

Review of Townsville Diocese School Renewal Processes

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Acknowledgements:

ACER wishes to acknowledge the Diocesan leadership team for their openness in the conduct of this Review. The determination expressed to further improve the processes by which schools are supported in their improvement journeys is commendable. Further appreciation is expressed to the support teams within the Diocese whose knowledge and familiarity with their schools allowed significant insights to be gleaned.

To the principals who provided their time in interviews and through their strong responses to the survey instrument, the authors express sincere appreciation. The data collected from all sources was rich and relevant to the purpose of the Review, that is to improve the quality of learning through the processes of evidence based review and reflection.

Executive Summary:

Townsville Catholic Education Office (TCEO) commissioned ACER to review its current processes for school renewal. TCEO seeks to support its school leaders in the design and implementation of self renewing school improvement. This Report will focus on the explicit elements of Teaching and Learning with a particular emphasis on forming recommendations on the evidence base applied to school led reflection. The Report is based on data collected from documentation, the views of diocesan leaders, consultants, principals and the current body of research evidence informing school improvement.

The recommendations are noted below under the common characteristics of highly effective systems identified in the literature on school and systemic improvement.

PART A

A. Focus on teaching:

Highly effective systems and schools maintain an unrelenting focus on student learning and the work of teachers. International research is providing the profession with significant insights into the ways children learn and the impact of explicit teaching practices. The work of school renewal and improvement therefore requires schools to shift from a focus on planning actions and inputs towards tracking their impact on learning. This demands an enquiry based approach whose central focus is the student and its location is the classroom.

Recommendation 1:

Review Diocesan School Renewal documentation to make explicit and substantive the desired focus on measurable teaching and learning outcomes within School Renewal Plans.

Recommendation 2:

Consider the expression of School Renewal goals in terms of student benchmarks, agreed and appropriate measures of student progress, projected improvement targets and required teacher practices.

B. Build collective capacity aligned to clear goals

The research is resonant with the recommendation for systems to build collective capacity in their pursuit of learning improvements. Competitive, top down, reward driven systems do not produce the same outcomes as the aligned, evidence based work of committed educators working in concert across schools and systems towards shared goals.

Recommendation 3:

Enhance school renewal documentation, validation guidelines and Diocesan support processes to include advice and support to schools on how to engage their teachers and communities in evidence based review.

Recommendation 4:

Consider a Diocesan or cluster wide focus on an explicit learning enhancement for students in the Townsville Diocese that models instructional leadership through the identification of a shared Diocesan learning goal, its interpretation in school specific targets and a focus for teaching and monitoring in classrooms

Recommendation 5:

Support principals and school leadership teams to develop the required knowledge for them to lead strategic planning with their staff in the identification of agreed learning improvement goals, the design of best fit strategies and the analysis of progressive measures for review and reflection.

C. Focus on the process of school improvement.

Principals have access to a broad range of frameworks to define their work in terms of capabilities and standards. International research is now providing the profession with very precise evidence as to how improvement is actioned in schools and systems. Common characteristics of highly effective schools are informing school improvement frameworks that allow leaders to reflect on their schools context, its improvement processes and their own leadership from an evidence based perspective.

Recommendation 6:

Investigate the adoption of a Diocesan Framework for School Improvement to scaffold ongoing school review and to inform the decisions and processes during formal school renewal.

Recommendation 7:

Engage principals and school leaders in collective self review cohorts to offer critique, feedback and support to each other during the school renewal plans and processes.

Recommendation 8:

Provide and support ongoing professional learning on the beliefs, knowledge, skills and behaviours of highly effective instructional leaders.

Recommendation 9:

Support principals and teachers to align their school renewal goals to professional learning priorities, school wide assessment plans and expectations for classroom teaching

D. Differentiate the Leadership

Other evidence suggests that leadership of school improvement needs to be differentiated to different contexts and to stages of development just as it is in highly effective classrooms. This evidence is suggesting how certain interventions and strategies are more appropriate for different contexts and challenges. Systems and schools develop higher levels of effectiveness in response to a differentiated set of leadership processes.

Recommendation 10:

Develop an agreed rationale for identifying the most appropriate improvement processes for individual schools and for differentiating how that school will be supported by the Diocese in its unique improvement pathway.

Recommendation 11:

Consider how Diocesan School Renewal processes can best respond to the issues of small schools especially those with dynamic contexts.

E. Be Evidence Led

A collective and collaborative focus on learning improvements requires a common language and shared data to facilitate disciplined dialogue on student learning. Such data sets need to be matched to targeted learning and systematically collected for review by individual teachers, teams and the leadership of the school. Both the analysis of the data and its central collection serve two clear core teaching priorities – to identify where children are at currently and to inform the design of their future learning directions.

Recommendation 12:

Encourage schools to establish school wide assessment plans as part of their School Renewal Plans targeting explicit improvements in learning.

Recommendation 13:

Investigate and implement a software solution that facilitates the collection, retrieval and sophisticated analysis of school generated data on student learning.

Executive Summary PART B

These recommendations are repeated below under three key areas to illustrate their alignment and focus for leadership.

- A) The Diocese,
- B) The School,
- C) The Classroom.

Recommendations for the Diocese:

- a) Review Diocesan School Renewal documentation to make explicit and substantive the desired focus on measurable teaching and learning outcomes within School Renewal Plans
- b) Enhance school renewal documentation, validation guidelines and Diocesan support processes to include advice and support to schools on how to engage their teachers and communities in evidence based review
- c) Consider a Diocesan wide focus on an explicit learning enhancement for students in the Townsville Diocese that models instructional leadership through the identification of a shared Diocesan learning goal, its interpretation in school specific targets and a focus for teaching and monitoring in classrooms
- d) Investigate the adoption of a Diocesan Framework for School Improvement to scaffold ongoing school review and to inform the decisions and processes during formal school renewal.
- e) Develop a rationale for identifying the most appropriate improvement processes for individual schools and for differentiating how that school will be supported by the Diocese in its unique improvement pathway.
- f) Consider how Diocesan School Renewal processes can best respond to the issues of small schools especially those with dynamic contexts.
- g) Investigate and implement a software solution that facilitates the input, retrieval and sophisticated analysis of school generated data on student learning.

Recommendations for the School:

- a) Consider the expression of School Renewal goals in terms of student benchmarks, agreed and appropriate measures of attainment, projected targets and required teacher practices.
- b) Provide and support ongoing professional learning on the beliefs, knowledge, skills and behaviours of highly effective instructional leaders.
- c) Develop the required knowledge for leadership teams to lead strategic planning with staff in the identification of agreed learning improvement goals, the design of best fit strategies and the analysis of progressive measures for review and reflection.
- d) Engage principals and school leaders in collective self review cohorts to offer critique, feedback and support to each other during the school renewal plans and processes.

