Rio, Eduardo Paes, came to the end of his term in October 2016, and it is uncertain if there will be any new major initiative to carry forward the learning from Schools for Tomorrow.

Despite its inability to fight off external circumstances, some important pieces came out of the efforts to rethink the strategy of Schools for Tomorrow. For the monitoring and evaluation strategy, Campos worked with a team of statisticians to devise a method to cluster Schools for Tomorrow into different groups. They used IDEB results and tested the effect of 32 factors related to a school’s area and student body, such as levels of violence or student demographics. Nine of the factors were consistently related to results across all schools, and they saw that all of these factors had to do with a school’s location as opposed to student grades. The most important two factors were whether a school was within a 500 meter radius of a favela, and the average socioeconomic status measure of the student body (a measure known in Brazil as the NSE). With these findings, they were able to establish a set of firmer criteria needed to qualify as a School for Tomorrow. At the time, they thought it might be necessary to use these criteria to phase out a portion of the schools, in order to keep working with

others. As it was, the whole program came to an end before they could apply them, but Campos hopes the criteria could still be useful at a later date.

POLICY ELEMENTS

The basic features of Schools for Tomorrow were aimed directly at keeping students safe and at engaging with the reality of their difficult environments. This involved training teachers in peace-keeping methods, and in how trauma can impede cognitive development. The second key approach was to introduce a longer school day, in order to keep students safe for as long as possible. Using the funds from “More Education,” Schools for Tomorrow opened earlier and closed later than other schools, filling the time with arts and sports programs as well as remedial classes.

Beyond these basic features, Schools for Tomorrow engaged with partner programs to provide additional supports for its schools. Many of these were not provided universally, but were allocated on the basis of need. A conflict prevention program, for example, was implemented in 15 schools in the most violent areas. Some were restricted by what schools would accept: *Ensina*, the Brazilian arm of Teach for All, offered teachers to 30 Schools for Tomorrow, but only 14 were willing to receive them.

The more universal programs became known as the “pillars” of Schools for Tomorrow. Among these, three are seen as having been particularly important: *Saúde nas Escolas* (Health in Schools), *Bairro Educador* (the Educating Neighborhood), and a new approach to teaching science

referred to as “Scientists for Tomorrow.” In order to make implementation viable, each of these projects was introduced to one group of schools at a time in a gradual rollout that took place throughout 2009-2011.

SAÚDE NAS ESCOLAS (HEALTH IN SCHOOLS)

Health in Schools involved placing a health technician – a specially trained nurse – in each of the Schools for Tomorrow to provide primary care. They carried out regular routine checks on the children – on their sight, hearing, and diet – and were linked to the public health system, allowing them to refer problems to a hospital where necessary.

Fabio Campos, who worked with Schools for Tomorrow as a partner (as CEO of Ensina) before he became manager of the program, believes that this was the most important aspect of the project. The quality of healthcare in the favelas was very poor, with many children having no access at all to doctors who were based too far from their homes. Often, it was basic health information that was lacking as much as treatment. Campos recalls seeing young students on a school visit whose faces had been nibbled by rats while they slept, and had gone untreated. The children did not know that just ensuring that their faces and beds were clear of remnants of food before sleeping would reduce that risk. In such contexts, the co-location of nurses in schools had a major impact on preventative approaches.

The presence of the additional staff members also reduced distractions for teachers and school leaders. Barthelemy recalls cases where, prior to the program, if a child hurt themselves or fell sick during school, a principal would

drive them in their own car to the nearest hospital, which could often be some distance. The location of the health practitioners within schools also meant that they could notice and work on problems specific to a school, allowing for more tailored services. This was especially relevant in containing context-specific outbreaks, such as tuberculosis or particular STDs, that otherwise had gone unchecked.

In the informal evaluations of Schools for Tomorrow carried out by the Secretariat team, school principals agree that this component was the most important. As Barthelemy describes it, the program was so popular because:

You're talking about very tangible things – if my kid is in pain, they can solve it, if my kid can't see, they can solve it.

The health practitioners could eliminate the most straightforward barriers to learning, and the ones most obviously outside the remit of teachers and principals.

Although the Secretariat felt very confident in the value of the project, there remained open questions as to whether it was the responsibility of the Education Secretariat to be providing this service. The Health in Schools program was co-managed with the Department of Health, but the funding was provided by the Secretariat through Schools for Tomorrow. In retrospect, it was perhaps never sustainable for education budgets to be funding something that was the responsibility of another department.

In 2015, the city of Rio carried out a major expansion of the health system to try to increase healthcare coverage in favelas. Although it does not stretch to the extent of providing a health-care worker in every school, it may be that this will fill in some of the gaps left by the termination of Schools for Tomorrow.

SCIENTISTS FOR TOMORROW

Scientists for Tomorrow was the project that involved the most substantial change to in-school time. Lab facilities were built in each of the 155 Schools for Tomorrow so that teachers could conduct science lessons involving experiments and lots of hand-on activities.

As previously noted, the mini-labs had been a major draw for schools asking to become Schools for Tomorrow, but they were also a major source of contention. Schools outside the favelas may be less troubled by their environment, but they are by no means lavishly equipped. Such a tangible sign of the differences of provision in Schools for Tomorrow and other schools sparked opposition among groups in the Secretariat who saw this as a different form of inequality.

Along with these new facilities and materials, teachers received dedicated pedagogical training to facilitate learning-by-doing. Ultimately this was not as impactful in the Schools for Tomorrow as had been hoped, as the pedagogy was challenged by overcrowded classrooms. The lessons were planned for students to be in groups of four or five, but with classes of 40 students rather than 25 or 30, teachers had to create larger groups and then adapt the plans on the go. With students and teachers both getting to know these new ways of working, it was a struggle to get through all of the planned activities, and content coverage suffered as a result.

Scientists for Tomorrow was phased out prior to the end of Schools for Tomorrow. The official reasoning was that better science facilities needed to be provided in all schools across Rio. It is unclear whether any other schools will receive the support for project-based pedagogy.

BAIRRO EDUCADOR (THE EDUCATING NEIGHBORHOOD)

The central idea of the Educating Neighborhood is that learning can happen everywhere, and that both students and adults outside of schools benefit when they have greater contact with each other. The program was provided in a partnership between the Secretariat and an NGO called the Center for Integrated Studies and Sustainable Development (CIEDS), which runs projects across Brazil. It was based on a UNESCO methodology that advocates building on resources within communities.

CIEDS provided a link between the schools and the Secretariat: they employed local people in each of the areas, but reported to the team at the Secretariat. They worked closely with schools and with the regional coordinators. Every week, someone from the NGO would be in a school, working with them to develop ideas and opportunities specific to that school and its location. As Barthelemy puts it, “The idea was always to get students out [of the school building]”:

How could students learn from the local breadmaker, could they visit with the math teacher and talk about how measurement relates to making bread?

With these kinds of activities, the aim was to promote community responsibility for student learning. They wanted to make real the mantra that “it takes a village” to raise a child. That philosophy was already present to an extent in the favelas, but now they were uncovering hitherto underutilized educational resources. The coordinators worked with teachers to come up with ideas that aligned to the curriculum, planning trips to match up with learning for topics such as water cycles or business. As well as arranging field trips for students, they would arrange for people such as local entrepreneurs to come into the schools.

Some excursions involved taking students further afield, and here the CIEDS were invaluable in working directly with the schools to overcome logistical challenges – primarily around transport. They were particularly effective at securing additional resources to supplement the funding provided by the Secretariat. They would lobby businesses, civic organizations, or other government branches, and secure anything from hundreds of free metro tickets and bus rides to tickets for the circus. Barthelemy estimates they were able to save a couple of million dollars in donations over the course of the project, and most importantly perhaps, were able to avoid excessive red tape about what could be funded with government money.

The program was designed both to create responsibility in a neighborhood for the outcomes of children, and also to empower members of a disadvantaged neighborhood to make the most of their surroundings. Barthelemy believes that this second aspect was central for the children in Schools for Tomorrow:

How can these kids see that they have a right to access the city?...[this program says] “you are a citizen of Rio, you should go to the beach, you should go to the galleries, it is your city”

Even so, children from favelas face discrimination in a city that has stark economic inequality, and where the poor and rich are sharply segregated between neighborhoods.