Recommendations for the Classroom:

- a) Encourage schools to establish data collection plans as part of their School Renewal plans for explicit improvements in learning.
- b) Support principals and teachers to align their school renewal goals to professional learning priorities, school wide assessment plans and expectations for classroom teaching.
- c) Engage teachers in the ongoing review of student performance especially with respect to priority target areas.

Review of Townsville Catholic Education School Renewal

A) Introduction:

The leadership of the Townsville Catholic Education Office (TCEO) engaged the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) to conduct a Review of their current school Renewal and Validation policy and practices. The evidence to be considered included Diocesan documentation, the international research on school improvement, the lived experience of serving principals in the Diocese, the informed opinions of TCEO Consultants and the work of other Catholic Diocese in leading school renewal.

B) Background:

Renewal of Catholic schools must be understood in terms of the role it plays in serving the mission for Townsville Catholic schools which is described succinctly in the Forward to the *Renewal in Catholic Schools* documentation.

“Catholic School Renewal is a process that enables school communities to examine the way in which they work together so that they can continue to develop and adapt their practice to better meet the needs of the children they serve”

Two clear parameters were therefore apparent for the context of this Review.

Firstly the strategic directions for the Diocese 2007- 2011 describe the four pillars of Catholic Education (Anthropology, Epistemology, Cosmology and Story and Tradition) with its overarching focus *“to empower learners to enrich the quality of life in the community by living out the Gospel of Jesus Christ”*. This Report does not make comment on how this Catholic charism was interpreted in Diocesan schools during the process of review and renewal.

Secondly Renewal of Catholic Schools in Townsville Diocese is considered to be the work of school communities, with support from the TCEO, in a process of self sustaining and ongoing school review. The Review therefore sought comment and evidence on how schools review their own understanding of the charism above and the processes by which evidence is collected against its enactment in classrooms and across school life generally.

The process of renewal and validation serves a wide variety of purposes including accountabilities to the Diocese, the Office of Non State Schooling and to governments both State and Federal. However it is the intention of this Report to focus exclusively on those elements of school renewal that impact directly on teaching and learning in classrooms and in school life; namely curriculum, pedagogy, assessment/reporting, community relationships and finally student and collegial support.

Given that the focus for school renewal is improvement of the service to children, the terms ‘school renewal’ and ‘school improvement’ are considered to be synonymous for the purposes of this Report

C) Review Focus:

The review responds to three questions framed by the Executive Leadership Team of the TCEO; namely

- How might the current school improvement literature inform, affirm and improve the current school renewal processes of the Diocese?
- What is the level of impact of current processes on teaching and learning in Diocesan classrooms from the perspective of principals, and Diocesan leadership?
- Given the evidence collected above, what are the explicit areas of capability development required to build the effectiveness of school renewal and improvement across the Townsville diocese.

D) Review design:

The review was conducted using the following sources of evidence.

1. Review of documentation relating to the purpose, processes and validation of School Renewal in the Townsville Diocese. This documentation was provided by the TCEO as those pertaining to the conduct of school renewal.
 - a. Renewal in Catholic Schools – Townsville Diocese March 2011
 - b. Statistical data profile pro formas

- c. Audit response templates
 - d. Validation Report exemplars
 - e. Characteristics of Effective Catholic Schools” TCEO Policy School Renewal Appendix 1(f)
 - f. What makes a Catholic School?” Groome
 - g. “Statement of Strategic Directions” 2007 -2011
 - h. “Learning Framework” 2009- 2013
 - i. “A Christ Vision of Life”
2. Focussed interviews separately with members of the TCEO Executive Leadership Team, the Curriculum Consultants supporting schools and the Education Consultants as the supervisors of Principals.
 3. Focussed interviews with ten principals across the range of Diocesan schools.
 4. Survey data from twenty two respondents to an on line survey instrument.
 5. Literature review of the evidence relating to school and system wide improvement.
 6. Random sampling of school websites and My School data for Townsville Catholic Schools.
 7. Review of school renewal processes in two other Australian Diocese with most recent work in this area, namely Western Australia and Tasmania.

E) Review Report

Introduction:

Research from the national and international education community is clear on a number of critical success factors for both school and system wide improvement.

These elements are:

- Making teachers and teaching the focus of school renewal

- Providing a clear and explicit vision for learning;
- Focus on the ‘how’ of school improvement
- Engage with evidence based practices and systems to inform ongoing decision making.

1. Highly effective schools and systems focus on teaching

The key strategy available to schools and schools systems for raising student achievement is to increase the effectiveness of classroom teaching. Almost all school and system leaders know this but not all leaders take the next logical step to make the improvement of day to day teaching practice the focus of their renewal efforts. The two specific priorities for teachers to improve effectiveness of their teaching are, firstly, establishing where students are at in their learning; and, secondly, to design and implement evidence based interventions and strategies to meet student need and move them on from their current stage of growth.

John Hattie’s meta analysis of effective teaching cites the teacher as the second largest source of achievement variance (30%) outside of the students own ability (50%). (Hattie 2009). Consequently the processes of school renewal should focus on the practice of daily teaching to consider, define, affect and measure progressive improvements in desired student learning.

This focus is well represented in the existing documentation of the TCEO renewal process. The principles and values within TCEO School Renewal documentation promote the participation of teachers in the process. Further it claims the centrality of students in the work of Catholic schools and by implication the progress of their learning. The extensive list of documented beliefs is well supported by research as the underpinnings for effective school renewal and consequent improved learning for students. Evidence collected from users in the field confirms that the processes are well documented and provide effective supports for the conduct of school renewal and validation.

The documentation does not guide the decisions of principals around the design of their review processes or the nature of the evidence to be collected for review and validation. The policy documents and its appendices do not describe explicitly how the daily practice of teaching could be incorporated into the data informing review. Principals in interviews and surveys noted a lower level of involvement for teachers than for School Boards and TCEO staff. Curriculum Consultants confirmed that teachers including those with curriculum leadership roles often felt “removed” from the renewal processes. This is understandable given that the renewal agenda may not be expressed in terms of teaching practices. The data

collected for review may be unrelated to their specific classroom teaching or their classroom data sets are not included in the evidence of learning presented in review.

It is therefore recommended that TCEO make explicit the connection required between school renewal goals and the daily work of teachers. Engagement of teachers in the ongoing review of their teaching is founded on the belief that school improvement is driven by collective teacher effectiveness. The building of teacher effectiveness should represent therefore the core focus of leaders at both the school and Diocesan level asking questions of their schools related to “*How well are we teaching? How do we know? How can we extend that effectiveness further?*” This is made achievable when the focus is sharp and the expectations are both clear and the subject of regular monitoring.

The structuring of School Renewal goals in terms of student benchmarks, agreed and appropriate measures of attainment, projected targets and required teacher practices is recommended for consideration. Informed, explicit, time related expectations will focus and engage teachers daily practice and, through scheduled data collection systems, measure ongoing school renewal progress

2. Highly effective systems and schools are explicit about their improvement focus and align energies and resources to its attainment.

The Diocese is well served in the availability, and access to, the developing sets of AITSL and QCOT standards for both principals and teachers. Even in schools where teachers are committed to improved effectiveness, it does not always follow that they know how to make those improvements. Nor do all leaders understand how to lead their teachers in the processes of improved teaching. Characteristic of highly effective systems, leaders and teachers is a clear focus on an explicit agenda for improvement and a clear agreed school wide plan for supporting teachers to enhance their effectiveness within that focus.

A strong characteristic of highly effective systems and schools is therefore the clarity that surrounds their improvement agenda and an alignment of its resources and personnel to that focus. To this end, effective systems, effective schools and effective classrooms share the same two beliefs about improving learning. Firstly an evidence based assessment of current attainment describes the starting point for purposeful teaching. Secondly effective teachers design strategies and interventions based on that starting point and with knowledge of where to appropriately head next. In short, those who seek to lead learning in any context are very informed about their starting points and highly explicit about their intentions.

Michael Fullan has described the breakthrough strategy for systems as the generation of collective capacity among and within schools. (Fullan 2011) Collective effort is cultivated through a shared set of understandings about what represents quality learning, how it is best taught and how it becomes evident in measurable terms. In the interests of achieving aligned clarity and collective effort school renewal should include discussions with teachers on quality learning, quality teaching and the evidence of learning to be collected to make judgements on achievement. Continuous involvement of teachers in such reviews represents highly effective practice for the review of current school performance and the renewal of future targets. *It is recommended therefore that school renewal policy and guidelines, validation processes and Diocesan support be enhanced to include a focus on supporting schools to engage their teachers in ongoing collective monitoring of classroom teaching and learning especially in high priority areas.*

Principals across the Diocese call for a clearer, more explicit focus on student learning in the evidence used in Renewal processes. Data sets for school review are currently focussed on NAPLAN, senior schooling results, attendance, destination surveys and RADII data. However the principals seek to undertake renewal progressively throughout the cycle with a more defined focus on improving specific areas of student achievement tracked progressively using school based data sets. *It is therefore recommended that principals be supported in their capacity to use renewal processes to define a limited set of explicit learning priorities, define their starting points, program their responses to those challenges with targets and resources and schedule ongoing data collection with accompanying staff engagement in the analysis of achievement data. This capacity building may be supported by the provision of templates, case studies, coaching or highly focussed professional learning.*

Similarly TCEO senior leadership have expressed a clear intent to move the Diocese to the next stage of development of the School Renewal process. This next stage is best defined by the movement from managing renewal as a process to leading improvement as its product. Existing initiatives, with respect to skilling principals in the conduct of ‘classroom walk-throughs’, are evidence of such a practical focus on the active leadership of learning.

Alignment and collective capacity is deliberately led from the top in highly effective systems. The evidence of the Review found that school review and renewal was typically seen as a strategic event and not linked to the daily routines and processes of school leadership and management. If documented plans alone are seen as the product of school renewal and not ongoing learning improvement then perhaps a circuit breaker is required to illustrate and model the next stage of Diocesan development. One way of doing this involves the Diocese engaging in its own Renewal by working with its principals in an evidence based review of current student learning across the Diocese or within clusters of like schools. From this

collaborative analysis a set of explicit improvement priorities might be identified with accompanying targets and timelines. In similar fashion principals would be asked to frame corresponding school goals in collaboration with their staff and communities framed in terms of the needs of their own learners.

Leading strategic alignment requires leadership skills in working with evidence, working with the system, engaging the program leaders, defining expectations, allocating resources and programming review and reflection. Not all Diocesan principals expressed confidence in their ability to design and facilitate such processes. The career path of class teachers direct to school leadership may not prepare new principals for the higher level of complexity involved in partnering with a range of stakeholders, supporting co leaders and engaging staff in a skilful and effective manner. The shared dialogue and an ongoing common focus will serve to scaffold both personal and collective capacity building with respect to strategic planning. *It is recommended that the Diocese consider the impact of a Diocesan, or cluster wide focus, on a specific aspect of student achievement around which principals may align their collective focus.*

3. Highly effective systems focus on the processes of school improvement.

Principals and others in senior leadership roles are powerfully placed to drive school improvement from a set of beliefs, knowledge, skills and explicit behaviours. However leaders vary to the extent that their beliefs, knowledge, skills and behaviours allow them to be highly effective in leading learning improvements in schools.

Therefore the priority in high performing systems and schools is focussed on the capacities of leaders, like the very best teachers, to identify where their school is at, and then design appropriate strategies and interventions that fit the task and the context of their site. Considerable evidence now exists for how highly effective systems and schools are led. Connecting principals to each other's experience and to the growing evidence base represents a clear recommendation for senior leaders in systems to pursue.

The Catholic vision for its schools ascribes considerable autonomy to its Principals in the strategic leadership and management of their schools. Educational Consultants as supervisors of principals describe their role as one of "influence" rather than of direction and mandate. This level of autonomy and the accompanying responsibilities and Diocesan support attract strong endorsement support from Townsville Diocese principals.

In this context however the capacity of principals to be leaders of their own learning is critical. Resonant in the responses from principals was the need for

appropriate benchmarks and standards against which they could scaffold the review of their school's current effectiveness.

TCEO has described the Characteristics of Effective Catholic Schools as one scaffold for self review of their schools. The document asks “How good are we at?” and “How do we know?” for a list of attributes under the themes Reflection on Mission and Purpose; Climate Conducive to Learning; and, Emphasis on Learning and their further sub components. Whilst the attributes name specific indicators of quality it does not elaborate on the evidence required to prompt judgements of a current level of performance relative to a standard.

A number of frameworks have been developed to scaffold self review against agreed criteria. Documentation prepared by the Tasmanian Catholic Education Commission presents a School Improvement Framework as an Appendix to their document “School Improvement for Catholic Schools in Tasmania”. It lists five domains with sub categories listing very detailed elaborations of high quality practice sufficient to describe what high quality looks like in a Catholic school. Benchmarks in the form of stand- alone statements of high quality are consequently made explicit. The Framework does not calibrate its descriptors to plot current stage of growth towards that particular indicator of quality.

The Quality Catholic Schooling Project in Western Australia has compiled a “School Review and Improvement Framework” reflecting similar work in Brisbane and Sydney Diocese. It is structured under four Domains with elaborations for elements within each domain. Seven ratings are available with three sets of graduated descriptors to guide decisions. Suggestions for evidences are described in the introduction to the Framework. This Framework will deliver a considerable profile of progress against an extensive list of indicators that embrace the full range of expectations for Catholic schools in that Diocese.

The ACER Teaching and Learning School Improvement Framework focuses exclusively on Teaching and Learning and identifies eight domains of practice that characterise highly effective schools. Descriptors provide the required evidence for four levels of effectiveness from LOW to OUTSTANDING and are used to inform reports which identify commendations, affirmations and recommendations.