In 2013, the Educating Neighborhood was phased out as part of the preliminary redesign of Schools for Tomorrow. Barthelemy is torn about the decision:

...[I]t is easy to cut something not in the classroom. Even though we know it is important - citizenship is not just through math and Portuguese - we knew the importance of this type of project. But it was a really tough time for everyone, and you couldn't cut in math right?

Of all the three projects, it is the one she would fight to have re-implemented.

CHALLENGES

Schools for Tomorrow had many elements of a very strong and worthwhile program: it targeted particularly vulnerable schools, it took seriously the cultural and social context of schools, it focused on removing barriers for learning and providing for students' holistic needs, and maintained a core focus on academic outcomes, catch-up learning, and teacher capacity. Why, therefore, was it not sufficiently popular or well-regarded to be sustained?

“The second key approach was to introduce a longer school day, in order to keep students safe for as long as possible.”

DISORGANIZATION

It seems petty in a program with so many strong elements to focus on a lack of rationalization, but those inside would be the first to admit that the program's haphazardness played a part in its downfall. In its effort to do as much as possible with limited funds, it neglected the kind of processes that give large-scale programs the veneer of being high-functioning, and in turn, grant them the legitimacy necessary to keep going.

The lack of clear processes was perhaps a necessary result of running and initiating a large-scale project without designated project funding. Throughout its duration, Schools for Tomorrow was run by a team of five at most, and by its final year, only one. With division in the Secretariat, it was impossible to put together a larger team.

With so few people, a lot of implementation quality depended on the regional coordinators, who varied dramatically in their level of communication with the Secretariat and with their schools. While most of the coordinators knew the Schools for Tomorrow in their area well – with some even visiting them on a weekly basis and conducting planning with them – a small minority were much less communicative, were hard to reach from the Secretariat, and did not even know the names of the relevant principals.

SELECTIVITY

It was fundamental to the design of the program that not every school in Rio could be a School for Tomorrow: some selection was inevitable. Yet the size of the discrepancy in

resources allocated to those inside versus out, and the similarity of some marginal schools in each group, made selection a constant difficulty.

These issues also contributed to the internal opposition to the program. Throughout its lifespan, Schools for Tomorrow suffered from split support within the Secretariat. There were many who felt that it was an unnecessary program, which drew resources and attention away from other schools. Barthelemy explains that it's easy to see how this view got traction. The Secretariat was responsible for almost 1,500 schools and pre-schools, and the Schools for Tomorrow represented hardly 10% of all schools in their care. Yet thanks to the UNESCO funding, there was a specific team of four or five people looking out for those schools. Even apart from the specific provisions that came with being part of the program, the Schools for Tomorrow were more likely to have additional requests or queries addressed quickly, or receive information about additional opportunities.

The improved results in Schools for Tomorrow only lent more fire to the feeling that the supports they received should be going to more schools – after all, there were others who were in difficult areas or had low results. Ultimately, it was impossible to respond to these voices without some reallocation. Hence the decision to end central pillars of Schools for Tomorrow, such as the science and health programs, in order to try to roll out versions across the city.

TIMING AND POLITICS

The legacy of Schools for Tomorrow might look very different if it hadn't been for the teachers' strikes which brought Rio to a halt in 2013. For the most part, this was an exogenous event unrelated to the program. The strikes were not solely about teachers' conditions. It was unfortunate that they became focal points for more general anger about public service provision and policy brutality, and got caught up in protests from an anarchist group known as Black Block.

There were, however, aspects to the grievances that related more directly to Schools for Tomorrow and similar partner-based initiatives in which the Secretariat was involved. Teachers groups were concerned about "neoliberal reform," and some protested the notion of Rio's schools being "privatized by stealth."³

DEMONSTRATING IMPACT

Because each of the programs was rolled out in an uneven way, it was hard for the Secretariat to work out "what was working better and why." This lack of information was problematic both from the perspective of internal learning – for making decisions about which aspects of the program to roll out further and which to discontinue – and for those interested in learning from the program. As Barthelemy puts it:

There is a lot of very rich information and lessons, but we don't have anything to share that other people can learn from.

Those who were part of the project are pained by this fact; they feel that there were many valuable elements to the program that they would like to share – and would like to see continued in Rio – but do not have the right kind of evidence to back them up. The calculation of criteria carried out by Campos and his team allowed for the creation of a control group: a set of 150 roughly comparable schools who were not part of the Schools for Tomorrow program. In time, researchers may be able to conduct post-hoc quantitative evaluations using this group.

UNESCO is currently conducting a larger evaluation of the project, which hopefully will be able to draw additional conclusions.

CONCLUSION

Many of the challenges that ultimately brought down Schools for Tomorrow are interconnected. Had there been wider support for the program in the Secretariat, it may have been possible to commit a larger team to running the program. A larger team could in turn have focused more on monitoring and evaluation, ensuring that the program and its impact was well understood internally and externally. With greater public understanding, the program might have been better placed to withstand the buffets of contingent events like the teacher strikes.

On the other hand, there is a distinct possibility that greater transparency and wider understanding may have only increased the opposition the program attracted for its inevitable Achilles' heel: singling out a tenth of the city's schools for special treatment. While there was every good reason to provide these schools extra support, the contention around this issue is a reminder that in public education, it is extremely difficult to defend these decisions at the margin. Perhaps there would be no complaints if just a few schools in the Cidade de Deus (City of God) neighborhood – the most violent in the city –

received additional supports, but as the designated schools get more and more like those who are not designated schools, it leads to difficult questions.

Reducing educational inequality is fundamentally about shifting resources to those who need them most. Schools for Tomorrow is a reminder that, for this to be sustained long term, it needs to be carried out strategically, subtly, and with the ability to reframe initiatives in response to changing conditions.



Whatever It Takes: Combating Disadvantage in Rio de Janeiro Through the Schools for Tomorrow **TIMELINE**



JANUARY 2009

Claudia Costin takes office as Secretary of Education for the city of Rio de Janeiro. Among her first actions is to carry out an analysis of IDEB (Brazilian Education Quality Index) data by school and local area.

FEBRUARY - APRIL 2009

150 (later 155) schools are selected to be part of the Schools for Tomorrow program.

MAY - JUNE 2009

Teachers are trained in violence reduction and technology-based teaching.

AUGUST 2009

Key aspects of the program begin to roll out, including a science program, health visitors program, and the first "Educating Neighborhoods" site.

DECEMBER 2010

The Secretariat enters into a three-year partnership with UNESCO.

MAY 2011

In Schools for Tomorrow, basic education scores have risen and absenteeism has fallen at rates significantly faster than in other schools. Educating Neighborhoods is rolled out to many more schools.

DECEMBER 2011

The Secretariat signs an agreement with UNESCO to provide additional funding, management, and monitoring of Schools for Tomorrow.

“The health practitioners could eliminate the most straightforward barriers to learning, and the ones most obviously outside the remit of teachers and principals.”

MAY 2013

Fabio Campos takes over as manager of Schools for Tomorrow.

Public school teachers in Rio begin a strike.

DECEMBER 2013

The partnership with UNESCO comes to an end, and most of the central management team has to be disbanded.

JUNE 2014

Costin leaves the Secretariat, having been appointed Director of Education at the World Bank in Washington, D.C.

REFERENCES

- 1 http://www.nyc.gov/html/ia/gprb/downloads/pdf/Rio_SchoolsOfTomorrow.pdf
- 2 <http://riotimesonline.com/brazil-news/rio-politics/rio-schools-in-upp-communities-improve/>
- 3 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/08/teachers-protest-rio-brazil>

CASE 6

**The Scottish Government and *Getting it Right for Every Child*:
Taking Responsibility for Child Wellbeing**



Origins page 113

Implementation page 117

Policy Elements page 126

Challenges page 129

Conclusion page 131

ORIGINS

This case introduces “Getting it Right for Every Child” (GIRFEC), a large-scale strategy initiated by the Scottish Government in the mid-2000s¹ aimed at increasing collaboration in services to promote child wellbeing. Getting it Right emerged from several separate tributaries building up in Scotland in the early 2000s. Many of these are linked in some respect to the formation of the Scottish Government in 1999, which enabled a greater sense of national efficacy over the management of national services.

EDUCATION GOVERNANCE IN SCOTLAND

For a nation that has existed for over a thousand years, Scotland’s government is a young institution. The first modern Scottish Government with executive authority independent of the rest of the U.K. was formed in 1999, following the 1998 Scotland Act. Consequently, while health, social, and education services have been provided separately at a local level in Scotland for many decades, it is only relatively recently that a separate government has overseen these activities and been able to shape a distinctively Scottish approach to public service provision.