It is recommended that the Diocese investigate the use of a School Improvement Framework and skill principals in its application to structured review, the identification of improvement pathways and to focus an ongoing collection of valid and appropriate evidence for reflection.

The Framework's design and application should facilitate the principal's understanding of where their school is currently positioned with regard to the characteristics of highly effective schools. Ideally it should provide guidance

with respect to specific actions required of a leader to enact the sort of explicit improvements in learning described earlier. It will, in consequence, flag the specific learning required of principals and others to lead the strategic improvement process.

Principals are not equally experienced or skilled to design or lead school improvement projects. Consequently focussed and differentiated professional learning at all levels of the Diocese is critical in order to support the enactment of the expectations above. This professional development should have two foci. Firstly it should address knowledge with respect to the nature and processes of the school improvement required and secondly skills in the practice of leading such learning improvements appropriate to context.

This professional learning may involve symposia on international research, focussed Masterclasses on specific skill sets, learning rounds, mentoring and coaching. It should be delivered in a variety of media and with a focus on action research and reflection demonstrating the practice of active school renewal and validation.

4. Highly effective systems differentiate their support to schools and leaders

These systems understand that the most effective forms of support may be different at different points in an improvement journey. This is true of students, teachers, schools and systems. Part of the key to improvement is to identify the forms of support likely to be most effective given current levels of development and performance. The recent McKinsey review of the world's most improved school systems began by rating student performance in each system as Poor, Fair, Good, Great or Excellent (Mourshed et al, 2010). That review concluded that different forms of support for teachers and schools are most effective at different levels of student performance. For example, in school systems with very low levels of student performance, the most effective forms of support include addressing students' basic living needs, improving school attendance, providing scripted teaching materials and textbooks, and getting all schools to a minimum level in terms of infrastructure and student results. In school systems with very high levels of student performance, the most effective forms of support include decentralising decisions about teaching and assessment, encouraging collaborative practice among teachers, and promoting experimentation and innovation. In other words, the school systems experiencing the greatest improvements in student performance appear to be effective in differentiating the forms of support they provide.

The work identified four clear stages of development that could be interpreted to represent a continuum for school improvement from focused (and perhaps

mandated) ‘intervention’ through to the ‘building of foundations for effective teaching’ to the development of strong ‘professional communities’ and finally to operate with high degree of ‘collaboration and creativity’ in the interests of both the school itself and the system.

It is therefore recommended that Educational Consultants and Senior Leadership Team members generate a consistent and evidence based agreement of how school improvement can be best led and influenced in differing contexts across the Diocese. Principals in Townsville Diocese sought critique of their leadership decisions and behaviours against an evidence based framework and within the context of their own challenges. This conversation requires alignment of the work and beliefs of supervisors to a Framework about how school improvement is best affected in different schools and contexts. Such a map will provide informed critique and feedback to principals seeking to be asked ‘hard hitting’ questions on their renewal journeys. A shared language for school renewal will scaffold professional dialogue about how it is best led and sustained.

Small primary schools share unique and dynamic contexts especially in remote settings. A continuous process of ongoing school review is problematic in settings where staff turn- over is high. Further, their agendas are likely to be impacted upon significantly over a period of five years given factors of student transiency and progression. Consistent feedback was received from smaller school principals for more flexibility to be applied to the processes of school renewal in their settings.

5. Highly effective systems and schools are continuously evidence based in their decisions.

Highly effective teaching occurs when teachers are informed by knowledge of student development against which progress is tracked and from which teachers confidently design appropriate strategies for advancing their students’ learning. Ongoing assessment provides evidence against these development maps, continua or assessment rubrics.

Reliance on current data sets such as NAPLAN, non moderated class observations and Senior Schooling results was reported by some principals to be failing to identify the interim progress of students that is required to inform whole school, year level, subject area and class teacher adjustments to teaching. In schools delivering significant improvements in learning the creation of data collection plans for the school is given priority Principals and TCEO team members identified the need for “better evidence” to provide data on the range of learning sought in a Catholic school serving the Townsville Diocese. *It is recommended that the Diocese encourage schools to develop data collection*

plans as part of their Renewal and Annual Planning processes in order to regularly monitor and review their improvement agendas against their identified evidence sources.

Quite regular and demonstrative feedback from Diocesan principals and others confirmed the need for more highly effective software for the input and retrieval of data. Whilst it is understood that progress towards this recommendation is already under way its final design brief should include a consideration of its full functionality in improving schools.

Diocesan respondents join the literature in defining the following features of effective software applications that support school improvement goal setting, action planning and review.

- Systems for storage of progressive student data allowing access by multiple users.
- A capacity for the input and retrieval of data by program leaders across the school;
- Effective training to allow teachers to develop sophisticated reports on students to identify individual, cohort and year level trends, anomalies and patterns over time.
- Efficient templates for the development of school renewal plans and annual plans with a capacity to add progressive data according to the school's documented assessment plan.
- Capacity to produce aggregated reports of data across year levels for collaborative review and analysis.

Conclusion:

The review confirmed the need expressed by the senior leadership team for the development of school renewal processes that act upon class teaching as the medium of most influence for school renewal in a school. This represents the next stage for the enhancement of school renewal in the Townsville Diocese.

This direction is supported by the research which characterises highly effective schools and systems in terms of their focus on the impact of teaching and the support of teachers. Such a focus in the Townsville diocese can be sharpened through some key actions.

Firstly support leaders in the actual design of their strategic plans to make explicit the connection between renewal goals and teaching improvements.

Secondly take the next logical step from defining the improvements required in learning to supporting leaders and teachers to design and implement those improvements in classrooms as part of a collective effort.

Thirdly build the collective capacity that accelerates school improvement through, well based and communicated Diocesan learning targets to which schools can align their own contextually appropriate settings for improvement.

Fourthly establish a common language for school improvement across Educational Consultants, principals and teachers using a shared Framework for describing effectiveness, scaffolding ongoing review and informing school renewal processes.

Finally identify, distribute and celebrate effective teaching practices as a stimulus for the development of professional community in schools. Similarly do the same for the effective leadership of learning as a stimulus for the creation of dialogue on the definable set of skills, knowledge and behaviours that represent an instructional leader's repertoire.

The specific elaborations on these key recommendations are listed in the Executive Summary Parts A and B. Part A links the recommendations to the evidence on highly effective schools whilst Part B restates them under three focus areas for action namely the Diocese, the school and the classroom..

References:

1. Michael Fullan "All Systems Go" 2010 OPC Publication. Canada
2. Hattie 2009 "Visible Learning – Maximising Impact on Learning" NEW B7
3. Mourshead et al "How the world's most improved systems keep getting better" McKinsey 2010.
4. "Renewal in Catholic Schools" Diocese of Townsville March 2011.
5. "School Improvement for Catholic Schools in Tasmania" Tasmanian Catholic Education Commission 2011.
6. "Quality Catholic Schooling" Catholic Education of Western Australia, 2010

APPENDIX ONE:

TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS with DIOCESAN SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM (SLT)

FEB 24 2012

1. Roles of Senior Leadership Team

Assistant Directors participate in audits of curriculum, IT, RE, Indigenous Education and Environment.