The primary responsibility for children’s services in Scotland sits with the 32 Local Authorities, often known as councils, which are funded through a combination of central government funds and local council taxes. The current shape of the Authorities took form in 1995, with the abolishment of previous district and regional councils. Authorities vary in size from just over 20,000 inhabitants (the Orkney Islands) to almost 600,000 inhabitants (Glasgow).

Councils are responsible for almost all educational and social services a child might use and are the primary provider of schools. There are very few private schools in Scotland, and only a handful of state-funded independent schools. Health services, however, are provided by National Health Services (NHS) Scotland, whose service areas typically cover several Authorities.

Authorities are accountable to local councilors, who are elected every four years and are managed by a Chief Executive. The senior leadership team typically includes a Director of Education and Director of Social Services, although some Authorities have experimented with different arrangements for appointing one lead on all of children’s services.

Overseeing service provision from central government are various Ministers. Since 1999, the responsibility for schooling and children’s services has shifted a number of times, from the Minister for Children and Education, to the Minister for Education, Europe, and External Affairs, and then Minister for Education and Young People. In 2007, with the formation of government under the Scottish National Party (SNP) leader Alex Salmond, a new post was created – the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning – who works with a more junior Minister for Children and Early Years.

Getting it Right for Every Child emerged over a period of more than ten years. Along with the transition of greater responsibilities to the Scottish Government, several other factors were key to its development.

**ROOT 1:
IDEAS IN THE AIR**

With their overlap in ideas and timing, Getting it Right might seem to be deeply linked with the instigation of Every Child Matters, a strategy for integrating children's services in England and Wales that was announced in 2003. However, in 2001 – before anything had broken in England regarding the child protection cases or the Children's Trust pilots that led to Every Child Matters² – the Scottish Executive produced a visionary report on integrated working in children's services entitled, *For Scotland's Children*.³ Many of the features found in that report would eventually form part of GIRFEC.

**ROOT 2:
THE REVIEW OF THE CHILDREN'S HEARING SYSTEM**

A second, more proximate root of Getting it Right was a timely review of the Children's Hearing System. The hearing system is an institution unique to Scotland, responsible for hearing all criminal or child protection cases for persons under 16. Under this system, all cases that might require state supervision of a child are referred to the "Reporter," a government official who is then responsible for ensuring the child's case is seen. The Children's Hearing System has existed since 1971, but shifted in 1995 such that Reporters were employed not at the Local Authority level, but rather by a national non-departmental public body called the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA).⁴ Consequently, as former SCRA Chairman Douglas Bulloch writes in a personal reflection on his time in office, "The establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 had brought a new focus onto the work of the Hearings System."⁵

There was now a Minister within the Scottish Executive who quickly saw that the system was in a bad state: reports were taking too long to get from Local Authorities to the Reporters, and the number of children being referred was rising rapidly. In response to this situation, a review entitled *Getting it Right for Every Child* was instigated by the Scottish Executive, carried out between April and August of 2004.⁶ Bulloch describes this as a hands-on review from the Minister for Children, Peter Peacock, and Deputy Minister, Euan Robson. The review revealed that there had been a dramatic increase in the number of children being referred for non-offense concerns. A small-scale study looking more closely at the social backgrounds of 100 children referred to Reporters in the previous year found shocking proportions of complex problems:

*Almost half of children had physical and/or mental health problems. 58% had social, behavioral or emotional difficulties. 33% had experienced physical, sexual or emotional abuse. 37% had been neglected or diagnosed with failure to thrive. 36% of their parents/carers had mental health problems. 43% of children had experienced domestic abuse in their homes. 39% of parents/carers abused alcohol. 35% of parents/carers misused drugs.*⁷

The review as a whole indicated that clearly, the problem was not with the reporting system itself. Children being referred faced not only difficult environments but personal or emotional difficulties that made them ill-adapted to cope in universal services such as schools. As Bill Alexander, who would go on to lead the first implementation of GIRFEC, describes it, the government had a "breakthrough moment." It became clear that effort was needed to "stop children [from] getting to that point." The review therefore was replaced by the development of a much bigger policy agenda: the overhaul of children's services.

ROOT 3:

NEW COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

In 1999-2002, Scotland piloted “New Community Schools,” a model based explicitly on the full-service school model developed in the United States in the 1980s. Thirty Local Authorities took part in the first phase, developing 37 New Community Schools (NCS) that brought together 170 institutions (an NCS typically comprised a secondary school with its cluster of a nursery, primary schools, and sometimes local community centers). The integrative aspect of the project was funded by a grant from The Scottish Office Excellence Fund, but the cost of service delivery remained part of existing education, social work, and health budgets at the local level.

The pilot phase was deemed promising: an evaluation by the Institute for Education in London found many examples of good models emerging and a commitment to the work, but noted the short implementation timeline meant few had fully developed.⁸ In 2003, the Scottish Government aspired to make “every school in Scotland...participate in delivering Integrated Children’s Services by 2007.” However, the NCS program only covered a minority of schools, and there was never a strategy for full-scale implementation although there were halted attempts to spread learning from the pilot.⁹ Overall, the scheme gave a number of Scottish Local Authorities experience in integrated working. Indeed, those at Highlands say their experience with two New Community Schools was “critical” to their success in developing the models of working for Getting it Right.

ROOT 4:

THE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING BILL

The particular circumstances of the early 2000 period – the leadership of the new Scottish Parliament, the greater awareness of child deprivation, and the parallel developments supported by the active Labour government in England – created ripple effects that were not all encompassed by Getting it Right. Within education, a parallel development that started around the same time as the hearing system review was the Additional Support for Learning bill. This bill – which became an Act in 2004 that is still in force – required a shift in thinking about extra student resourcing, from a focus on “special educational needs” (SEN) to the larger, overarching concept of “additional support needs.”¹⁰

This move was aimed at securing support for students with extreme family or social and emotional learning challenges that would not be captured by the definition of SEN. Specifically, the Act applied to needs arising from multiple complex factors that were likely to continue for more than a year and that required support from agencies outside the Local Authority. It required Authorities to source and provide support where this could be done “at reasonable cost.” The Act was renewed in 2009 with additional rights for parents to make requests of services outside their local area, and a tribunal and advocacy service to support parents in pursuing these rights.¹¹

The years after the turn of the millennium were therefore busy ones for innovators in children’s services. As it was, their work was just beginning.

CREATING IT RIGHT: THE HIGHLAND PATHFINDER

As it became clear that the review of the hearing system was leading to a larger overhaul of children's services, questions necessarily turned to how this might proceed. In England, Every Child Matters had begun with a bang – a high-profile bill – but it was unclear what was really happening on the ground. The Scottish government wanted to develop a model based on *practice*: what would it mean for frontline practitioners to be *getting it right*? There were some ideas on certain components: a single plan for children engaging in multiple services, a “Lead Professional” to coordinate complex plans, and an emphasis on early intervention. Beyond this, there was little stipulation of how the processes should work.

Consequently, Boyd McAdam and others involved in the hearing system review began visiting councils, looking for ones willing to pilot components of a Getting it Right approach. Initially, the idea was that councils should just take on a particular social problem and develop a way of tackling it in an integrated way. Ultimately, four councils would take this route, creating approaches around domestic abuse – one of the main factors highlighted by the Children's Hearing System review. When McAdam visited Highland, however, he found a council keen to do more.

INTEGRATED SERVICES IN HIGHLAND

Highland, led by the Head of Children's Services, Bill Alexander, had recognized its own children's service challenges prior to the hearing system review. As a geographically disparate area, with many locales far from Scotland's major cities, it had an aging population and saw many young people leaving for work. Keeping young families in the area had become a key

goal, and the Council set to work making clear it was a “children first” Authority. Their first integrated “Children's Plan,” *For Highland's Children*, was created in 2001 to cover the period up until 2004. The second version of this plan, covering 2005-2008, was the first document to inscribe what became the eight central wellbeing goals of GIRFEC: that all children should be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, and included (SHANARRI).¹²

Highland had also been trying to learn from the work on integration occurring in England under Every Child Matters (ECM). They sought the support of an academic, Professor Jane Aldgate, who helped develop the ECM Common Assessment Tool, but ultimately felt the tool overly focused on high-needs children. In this way, it “started from the wrong end.” They saw integration as being about *prevention*, as opposed to managing the complexities of high-needs children. Hence, their focus was more toward general wellbeing.