Director oversees the policy settings and frames of reference for school review and renewal in line with effective educational practice and the mission for Catholic Education shared through the Bishop and Diocesan leadership.

Manager Finance and Administration oversees the financial health of schools throughout the diocese. Whilst not playing a direct educational role in the decisions made by schools the role does provide advice and support to the schools budgeting and review processes which often includes the management of significant infrastructure projects.

The entire leadership team visits each school at least in the year after validation of the school's Renewal processes and outcomes has occurred .

2. Discussion as to the effective processes of current school review:

Effective school review needs to address the following issues:

- The leadership team described the need for effective and ongoing school review to be about the real success of any initiative. These questions go to the *“How do we measure...?” and How well did we?”*
- Quality school review needs to enable us to make an evidence based decision about what impact we are having in an explicit area of school performance.
- What needs to be avoided is a “functionary approach” to school review. The

process of review must “give life to the story of Catholic education”.

- Encourage a less chaotic pattern of activity in schools by seeing the process as a state of mind about ongoing oversight, insight and investigation - not a seasonal event.

Perceived Current Strengths:

The ‘Characteristics of Effective Catholic Schools’ represents a philosophical base for a set of indicators of effective schools in Townsville. Diocese. Under such a values base an “alignment” between principal, Diocese and School Board about what a quality Catholic school looks like should emerge.

Financial processes encourage oversight by the principal and provide clear principles of sustainability, solvency and surplus.

Two clear questions of impact emerge in the financial management of the school. “Do the staff know what our current resources are?” and “What else do we therefore need?”

A Diocesan focus on instructional leadership skills and behaviours e.g walk throughs that are achieving uptake by principals..

Extraordinary leadership of the principal is evidenced currently through genuine collaboration across the school community, varied data sources such as Radian survey, NAPLAN, quality data analytics.

A strong point was made that the Diocese valued the local decisions that principals make to capture the right data for them and would resist mandating data instruments across all schools.

Perceived Current Barriers:

The process is often, but not always, ‘linear’. The discussion suggested that reviews may not chase down areas for improvement informed by a deep understanding of the evidence available. (This can be due to shallow interrogation of the evidence tabled, or the failure to table sufficient, relevant or valid evidence.)

The Team acknowledged the other major responsibilities that their more autonomous Catholic principals face which put pressure on time and focus.

The process can be “removed from teachers”. When not removed from teachers, review and renewal can engage teachers in purposeful conversations about how the characteristics of effective Catholic schools are enacted in effective Catholic classrooms within every lesson, every day.

At some schools the review may be seen as a process for ensuring the “shop is in order” rather than as a platform for focussed innovation/improvement.

The capacity required for renewal to move inside the classroom to engage teachers themselves in the leadership of improved teaching and learning

3. Discussion as to the current impact of school renewal processes:

Current school renewal now consistently drives 3/5 year strategic planning and yearly operational planning. It also drives budget and staffing where Townsville Catholic principals enjoy significant influence on their school’s staffing mix to drive improvement goals. There is a strong connection between renewal and planning processes and an appreciation for informed and focussed planning.

Schools make use of MySchool data to make an expanding range of assessments about their school’s relative performance. However Diocesan SLT would now seek that renewal moves in to the next level of impact – an assessment of the impact on each teacher and on to their consequent impact on learners.

4. What could be provided to support principals in current school renewal and in the leadership on to the next stage?

- Rubrics based on the effective characteristics of quality Catholic schooling.
- Questions in audits are minimal core processes of review; but what can be developed to measure impact of leadership/renewal and review on classrooms.
- Identify key questions that could initiate self review and scaffold quality decisions based on quality evidence.

Data processes should include NAPLAN, radii survey but also universal evidence based consistent measures of school improvement. This suggests what may be required are tools and processes for collecting evidence and applying summative ratings against a consistent standard that is both evidence based and consistent with the Mission of Catholic education practised in Townsville diocese. Such a standard should be applicable to both internal and external review processes.

The desired enhancement should be targeted at the self reflection stage of school review and not the validation stage. It should therefore form a process by which leaders in schools continuously structure reviews of teaching and learning as the delivery of the Catholic mission.

Key messages:

1. Current review processes are implemented consistently with a strategic and operational commitment to the process.
2. Some key issues are often not identified within school review. These include measuring impact on teaching and learning, informed planning to direct the explicit leadership actions and behaviours to amplify impact and the pursuit of skills and beliefs to enact that leadership.
3. The next stage in the enhancement of school renewal represents a process to engage teachers not just in the process of review but in the enactment of explicit directions consequent to the review.
4. Teaching and learning is the enactment of the Catholic mission and should therefore be clearly understood through more detailed elaboration of the characteristics of effective Catholic schools as a key reference.
5. Any such elaboration must also be universally applicable providing an evidence based standard against which reflections and judgements can be rigorously validated.
6. Renewal over the next five years should answer key questions about how to identify where a school is currently at against a consistent standard, what the evidence suggests is needed now or for its next stage of development, how that development could be measured, and what therefore should be the focus of leadership action to achieve that impact.
7. Processes for renewal should engage all levels of leadership in a school including teachers, students and community relative to their needs and current capabilities.

APPENDIX TWO

TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEW TOWNSVILLE DIOCESE EDUCATION CONSULTANTS

Feb 24 2012

1. Role of Education Consultants in school review and renewal:

The consultants see their role as providing “influence” rather than being directive in their work in schools. This is indeed the suggestion of the title “Consultant”. However principals perceive clearly that their Consultant is also their line manager and supervisor. Consultants report that they enjoy honest professional exchanges with their principals.

Consultants participate by providing oversight of the review cycle and engaging with principals in conversation influencing their reflections rather than giving assessments of school performance. This does not preclude principals seeking feedback nor consultants providing feedback when requested.

The review is not a process for principal performance management.

2. Discussion around the effectiveness of school review and renewal processes.

Characteristics of effective Catholic schools provides the over arching framework for principals. Recently there has been a greater awareness of, and in some cases a greater degree of skill in, the behaviour of principals in being more immersed in the classroom enactment of school priorities. (eg. ‘walk -throughs’). Whilst data sources such as NAPLAN, Teaching and Learning Curriculum Audits and Radian surveys are consistently referred to in review processes’ the degree of the informed and skilled use of that data is not as consistently observed. Review and renewal has moved towards identifying strategic drivers in a school and for monitoring current progress in a continuing ongoing seamless process. However the lived experience currently is still

accompanied by an “urgency” in the last year of that cycle. This normally focuses on completion of the audits and preparation for validation. Overall, Consultants monitor that reviews are done through a quality process where principals achieve an accurate sense of “How am I going?”

A plan of “continuous responsibility over three to five years” was one description of a quality five year process of self renewal.

It was also noted that non state school accreditation required a regulatory compliance issue which necessarily formed an essential part of the review processes.

Audits were implemented as point in time assessments for validation. The question posed was ‘To what extent do the audits suggest the actions that are required by the school and its leadership in moving further forward?’

A strong point was made for the development of processes that both collate school based recommendations as well as whole of Diocesan recommendations in support of those aggregated directions.

3. Discussion on the impact of review on Teaching and Learning

“Principals that are good teachers understand that they have got to monitor teacher practices.” This quote from the discussion underpinned observations about effective use of the review processes to influence and support quality classroom teaching.

These include “making it a part of the everyday life of a school” in its staff meetings, school development discussions, year level and departmental faculty meetings.

Reference was made to the movement away from documented episodic events towards organic review and renewal processes.

An example was given from a small school in a disadvantaged area ‘punching above its weight’ through curriculum leadership that established clear teaching practices based on evidence of children’s needs, inducted new staff explicitly on those and then monitored those daily to drive marked and explicit learning improvements in students.

One comment was made that the focus in school review necessarily has “all been processes” to establish a strategic and site based approach to school improvement. The next stage is to focus on actions consequent to the review’s findings....the ‘So what?’ question.

4. What could be provided to support principals in current school renewal and in the leadership on to the next stage?

Suggestion was made that two sorts of support would be valued. Firstly schools would value the “presence” of the leadership in their work environments. Secondly it was suggested that expectations need to be clear, explicit and measurable.

The role description for principals was mentioned as a support document both for reflection and to engage in principal performance development.

It was suggested that a scaffold for the provision of objective feedback would be a valuable framework for providing evidence based feedback.

Less ‘clunky’ tools for school development planning and strategic planning

The following were listed by the group as areas of support worth initiating or continuing:

Mentoring supports;

Processes and tools for professional reflection;

Processes for developing school based priorities;

PD that addresses the enactment and alignment of the Catholic charism and effective daily teaching and learning;

Curriculum clarity (i.e. emerging national curriculum expectations);

Mental health and well being....this was endorsed by the entire group.

A separate category of suggestions sits under leadership capacity development:

- Use both university courses and school based learning with a growing emphasis on the latter;
- Such practical PD suggested by the above mix would include the art of critical conversations, the informed use of data in all its forms, utilising teacher leadership and peer based professional dialogue between teachers, principals, associate leaders and senior leadership level.

A significant issue raised was the issue of talent identification and development across the Diocese which was described by one Consultant as a “critical issue”.

5. Key messages:

- Using school review to identify and provide measures for areas of explicit school improvement in T and L would represent a major support of schools in the Diocese.
- With strategic planning processes now embedded as a foundation to reflection focus needs to be on developing capabilities in leading consequent action planning and ways to monitor that progressively for impact on classrooms.
- PD represents the most significant focus for Diocesan support of the next stage school review .
- A tool for the organisation, collection and analysis of objective feedback could support collective professional discussion at Diocesan, peer and school reflection.
- That making review the everyday organic work of principals, as opposed to being extra work for principals represents a critical disposition for principals to appreciate and apply.

APPENDIX THREE:

Focussed Interviews with Townsville Catholic Education Principals

March 15,16, 17 2012

Interviewees:

Caroline Fuller (Rural school, 11 students)

Megan Wagstaff (Remote school 201 students)

Mike Colahan (Urban school 430 students)

Paul Lucas (Urban 900 students)

David McNeale (Urban P/12, 2400 students)

Tom Kruger (Rural High school 400 students)

Glenda Scarse (Remote primary school)

David Burke (Remote High school 280 students)

Sharyn Bell (Provincial primary.)

David Manning (Remote primary 55 students)

The Interviews were conducted face to face at the Townsville Catholic Education office from a guiding set of questions focussed on two themes. Firstly the issue of current effectiveness of Renewal and validation processes was explored. Secondly the theme of Renewal's impact on teaching and learning was discussed within the context of each school.

The range and diversity of schools covered primary, P/12, high schools in rural, remote and urban settings. Principals of those schools covered a broad range of experience in the role and with a broad level of experience with regard to Renewal and Validation processes as enacted in Townsville CEO.

EFFECTIVENESS OF CURRENT RENEWAL PROCESSES:

Significant themes emerging from the interviews revolved Renewal's role in 'taking stock'. Firstly, the provision of feedback especially in the validation year provided affirmation of the principal and other leadership across the school for the work and achievements of the school over the last five years.

Secondly the process in its fifth year required a renewal of the school's five year vision. This represented an opportunity for the school to engage in quality reflection. Such an opportunity may not have occurred if not for the event being scheduled to occur in the life of a constantly busy school environment. Its outcomes also commit the school to a designated set of future priorities.

Thirdly school validation itself provided a time to celebrate the distance travelled as a school. In that respect it was morale building. The events of validation also built positive teamwork in their preparation and presentation. On a more practical note the process allowed the school to engage in some "housekeeping" ensuring through the audits that the school was delivering on its responsibilities and mandates.

The benefits of school renewal appear to be more obvious in the validation year where the school becomes deliberately focussed on reflection, measurement and analysis than any other year in the five year cycle. However some principals especially those in larger schools noted the significance of the renewal priorities in setting general directions.

It was a more general observation that the annual planning processes were the significant drivers of school improvement. Some principals felt that the cycle of five years was too long in today's context to be effective after the second year. The example was cited re the impact of BER and the Australian Curriculum as significant current drivers that had made the renewal priorities of four years ago appear redundant. Others in smaller schools noted the impact of transiency of staff and principals which meant that no one in the school may have had any input or context for the renewal priorities set down perhaps only three years ago.

Principals spoke positively about the support available for the conduct of renewal and validation processes. The effectiveness of the Educational Consultants' role was identified by some as positively related to moral and intellectual support. Curriculum Consultants were seen as being effective through their role in the collection of evidence against the dimensions of the audits conducted during validation year. Some sought further illustration of what was expected through exemplars and guidelines. Experienced principals expressed the belief that the success of renewal processes was dependant on the "professionalism" of the principal in the leadership of the process and in the active search for objective

evidence to inform rigorous review. One principal felt that the perceptions and questions of the independent panel member provided his most valued perspective.

Two principals mentioned the “Characteristics of Catholic Schools” as being a reference point for the leadership of their schools. However one noted that it was not in regular use by principals and another that it was a “theoretical” model and failed to describe to him the “practical realities” for his school.

Consistent comment was made about the “clunkiness” of current electronic templates and software in use for the collection of data and preparation of school development plans. However they felt that electronic platforms especially those that might allow for progressive input and shared access by staff would be particularly valuable in engaging staff in strategic planning and data monitoring.

Several principals from a range of schools noted their openness to professional objective critique. They sought to be asked “hard hitting” questions that were informed by knowledge of the context and by evidence of the school’s performance.

Some noted that the data informing future directions were not always reflective of the full range of expected student outcomes.