In thinking about integration, Highland had good experiences with New Community Schools: as part of the pilot phase at the turn of the millennium, they received £400,000 to create two NCSs around Inverness High School and Alness Academy. They saw “good communities” develop around those schools, and worked out some effective ways for social workers to be based in schools. But they were concerned that the model was not sustainable and that it could only impact those two communities.

By the time Boyd McAdam visited, therefore, Bill Alexander and his team were not interested in taking on a theme-based pathfinder. They insisted that the GIRFEC approach had to be “whole system.” Thus, the “Highland Pathfinder” was born.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation took place in roughly three phases, which are mirrored in the three sections below. The first section traces the development of GIRFEC practice in Highland. The second looks at preparations for nationwide implementation, in terms of the support provided by national agencies and training providers. Finally, the third looks at Edinburgh as an example of how those implementation efforts are playing out in large urban contexts.

HIGHLAND

Developing the Practice Model

From 2006 to 2008, a team in Highland worked through the principles of Getting it Right and developed the elements of the “GIRFEC Practice Model.” The Practice Model refers to the collection of tools and methods of working developed to enable multiple services to contribute to holistic and healthy child development (see page 126, *Policy Elements*, for a full description). The development process was a great investment of time and resources, with the Scottish government providing around £200,000 each year.

After starting with just a handful of people, the project snowballed as it became evident that important decisions were being made, and each sector sent representatives to be involved. In addition to a central group of about 12, each of the different services had its own discrete reference groups. The education reference group, for example, involved two primary school principals and three secondary principals, all periodically released from their day jobs by the Scottish

government funding. Ultimately, around 50 people regularly engaged with the central development team, and each of these worked with more people in their own agency or area, resulting in hundreds of people being involved in the initial discussions.

A lot of debate centered on the design of the Child’s Plan, a document to ensure that any child being supported by multiple services had all information about their progress, opportunities, and challenges recorded in one place. Each sector was eager to be involved to ensure that their particular views and needs were being reflected. Workshops could become heated, or “run away with themselves,” but this was an indication of the passion and investment practitioners and leaders were bringing to the project.

The Child’s Plan required the development of some kind of common assessment framework. The existing system was, in Alexander’s words, “bloody awful,” involving many different reports being produced and lots of time wasted in meetings reading each other’s reports and arguing about what it all meant. Moving to a common assessment was a real challenge, however. The goal was to incorporate pre-existing elements with new ideas. The first version of the Child’s Plan was partly based on the existing social work assessment system, but informed too by the way intervention plans were used by schools. Each discipline – health, education, and social work – had its own way of thinking and writing, and the first versions of a multi-agency plan were simply condensed versions of the previous process: this is what education thinks, this is what social work thinks, this is what health thinks. What was lacking, as Alexander points out, “is what this all means.”

The Lead Professional – the agency representative closest to the child – became key. It was their role to manage the process of receiving shorter reports offline, to make final judgments, and to record these judgements in the plan before a meeting was called. The parents and child therefore received one plan, and any uncertainties or disagreements between individual professionals or agencies could be sorted out beforehand.

The other main component to arise from the development process – and the one totally new to the government’s model – was the Named Person. The Named Person is a particular professional already in a child’s life (i.e. a health worker or a school principal) who becomes responsible for being the first port of call for the child or their parents if they have a problem or want access to a service. The impetus for the Named Person came from families, who pointed out that if GIRFEC is about every child, and most children do not have a social worker, who should be their port of call if they need assistance? The commonsense answer is that they would tell a teacher, or, if it was a parent concerned about something on behalf of a younger child, a health visitor. To formalize that common sense, they decided to give that role a name, and so the Named Person became a key part of the Practice Model.

Implementation Across Highlands

In 2008, the Practice Model was deemed complete, and it was time to roll out from Inverness to the rest of Highland. Central to this process were the practitioners who had already been involved in development of the model. Their “ownership and commitment” allowed for a dual top-down and

bottom-up strategy. Likewise, the “early adopters” in Inverness became part of the means of implementation, becoming trainers and champions.

Beyond the initial strategy, there was some uncertainty as to how the implementation should proceed. The GIRFEC team had developed guidance and training materials on the Practice Model for staff in different agencies and sectors. Initially, the plan was to do a “big bang,” where all of the changes implied in the model would come into play at once. Quickly the team recognized that this would be impossible, so it was replaced by a much more incremental – and much more complex – plan. Different small pieces were carefully timed to activate one by one.

However, pieces were already spreading from individuals who had been involved in the development. Having come up with ways of doing things better, agencies did not want to wait for their turn to get on board. The police, for example, decided to change how they reported child and youth incidents. Previously, if they had a concern about a child, police would write to the region’s Children’s Reporter. Formally preparing a report might take a couple of weeks in busy periods, and then the Reporter might take a couple of weeks to write to the school or social worker. By this point, there was substantial delay in reports reaching the professionals – such as teachers or health care workers – who saw the child more regularly. Catching the spirit of integrated working, the police decided to send information directly to schools as well as to the Children’s Reporter. Schools were starting to learn things within 24 hours, and this quickly changed the patterns of response and discussion.

Similarly, the timing of some of the technical changes involved in the model had significant ripple effects. When the Child's Plan framework was written into the computer system used by social workers, every social worker started using it. Suddenly there was a single assessment model right across social work, affecting not only those professionals, but all partners working with the 600-700 children who had intensive interaction with social workers. The implication of integrated working was becoming evident: it was impossible to implement agency-by-agency when each was working with the same children.

The complex, staged implementation plan therefore was scrapped, and replaced with something simpler. The fully integrated practice model would start in Inverness, and be applied to newborns, then subsequently to early years, to primary, then secondary. The final stage would check back on children with high needs, to ensure that the model was coping with the complexity of working with them. Instead of carrying out implementation sector by sector, they rolled out the holistic model geographically, from Inverness to the North and East. The whole process took about 18 months.

Pushing and Problem Solving

One of Alexander's favorite and oft-used phrases is, "We worked through it." The mantra epitomizes his approach to implementation: get together with people and help them figure out their problems, and stick with it until you're on the other side. In "working through things," his biggest allies have been frontline practitioners who helped develop the practice model. This support was, in Alexander's view, vital:

You had to have the directors saying do it, the politicians saying we support you doing it, but frankly if you didn't have professionals and practitioners on the ground saying this makes sense, it wouldn't have happened.

Once the initial rollout happened, practices continued to be refined. The central development team has been reformed as the "GIRFEC Improvement Team" and monitors the quality of implementation.

One form of monitoring is reviewing the quality of Child's Plans. The Improvement Team has noted that different professions struggle with different aspects of plans in relation to their particular professional cultures. It was a push to get education workers to take a more holistic perspective on a child before jumping to curriculum-based actions, and conversely to get social workers to move beyond describing the child's situation and write plans with specific goals and actions. Pediatricians wanted to see their issues as ultimate causes. This led to further rounds of guidance and training, and to the development of a second version of the Child's Plan. Instead of having numerous sections to fill in, the new emphasis is on including whatever is important for that child. Consequently, plans have become shorter and more focused.

Some of the things the Council has struggled to work through are those that cannot be decided centrally. This includes deciding when a meeting is necessary and when a handover of the Named Person or Lead Professional role should occur. Ian Kyle, a former school principal and now a Children's Planning Manager with the Council, understands both sides of this decision-making. He believes many such decisions have to be decided on a case-by-case basis, at the child level: "You can't write pages and pages on that; it needs to be fluid."

They are still getting there, but they are seeing the impact five years after rollout. One of their most important measures of success is the number and specificity of supports for children. They are seeing greater numbers of interventions and supports being used, but these are being utilized for shorter periods of time. This is a strong indicator that the balance of care calculation is working: they are reaching more children earlier, and are less reliant on long-term crutches. The numbers of children re-offending and numbers of school expulsions have both fallen to low levels.

The fourth version of *For Highland's Children*, which looks forward to 2019, is the first one that really covers all children's services. Bill Alexander is now the Director of Health and Social Care, a role that reflects the incorporation of more health services under the Council's responsibility. His current worry is that psychiatrists do not feel they are getting the information they need from the Child's Plan, and are moving back towards additional separate paperwork. It is a sign that integrated working is an ongoing process, but Alexander is not fazed. They will sit down and work through it.

NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

Legislating GIRFEC

Following the conclusion of the development work in Highland, the Scottish Government published the Practice Model as a recommended approach.¹³ From 2008 on, GIRFEC began to spread. According to Phil Raines, Deputy Director for Children's Rights and Wellbeing within the government (previously head of Child Protection), there grew a widespread recognition among both senior service leaders and across the political parties that "the principles that underlay GIRFEC

were things that underlay best practice." This consensus was made official at a summit in 2010, where all the service association leads endorsed "GIRFEC principles."

On the ground, however, there was still a feeling that the commitment among Local Authorities varied greatly; the government felt that in too many places those principles were not being carried forward into practice. Therefore, when the Scottish National Party (SNP) put out their manifesto in March 2011, it included a commitment to establish a legislative basis for elements of GIRFEC. Upon the re-election of the SNP to government, that commitment became the basis for the proposals that the Named Person service and the Child's Plan should become law. For those who had been working centrally on implementation of GIRFEC, this was a "dramatic change": instead of supporting the spread of a voluntary program, they were now overseeing implementation of a legislated program. As one would expect, this amped up the level of central government support.

National Implementation Support

National level support for Getting it Right is coordinated by the Scottish Government. Phil Raines, who now leads the unit responsible for implementation, oversaw the passing of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act, and is now focused on ensuring all parts of Scotland are prepared for the 2016 enactment. He describes his team's work as threefold: (1) to ensure that funds are available for services taking on the burden of new duties, in the form of the "financial memorandum" arising from the legislation; (2) to clarify the national expectations of the services, including additional guidance on each of the elements in the legislation; and (3) to act as a "national enabler," sharing emerging best practices and providing support for councils and agencies that come and ask for it.

The majority of this central activity has been directed through the GIRFEC National Implementation Support Group (NISG), made up of representatives from a cross section of national agencies and the third sector. From the development of the Children's Act to its passage through parliament, the NISG reported to the GIRFEC Program Board, which is comprised of leaders from each of the sector associations. Now the NISG reports directly to the National GIRFEC Team in the Scottish Government, with the associations continuing to play a role as "critical friends" by reviewing guidance before it is published. Amongst their current activities, the team is working to develop guidance on role of the Named Person. Regional working groups have identified several Local Authorities that are advanced in implementing the Named Person role, and those Local Authorities are now working in collaboration with the Scottish Government to develop a national Named Person training offering. More broadly, the central team is trying to promote the sharing of relevant practice through their knowledge hub by encouraging Authorities to upload any guidance or examples of policies and tools they have created. While it is easy to imagine that this kind of process could be very useful, given how far ahead some councils are relative to others, it is not necessarily quality assured.

The Scottish Government is also due to provide statutory guidance to all the Local Authorities, in line with the Act. Draft guidance has been consulted on and the final statutory guidance was published in Spring of 2016, following the consideration of secondary legislation by parliament.

GIRFEC in Schools

The ongoing work to support the implementation of GIRFEC in schools is illustrative of activity occurring in each of the key service sectors. Although education and social services are the responsibility of local government, since the formation of the Scottish Government central bodies have existed that provide support across Scotland. For schools, the key body is Education Scotland, an arms-length organization with delegated powers from the government, responsible for curriculum development, training, and policy guidance. Policies informed by Education Scotland come only in the form of recommendations, but they often provide templates for Local Authorities who can prescribe activities for schools.

In 2011-12, Education Scotland carried out a review of the implementation of GIRFEC in schools. Members of the inspection team visited schools in 11 Local Authorities at different stages of implementation and conducted interviews to evaluate the extent of implementation in Authorities, early years, schools, and colleges. They found a generally positive picture, but the report highlights that in many schools there was still uncertainty around key components of Getting it Right, including the role of the Named Person and the precise requirements of the Child's Plan.

On the basis of the report, Education Scotland decided to carry out a three year capacity-building project. Local Authorities were invited to co-develop a GIRFEC training session with Education Scotland, working together so that each training would relate to the particular processes in that Authority. Authorities then selected a cluster of schools where one or two staff would undergo this training (a cluster being a secondary school and its feeder primaries and early learning childcare centers). The training aimed to prepare these staff to be "GIRFEC champions" and to use a self-evaluation tool

with their team to assess the progress of Getting it Right in their own school or center. Education Scotland asked that the training also be attended by key representatives of additional educational services at the Local Authority to help build relationships and shared knowledge. This included psychological services and school support officers (or equivalent – different Local Authorities have created a variety of roles to provide local-level school improvement and innovation supports).

Some months later, Education Scotland reconvened the champions to get feedback on their experiences of carrying out the self-evaluation and training with their own schools. The general feedback was that the self-evaluation tool provided a “quick win” in that their school recognized the significance of Getting it Right and acknowledged the need for greater visibility. Common responses were to introduce GIRFEC as a weekly presence in staff meetings and put up GIRFEC materials in the schools so as to establish shared understanding of the wellbeing indicators and roles. Some champions reported that they now saw staff using more consistent language and using the wellbeing indicators in everyday speech. The goal is now for champions or the Local Authority representatives to go out and provide the same training to newly designated champions from other clusters.

This exercise has yet to be evaluated, but the informal feedback suggests that participants appreciated that the self-evaluation was peer-led because “people were able to be honest and reflect accurately.” Maggie Fallon, Senior Education Officer at Education Scotland, oversaw this process and feels it would not have been this way had Education Scotland tried to lead the process themselves. A specific reflection was that timing is

key: schools in Scotland go through self-improvement plans in cycles, and many of those who took part in the exercise are keen to incorporate GIRFEC into those cycles. Education Scotland advised them not to create a separate GIRFEC improvement plan, but rather to weave its goals and language into their overall planning. To support this, Education Scotland has produced a tool, “Making the Links, Making It Work,” which sets GIRFEC in the context of other education policy and links to the *Curriculum for Excellence*. They have received very positive feedback on this. Another link aligns GIRFEC responsibilities with the teaching standards of the General Teaching Council for Scotland. These carry weight with teachers, as they form part of the teacher registration process.

For Fallon, it is important to be able to explain to teachers how all these policies fit together and to articulate the reasons behind them. They’re hoping to avoid GIRFEC becoming another thing teachers feel they have to comply with – a harried “we need to do it, we need to do it by Friday” response. Where they have been able to take time with schools and teachers to explain the rationale, they have found near universal buy-in.

University-Based Training

The 2012 Education Scotland review of implementation in schools concluded that, “In almost all Authorities in the sample, there is no systematic, ongoing training and development opportunities for education staff to help them understand and use the Getting it Right approach.”¹⁴ Education Scotland is not the only group seeking to change that situation; several Scottish universities offer continuing professional development courses on Getting it Right. Mary Lappin, a Lecturer at Glasgow University, describes how they decided to have an

offering on GIRFEC because they recognized that schools were at very different points in their familiarity with the policy: most have heard of it and support the principles, but struggle to see what it means to implement it.

Lappin says that the teachers or schools that have opted into a GIRFEC course typically have identified Getting it Right as an area of priority in their improvement. The growth of ongoing professional development oriented toward Getting it Right may therefore rely on its continued emphasis from the inspection system (described below) and its profile in the school self-evaluation tool provided by Education Scotland.

Training for new and incoming teachers has also begun to include an introduction to Getting it Right. A 2010 review of teacher education in Scotland made no mention of GIRFEC (Donaldson 2010¹⁵), but the response from the Scottish Government stressed the need for training to take more account of cross-sector work, explicitly referencing Getting it Right.¹⁶ Meanwhile there has been progress in other sectors: a 2014 review of the state of social work training found that in qualitative feedback, trainees were familiar with recent developments such as GIRFEC and felt there had been a lot of focus on these contemporary developments in their university-based training.¹⁷

Inspection

One of the main levers for agency accountability in Scotland is the inspections system, and this system will play an important role in monitoring the full implementation and embedding of Getting it Right into schools. Schools are inspected through a collaboration between the Care Inspectorate (who

specialize in social care and child protection) and Education Scotland (who specialize in learning and teaching). In late 2015, Education Scotland carried out a whole-scale review of the inspection system where they piloted new approaches to inspection.¹⁸ One of these was a more thematic approach in which a school could encourage feedback on an area of their choice, including Getting it Right.