In summary principals used the Renewal and Validation processes to engage in reflection and affirmation of the school’s achievements. Whilst support was valued and readily available the successful conduct of a review and renewal was dependant on the professionalism and involvement of the principal. Looking forward, principals recommended consideration of processes and tools that engaged principals and schools in the search for “better data”. The availability of standards and benchmarks for tracking a school’s growth over time and relative stage of development was identified as a valued future enhancement. Consideration was also sought re the cycle of school renewal with respect to strategic planning in an increasingly dynamic context and with respect to the practicalities of small schools.

IMPACT OF SCHOOL RENEWAL AND VALIDATION ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Principals across all schools confirmed the value of school renewal and validation in affirming the school and its leadership which had a significant flow on impact on school morale both through the validation processes and in the development of emerging priorities.

Most of the principals referred to the greater role of shorter term planning as focussing the energies of the school staff. The comment was made that class teachers would not generally relate their classroom priorities to the school renewal five year priorities. Goals were expressed in terms that were too general for focussed action

in the classroom. One small school principal felt that the renewal in her school emanated more by a close examination of the data in literacy exposing “nitty gritty” aspects of student performance which created a clear focus for her staff. Another principal spoke of similar success using an action research model providing significant renewal of enquiry based learning in the senior years in response to more immediate review of student performance.

Principals sought greater impact of school renewal on classroom teaching and learning. They accepted their responsibility in leading ongoing school renewal as part of the daily life of a school. However it was their observation that the skills and tools required for such an ongoing process cannot be assumed. They sought clearer sets of standards for what constitutes school improvement and quality data from which to measure the success of their annual agendas on student learning. Professional learning on the design and maintenance of rigorous self review and strategic leadership was noted by several principals.

Principals accepted the necessary balance between compliance driven measures and strategic processes. The engagement of quality electronic platforms was considered a priority and the notion of progressive uploading of compliance data was suggested as a way of making school renewal not a “seasonal event but an organic ongoing process”.

APPENDIX FOUR (4a)

Summary Report of Principal Survey Responses

Completed on line June 3 to 16, 2012.

A survey was posted in an online format to all Townsville Catholic Education Principals to complete in the weeks June 3 to June 16. Twenty two completed surveys were lodged with three other surveys commenced but not completed. This report describes and analyses the responses of the twenty two surveys completed and finally submitted. The sample group is small but the survey data represents the views of more than seventy five percent of the principals in the Diocese and is capable of informing customised solutions to the needs and beliefs of Townsville Diocesan principals.

It is important to note that principals generally referred to ‘renewal’ as the process that occurs towards the end of the five year cycle preceding validation. This was noted both in interviews and the survey items. However some explicitly qualified this in their comments noting that they are regularly reviewing their school throughout the five year cycle.

The questions directed arose from the issues raised by the participants in the interview process. Two explicit themes for the survey were explored in the survey items. The first centred on the current effectiveness of renewal policy, process and practice. The second explored the theme of the impact of current renewal on the quality of teaching and learning in their schools.

Item Analysis:

A copy of the survey items is included in the appendices to this Report. Graphical representations of the survey item responses are also included for reference.

- 1. How important do you regard each of the following functions within the process of School Renewal and Validation?**
- 2. How well do you believe the current School Renewal and Validation fulfils these functions?**

Townsville Diocese principals confirmed clearly that all the listed functions for School renewal and validation were considered important or very important. A higher level of importance was recorded for its role in assuring compliance for non state school registration, for the review of management and collaborative practices and on the review of teaching and learning in a school.

The principals surveyed responded to the usefulness of the current renewal and validation processes to those functions as being moderately to very useful. Half the principals recorded higher levels of usefulness with respect to the functions of compliance and school management. Slightly lower perceptions of usefulness were recorded for school renewal's review of teaching and learning and of school leadership.

Comments such as the following illustrate the emphasis Townsville Diocese principals seek for their school renewal.

“At all times, the primary focus must be related to the students. If we become totally consumed with meeting external `requirements’ we have missed the point of our existence. (Urban Primary principal)

The compliance provides a base level and must be met. They are a necessary but not sufficient condition. Teaching and Learning is the core business and School Renewal is about improvements in this area. This provides ‘the what and the why’. The ‘how’ is in the management and collaborative processes and therefore is subordinate to the ‘what and the why’, therefore not as important”.(Secondary Principal)

and another similar comment

“Compliance with TCEO “initiatives” leaves little scope for school-based initiatives”. (Secondary principal)

3. School Renewal and Validation has led the strategic directions of my school over the last three to five years.

Nearly all principals believe the process has led the strategic directions of their school. Comments allude to the fact that school renewal priorities have emerged out of ongoing community consultation with the Renewal and Validation process providing affirmation of the school's achievements and strengths e.g.

“In our school, strategic direction of our school arose prior to school renewal and validation. I think the needs of the school and the discussions with the local community and the CEO have led the strategic directions. School renewal and validation has been something of a ‘check-up”. (Secondary school principal)

Smaller schools recorded lower levels of agreement to this statement with one commenting that little awareness and involvement of staff and community had been evident in strategic planning.

“Maybe the last two years but there is not much evidence before then that staff were too aware of Annual School Development Plans and they certainly had no part in developing them.” (Rural small school)

4. Validations are a consistent process across all schools.

Principals record a strong belief that renewal processes are consistently applied. One commented that its intensity grows as the cycle comes to a close and another that the validation year is only one, albeit important, part of the review and renewal process.

“It seems it intensifies as the process draws to a close.” (Small school principal)

“It is important to remember that we have to be constantly reviewing and renewing and while the four yearly School renewal process is a major part of this process, it is not the only part.” (Secondary principal)

5. The Validation component of School Renewal addresses student achievement.

The majority of principals agree that student achievement is addressed in school renewal processes. Six respondents from the full range of schools in the Diocese disagreed without comment. One who disagreed made the following comment

“I don’t think this is a strong feature of validation. Closer analysis could be useful.” (Primary principal)

Another response recorded agreement with the statement adding the comment.

“Once again would like to believe that this is a key driver.” (Small primary school principal)

Agreement was also recorded by others but with the following qualifying comments.

“It does to some extent by looking at results from NAPLAN and Senior classes. The school is expected to present a ‘case’, and this could be a presentation of student achievement in a wide range of facets.” (Secondary Principal)

and,

“Only Naplan results.” (Small school principal)

6. The personal skills and professionalism of the principal are crucial to the quality of School Renewal and Validation.

Resounding agreement was expressed for this statement . Two comments however made the point that quality principal leadership does not guarantee success in school renewal. School renewal is the responsibility of the school and its community albeit under the stewardship of a competent leader.

“There is a point of distinction here. Again, a necessary but not sufficient condition. The Principal needs to be professional for a quality outcome, but a professional principal will not ensure a quality outcome, as there are other determining factors e.g. quality and harmony of staff.” (Secondary principal)

However it would appear that Diocesan principals believe successful school renewal will not be achievable in the absence of effective distributed leadership.