Education Scotland has promoted a developmental approach to inspection, where a school conducts a detailed self-evaluation prior to being inspected, using the tool, “How Good is Our School?” A new version of this tool was released in 2015, with adjusted language for the quality indicators to align more with Getting it Right. During an inspection, inspectors use the self-evaluation tool to probe, challenge, and sometimes coach schools toward greater improvement. As part of a week-long full inspection, inspectors also offer professional dialogue sessions in which any teacher can participate. This is a two-way opportunity where on the one hand, the inspectors get a richer picture of how things are going, and on the other, teachers can seek advice or clarification on points of policy or on issues raised in a prior inspection or review. GIRFEC is a topic of conversation in these sessions.

Marie McAdam, who is reviewing the inspection system, hopes that one new approach will be particularly helpful for embedding Getting it Right into schools: the localized thematic review. This approach involves an inspection team conducting a multi-site and agency review on a particular theme, which might be youth employment, healthy eating, or Getting it Right. Implementing this kind of approach could better account for the interdependencies that are otherwise difficult to monitor in a regular inspection of a single school.

Hard Metrics

The next frontier for all Local Authorities and services is the firming up of outcome indicators linked to SHANARRI (that all children should be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, and included). Some Authorities are being highly proactive in gathering data on wellbeing. In East Ayrshire, the Council surveyed all schools at both primary and secondary levels to get an initial picture of wellbeing levels; they do not intend for the data to be robust over time but are using it as a diagnostic.¹⁹ In Angus, they have developed a “wellbeing web” that includes one to five criteria for each of the eight wellbeing dimensions, and they use that as a diagnostic tool for individual children.²⁰ The emphasis of this and similar tools is on an assets perspective: allowing children to articulate what they are good at and to take a representation of their strengths and resources with them when they move between schools.

These tools provide professionals with information, but government monitoring will require different measures. As Lynn Townsend, education lead on the Scottish Government’s GIRFEC team, points out, “The Cabinet Secretary can’t stand up and talk about wellbeing profiles.” Authorities already collect copious data on school progress, youth offending, and outcomes of children in care, but are looking to supplement these with other health and wellbeing indicators. At the national level, the measure of the number of young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET) is currently being replaced by a participation measure (recording the number of young people definitively *in* education, employment, or training), to provide a more accurate picture of young people’s work outcomes.²¹

Additionally, annual statistics are currently divided between school-level outcomes, outcomes for children in care, and 16-24 year-old outcomes. Post-legislation, elements of these may be brought together.

EDINBURGH

Across Scotland, Local Authorities are at very different stages in putting the conditions in place for Getting it Right. There is concern that some are still scrabbling to be ready in time for the legislation, while those that started in 2010 are well on their way. One of the early starters was Edinburgh, the second largest Local Authority in Scotland (after Glasgow), with just under half a million inhabitants. This section of the case focuses on their efforts in order to illuminate how the process of embedding GIRFEC across systems looks different in a much larger locality, in the absence of central government support.

Like Highland and many other councils, the overall direction for children’s services in Edinburgh is now set by an “Integrated Plan for Children and Young People.” The first integrated plan was developed in 2008-9 and is updated every three years by the Edinburgh Children’s Partnership, a group comprised of senior leaders from the Local Authority, health service, police, voluntary organizations, and equivalent of the city’s major community college. This broad group is reflective of the complex ecosystem of organizations in Edinburgh that work with children.

Coordinating Integration

The implementation of GIRFEC began after 2009. In Edinburgh, the initial stages of implementation were carried out by a team of people from across different services, with support from four area coordinators. This new coordinator position – considered temporary – was created as a partnership between services. Of the six original coordinators, four were from the Local Authority, one from the NHS, and one from the police. At this stage, these latter two have returned to their full-time positions, leaving the four council-based coordinators to continue facilitating integrated working.

One of the key roles of the area coordinators is the difficult task of facilitating the Children’s Services Management Groups (CSMG), founded to bring together management-level professionals responsible for different aspects of children’s services. The groups include representation from education, social services, health, policy, and the voluntary sector, as well as housing. Initially, there was a lack of understanding as to why the group was being brought together. The coordinators thought that these senior managers would bring problems to the table that required integrated attention, but the managers were not always best placed to know about the challenges of integrated working. While Edinburgh has been carrying out training on Getting it Right for over two years, managers did not often go to training courses and had built up only a half-formed impression of what GIRFEC was. Early work of the group became about filling in these gaps in knowledge.

Many discussions revolved around lack of data and how to show evidence of need. Although the Integrated Plan establishes high-level goals, it is often difficult to link these to the concrete realities due to this lack of available data. There is

also uncertainty about data in the context of information sharing. The Getting it Right mantra is that information should be shared in ways that are “relevant, proportionate, and necessary,” but it is unclear how to determine those bounds. A shared understanding is growing that the priority under GIRFEC is *transparency*: when there is good reason to share information, it is important to inform a family, but it is not statutorily necessary to gain consent.

Training Practitioners

Aside from supporting and facilitating this integrated work, the majority of the coordinator role has been dedicated to providing training sessions: they host at least four sessions per trimester every year. The main training offered is a four-hour introduction to Getting it Right, and a four-hour session on assessment of need and the Child’s Plan. Additionally, they provide sessions for Lead Professionals. All training aims primarily at quelling anxiety and normalizing Getting it Right; they share that most of it is common sense best practice, but since it has been formalized, there is a need to reassure people and facilitate understanding of what is involved.

Edinburgh has tried to move as much as possible to offering multi-agency training on an area-basis, and this has been met with a very good response. A primary purpose of this is to build relationships, and the area coordinators see relationship building as a key part of their role. A further benefit of being trained simultaneously is that it allows each service to understand how GIRFEC affects other agencies. For example, those in social services – who had always been involved in children’s planning – had the opportunity to realize that for other professionals who were now involved, a child’s plan was an unfamiliar type of document. It also provides the opportunity to work on the question of balancing the priorities of different services.

Team Around the Cluster

A further opportunity for working through these questions is “team around a cluster” meetings. Clusters refer to the geographical area around a high school, including the primary schools, the local health services, and voluntary organizations operating in the area. A team is typically about 20 people, and they meet for one hour every month to focus on either specific children and families or on a specific theme. In addition to being an opportunity for case discussions, the meetings have led to better relationships between workers, and they are already seeing an increase in professionals contacting each other on the fly between meetings. Increasingly, those working on the same case are staying up-to-date between meetings, and are able to use the meeting time to reach new group agreements or discuss wider issues.

Learning from Edinburgh: The Importance of Facilitation

The experience of the coordinators makes clear that integrated working cannot happen without support. Their role is a difficult one to sustain in local government past the end of a specific project, yet they feel their work is far from over: really “getting it right” will require continuous work on relationship building and training as staff cycle through. This role is perhaps particularly important in relation to Edinburgh’s large number of voluntary organizations, which provide important additional services, but also create a more complex landscape. It can be hard for schools and other public service providers to keep abreast of which organizations are active in which areas. Local area coordinators can play a key role in updating information and relationships.

The situation is further complicated because integration extends beyond the borders of Edinburgh as a Local Authority. Some services in Scotland – health in particular – work across council areas. The combination of GIRFEC and the Edinburgh transformation have created an opportunity to build new structures to support work across those boundaries. A new position of “Partnership Development Manager” has been created to aid that transition, jointly funded by the Edinburgh Council and NHS Lothian. The local area coordinators are hopeful that the introduction of GIRFEC in national legislation will create alignment between councils on terminology and processes that will enable further deepening of integrated working.

POLICY ELEMENTS

Depending on who you talk to, Getting it Right for Every Child is a policy, a set of practices and tools, or a philosophy. In official documents, Getting it Right is represented by 14 bullet points describing its values and principles, and ten core components. Boyd McAdam, Chief Executive of Children’s Hearings Scotland and one of the key architects of GIRFEC, summarizes its core principles more briefly:

- *Children get the help they need when they need it*
- *No more referrals*
- *Responses to meet need are appropriate, proportionate, and timely*
- *Strengthening the capacity of families and communities to meet the needs of children²²*

The intention of the approach is that these goals are achieved through:

- *A unified approach*
- *Minimizing bureaucracy*
- *Thinking whole child*

In more concrete terms, the core components of Getting it Right can be understood as a collection of new indicators, practices, and roles. These form the basis of how it is constituted in legislation and as a philosophy.

INDICATORS

For many, Getting it Right is embodied by the eight wellbeing indicators to which the rest of the strategy is oriented: that all children should be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, and included (SHANARRI). While each of these indicators might be more related to some services than others, the core principle of GIRFEC is that their fulfillment relies on cooperation and collaboration between all services and organizations within a child's community (including the third sector). For many children, these indicators may be met with little input from government; for others, it may take extensive effort from multiple services. Getting it Right represents the government's commitment to making that effort.

PRACTICES

Getting it Right introduces a new way of working created to enable multiple services to contribute to holistic and healthy child development. The new practice is supported by new tools and processes, which together are described as the "National Practice Model."²³

The first key tool is the Wellbeing Wheel, which reflects the eight SHANARRI goals with simple descriptors and arranges them in relation to the "four capacities" that are central to the *Curriculum for Excellence*, the Scottish school curriculum framework. The wheel is used to record information against the different indicators and to review progress; it can be used for outcome-focused planning, or to provide a basis for raising a concern.

There are two tools available to support cases where a concern is not immediately addressed and professionals want to gather more information on a child. The "My World Triangle" is a heuristic for exploring the different areas of a child's life and what they feel they need to develop and grow. The goal of the triangle is to promote collection of information about both the positive and concerning aspects of a child's life. By recording this information, all professionals are encouraged to work toward asset-based plans and solutions tailored to the particular strengths and supports available to that child.

An additional tool that accompanies the My World Triangle is the resilience/vulnerability matrix. This matrix draws attention to resources of the child (their resilience) versus those of their environment (a protective environment) and highlights how interventions might target use or promotion of those types of resources.

The element which brings all these together is the Child's Plan, which documents the details and progress of any child under Local Authority care. Not every child will have a Child's Plan, but any child being supported by multiple additional services or who requires a targeted intervention will have a plan to ensure that all information about their progress, opportunities, and challenges is recorded in one place.

ROLES

Getting it Right created a number of new roles. As mentioned previously, the Practice Model designated a Named Person for every child. This person, responsible for being the first port of call for children and parents who need assistance, is typically a health worker during early childhood and a school official for school-age children. The Named Person must be informed whenever other services have relevant knowledge about a child that might affect their wellbeing, such as if something has happened to their parents or their home.

In cases of complex need where two or more agencies are working to support a child, a child also has a Lead Professional who is responsible for managing their Child's Plan. The Lead Professional would typically be a social worker.

Beyond these specific roles, Getting it Right entails a strategy for professional development across a range of services. Within some services, such as schools and hospitals, some of the professional learning has focused on the required shift of mindset to focus on the holistic development of a child. In others, such as adult social work and the police, training has been required on the new responsibilities in relation to information sharing – particularly in ensuring a Named Person is informed of any concerning developments in a child's life. All of these changes add new formal aspects to the role of professionals in Scotland.

LEGISLATION

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 established key elements of the Getting it Right approach as entitlements for all children across Scotland. Not all components have

been written into this legislation, but three key legislated pieces include the Named Person service, the Child's Plan, and the responsibility for all services to share information about a child where it is relevant, proportionate, and necessary. More broadly, the Act requires Authorities to report on children's outcomes in relation to the areas defined by SHANARRI, writing this definition of wellbeing into law.

PHILOSOPHY

Beyond any of these structural changes, what does Getting it Right add up to? To the public, Getting it Right is presented as taking child wellbeing seriously. A GIRFEC website developed for young people puts it succinctly: "GIRFEC encourages all the adults in your life to look out for your wellbeing and offer help if you or your family need it."²⁴

In interviews, participants articulated a sense of what Getting it Right meant that broadly overlapped with this focus on wellbeing and information sharing. As one implementation lead in Edinburgh put it, Getting it Right is about children getting "the right support, at the right time, by the right people." The tools and processes are simply intended to allow anyone to raise concerns about a child in a way that will quickly connect into formal systems and services, so that they can get support as early as possible.

In the long run, Getting it Right is intended to be a good financial bet as well as an ethical one: in the "balance of care," the earlier services intervene, the better for the child and the more cost effective it is. As councils are funding social care and aspects of health services as well as schools, they have an interest in not doubling up support services that quickly become expensive for schools. If early intervention can prevent the need for "emergency service" style social work, when problems have become too severe to be managed in school, the cost of addressing issues should fall.

CHALLENGES

As is clear from the above, the implementation of Getting it Right remains an ongoing process both nationally and locally. This section reviews some of the key challenges teams are working through to fulfill the aspiration of the strategy.

PROFESSIONAL SILOS

Any approach that has at its heart working across service boundaries is going to be challenged by the different cultures and formal structures that have long divided health, education, and social work – not to mention other relevant services such as police and housing.

Highland saw this during implementation when – despite the Practice Model being “whole system” – the model still relied on many different services taking action within their own organizations. This often revealed silos within individual sectors and services. Health posed significant challenges, where professionals such as psychiatrists and pediatricians, with long-embedded and quite specific ways of working with children, were reluctant to consider something different. As part of the Highland rollout, they found themselves carefully working through the implications with each of the services – health visitors, speech and language therapists, midwives – helping it make sense anew each time. Whether multi-agency coordination would be a help or a hindrance on these details is an open question.

In Edinburgh, they spoke of the difficulty of “getting all players to participate,” but in contrast to Highlands they

found the police the hardest to involve, perhaps reflecting the priorities of a more burdened police force in a central city. The Council is working to try engaging all adult services more, helping them understand that anyone working with adults has a responsibility to report to a child’s Named Person if an incident involving their parents is relevant to the child’s wellbeing.

From the Scottish government perspective, too, bringing the adult services into the conversation remains a severe sticking point. In health, for example, where professionals have always focused on early childhood and completely understand the impulse of Getting it Right, hospitals and health boards geared towards adult services have been slower to recognize their role in it. Orienting themselves towards wellbeing does not come naturally, nor does the inclination to share information about adults that might be relevant to those working with their children.

TECHNOLOGICAL SILOS

Information sharing is a problem because the information management systems used by different sectors are not connected. For schools, Authorities use a privately developed solution, SEEMIS. Even within one domain – health – the 14 health boards across Scotland do not use the same information systems as doctors. The government has had limited success in driving a national solution but continues to support and influence developments. At the moment, therefore, ease of information sharing relies on local ingenuity and the tried and tested practice of good professional dialogue.

SIMULTANEOUS REFORM

Although Getting it Right is meant to draw together all of the processes that contribute to children’s wellbeing, in actuality it is just one of several reforms and new pieces of legislation

facing professionals who work with children. In particular, the primary concern for schools for the past decade has been the implementation and embedding of the *Curriculum for Excellence*. This comprehensive Scottish national curriculum framework was published in outline in 2004 and implemented in schools from 2009 onwards. Schools in the Highland faced particular conflict in simultaneously making sense of GIRFEC and the *Curriculum for Excellence*. According to Bill Alexander, “For secondary heads [Getting it Right] was yet another innovation at a time of lots of innovation.” Principals were wary because some of the recent innovations “didn’t last, [and] they weren’t for real.” When it became evident to principals that this particular one was “for real,” they had questions about the expectations and what was possible without more resources. The Highland Council convened “two or three critical sessions” with all secondary heads, which Alexander describes as “convincing the mind.” All were in favor of the approach at an emotional level, but each of their concerns had to be responded to specifically and concretely in order to proceed.

Simultaneous implementations become a particular concern in times of austerity. Maggie Fallon believes that most councils are “signed up to the values and principles behind” Getting it Right, but are worried about resourcing it because of the financial climate. In some cases, however, the coincidence of the two agendas may have been beneficial for schools. Lynn Townsend feels that education may be ahead of health in embedding Getting it Right principles and practices because they were already inclined to think in terms of wellbeing.

The Named Person role causes a concern for some schools that fear it will add to their workload. While the government believes it is no more than their regular pastoral care duties – that the new responsibility is more on other agencies, who must provide schools with relevant information – Ian Kyle can understand that the legal aspect “scares people.” It also raises questions about the responsibilities of schools during holidays – though this is actually a Local Authority responsibility – and as Lynn Townsend points out, “proactive Local Authorities” have always had plans in place to look out for vulnerable children during holidays. The only change introduced by the Act is that *all* Local Authorities will have to take this kind of care.

PUBLIC AND MEDIA OPPOSITION

In 2014, Getting it Right hit an unexpected road bump. Following the introduction of national legislation, a small but concerted protest movement began against the introduction of the Named Person service. Supported by a combination of libertarian, religious, and home education groups, the movement caught the eye of the Scottish Conservative party, who joined calls to have the Named Person dropped. After the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act was passed, the protest groups went to judicial review to have the section pertaining to the Named Person overturned. The appeal was rejected in January 2015, and an appeal against the ruling was rejected in June 2015.²⁵ The opposition group NO2NP pursued the issue to the UK Supreme Court.²⁶ Since the completion of research for this case, the Supreme Court ruled in July 2016 that imposing the Named Person service breaches rights for privacy under the European Convention of Human Rights. The Scottish Government is continuing to make the service available but cannot legislate it for every

child. It is worth noting that at least some of the funding to mount this appeal has been traced to U.S. sources, indicating a strong U.S.-based constituency that is opposed to what is seen as an encroachment on family rights.

Certain Scottish and national UK newspapers have played up the issue, implying that the Named Person service means “a social worker for every child,” and that they would be free to “arrive unannounced at the family home and check on... when a child goes to bed.”²⁷ For anyone working within schools or children’s services, the idea that a child’s guidance teacher would be going into their home and helping them choose their bedroom curtains (another tabloid claim) is patently absurd, but the campaign also reflects a more serious uncertainty about the role of the government in children’s development. As Alexander explains, “For some people, there clearly is an issue about the state going too far.” Still they point out that, in the many years that the service in Highland was implemented prior to the media story, not once had a parent complained. Ian Kyle says that “parents saw the support for what it was” – just the kind of information sharing that had always been best practice.

Ultimately, the GIRFEC implementation advisers are confident that the case for the Named Person service is unassailable for the vast majority of Scots. Townsend finds that, one-on-one, it is easy to explain the need for this to be a universal entitlement. Additionally, the number of deaths across Scotland where the fatal accident inquiry has illustrated the role of information sharing – where different agencies had information about a child that, if collated, could have alerted services to a high risk – lends further support to the approach. There will be a

focused, proactive positive communications campaign in the run-up to the commencement of the Act. Currently, the government does not want to waste resources on a counter-challenge that might just leave them looking defensive.

CONCLUSION

So, is Scotland “getting it right”? Despite the challenges of implementing the Named Person approach, other countries have shown interest in adapting the GIRFEC National Practice Model, including Ireland and Finland. There will likely be other jurisdictions watching carefully to see how the approach unfolds.

With so much activity, many different elements, and Authorities progressing at different rates, will it ever be possible to get a picture of whether Getting it Right is having the desired impact? The team within government recognizes this as a crucial challenge, although it is primarily the responsibility of Local Authorities to monitor their own progress. The origin for the legislation, however, was the urge to see greater consistency across Scotland, and they are thinking about how it will be possible to ensure that the legislation is being fulfilled in the desired way. New metrics such as the participation indicator will play a key role. Many of the leaders I spoke to, however, see the purpose of Getting it Right not as meeting new targets but as bringing about a cultural change in how professionals view their work, and how children and young people view the services that are there to help them. It may be, therefore, that Scotland’s development-minded inspection system is best placed to monitor progress, understanding that Getting it Right is an ongoing process.

The Scottish Government and *Getting it Right for Every Child*: Taking Responsibility for Child Wellbeing **TIMELINE**



OCTOBER 2001

The Scottish Government publishes *For Scotland's Children*, setting out aspirations for integrated children's services in Scotland.

FEBRUARY 2004

Highland Council works on development of a new Children's Plan approach for their area.

APRIL 2004

The Minister for Children publishes a review of the Children's Hearing System, entitled *Getting it Right For Every Child* (GIRFEC), highlighting dramatic increases in children identified with multiple needs.

AUGUST 2005

Discussions occur between Highland Council and Scottish Government about launching a pathfinder to develop a model for integrated working.

JUNE 2006

The Scottish Government announces the Highland Pathfinder and the GIRFEC Development and Implementation plan is published.

MARCH 2007

A second set of smaller pathfinders, focused on the needs of children living with domestic abuse, is launched in four Local Authorities: Dumfries & Galloway, West Dunbartonshire, Edinburgh City, and Falkirk.

MAY 2007

Scotland holds a general election, and elects the Scottish National Party (SNP) to form a new (minority) government.

JANUARY 2008

Highland Council starts full implementation of the Practice Model across the Authority, with training for Lead Professionals.

MAY - JUNE 2008

The Scottish Government holds roadshow events talking with councils, professionals, and parents about GIRFEC.

SEPTEMBER 2008

Scottish Government publishes the first version of *A Guide to Getting it Right for Every Child*, detailing the Practice Model. Other councils gradually begin adopting aspects of the approach.

MARCH 2009

GIRFEC training is implemented for all staff across the Highlands.

JUNE 2010

At a Children's Summit held in Edinburgh, the leaders of all national service agencies endorse the principles of GIRFEC.

MAY 2011

The SNP is re-elected to the Scottish Government, with a clear majority for the first time, having included in their manifesto a commitment to legislate aspects of GIRFEC.

JUNE 2012

A second version of *A Guide to Getting it Right for Every Child* is published, with no substantial change to the Practice Model.

JULY 2012

A bill is proposed in the Scottish Parliament to introduce aspects of the GIRFEC Practice Model as a unified approach to children's services across Scotland.

FEBRUARY 2014

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 is passed, setting a date of 2016 for full implementation of key elements of the GIRFEC approach.

JUNE 2014

Advocacy groups challenge the Named Person service in the Court of Session. The challenge is dismissed in January 2015 and an appeal is dismissed in June, but campaigners push to take the case to the UK Supreme Court.

JULY 2016

The UK Supreme Court rules that the Named Person service breaches rights for privacy under the European Convention of Human Rights.

AUGUST 2016

GIRFEC becomes the legislated model for integrated children's services across the country.



REFERENCES

- 1 *The case is based on interviews with key players in the design and implementation of Getting it Right at multiple layers of government in Scotland, supplemented by Scottish Government publications that have synthesized project learning from different localities. Interviews were carried out in August 2015, when the implementation was still ongoing. Details of the policy were accurate at the time of recording, but may have since changed.*
- 2 *See the complementary case study on Every Child Matters.*
- 3 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2001/10/fscr>
- 4 *Hearings are based outside Local Authorities, in the 32 Children's Panels that are staffed by volunteers. Each panel is overseen (and filled) by a Children's Panel Advisory Committee, appointed jointly by Local Authorities and central government Scottish ministers.*
- 5 http://www.scra.gov.uk/cms_resources/Douglas%20Bulloch%20-%20end%20of%20term%20report.pdf
- 6 *Press release on launch of the review: <http://www.gov.scot/News/Releases/2004/04/5402> and "consultation pack": <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2004/04/19283/36192>*
- 7 *Scottish Children's Reporter Administration. (2004). Social backgrounds of children referred to the Reporter: a pilot study. Stirling: SCRA*
- 8 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2003/08/17925/24651>
- 9 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2006/02/03143159/0>
- 10 <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/welfare/ASL>
- 11 http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/e/publication_tcm4646838.asp
- 12 <http://www.forhighlandschildren.org/pdf/FHC2.pdf>
- 13 <http://www.gov.scot/resource/doc/238985/0065813.pdf>
- 14 http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/GIRFEC%20FINAL%2024-10-12_tcm4-735258.pdf (p. 7)
- 15 <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/337626/0110852.pdf> (p. 5)
- 16 <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/920/0114570.pdf>
- 17 *"Readiness for Practice of Newly Qualified Social Workers: Evaluation Study for the Scottish Social Services Council," http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw_115855-1.pdf*
- 18 <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/about/principles/futureapproaches/index.asp>
- 19 <https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/Resources/PDF/C/Children-and-Young-Peoples-Service-Plan-2015.pdf> (pp. 12-14)
- 20 <http://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/measuring-outcomes-angus>
- 21 <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Labour-Market/LANEET>
- 22 *Scottish Executive slide deck introducing the program*
- 23 *The elements of the model are described in full with accompanying graphics here: <http://www.gov.scot/resource/0042/00423979.pdf>*
- 24 <http://www.wellbeingforyoungscots.org/>
- 25 <https://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/search-judgments/judgment?id=8a55eaa6-8980-69d2-b500-ff0000d74aa7>
- 26 http://no2np.org/press_release/named-person-campaign-will-continue-fight-state-monitors-law-despite-judges-opinion-following-judicial-review/.
- 27 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/health/children/10080013/Now-its-a-social-worker-for-every-child-in-Scotland.html>