“The Principal cannot do everything, however, they must build capacity among other staff to help facilitate and support the process.” (Secondary school principal)

7. How important should each of the following forms of evidence be in an evidence based review and validation of teaching and learning at your school?

8. How important is each of these forms of evidence in the current Renewal and Validation processes at your school?

Principals responded giving importance to all seven forms of evidence listed. They rated school documentation, student learning and validation panel feedback as the most important for a review of teaching and learning at their schools. A lower level of importance was attributed to the statistical data collected through the RADII surveys.

The role of TCEO personnel supporting schools as a team was applauded and its continuation recommended. One principal expressed this in terms of seeing teams “doing the hard yards with you” especially in the busy validation year.

Key Messages:

Interviewed principals value the role of school renewal as forcing a school to engage in necessary reflection, celebration and dialogue on its renewal priorities. Whilst some felt that the renewal cycle was too long or inflexible none recommended its removal. In its future form the principals sought learning and functional supports for leading and managing strategic review processes.

Its greater impact on teaching and learning could be enhanced through consistent, evidence based data collection. Conclusively they sought that this data collection be guided by a set of benchmarks and standards that allowed the principal to measure ‘how well’ priorities are impacting on student learning from year to year, term to term.

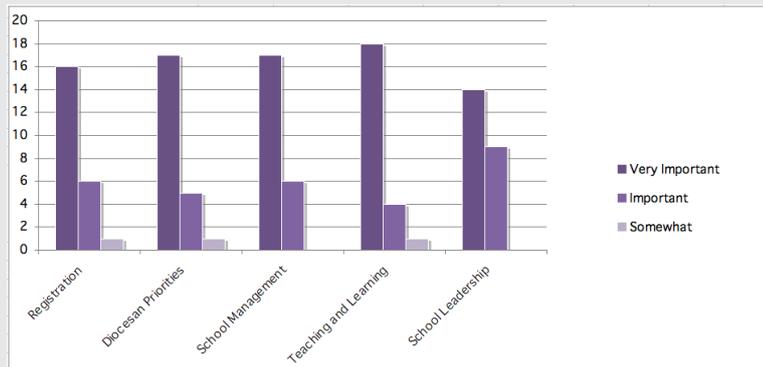
The need was expressed for an enhanced software solution for the management of renewal, planning and data retrieval processes.

APPENDIX FOUR (b)

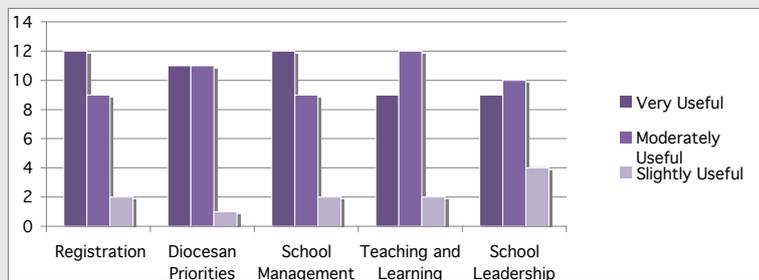
Geographical Setting

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING	LEVEL	SCHOOL SIZE <200	SCHOOL SIZE >200
Rural/Remote	Primary	6	4
Rural/Remote	Secondary	1	4
Urban	Primary	0	7
Urban	Secondary	0	2

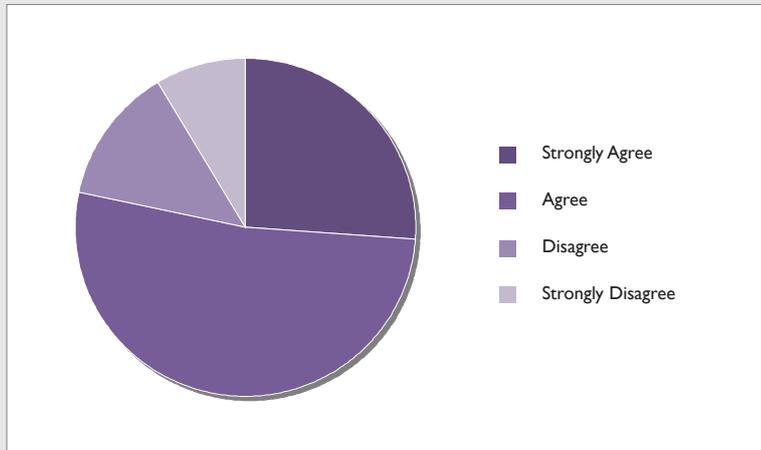
1. How important do you regard each of the following functions within the process of School Renewal and Validation?



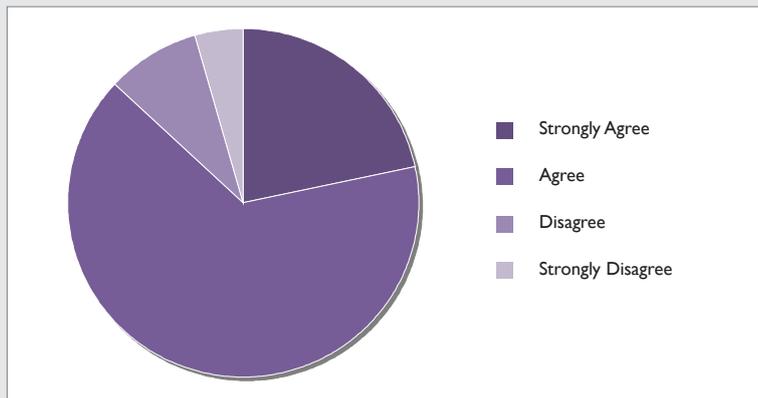
2. How well do you believe the current School Renewal and Validation fulfills these functions?



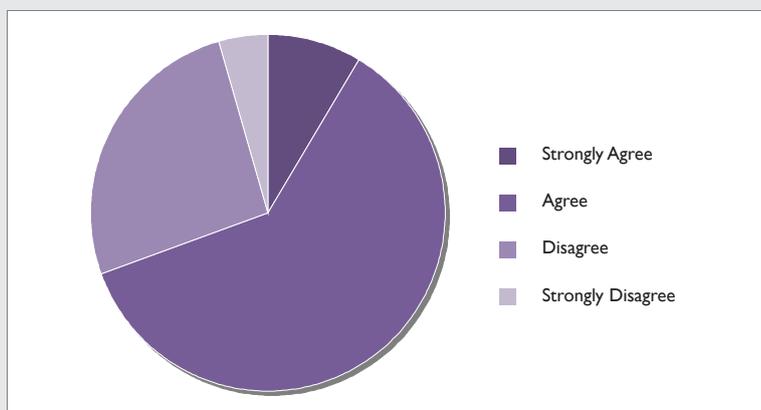
3. School Renewal and Validation has led the strategic directions of my school over the last three to five years.



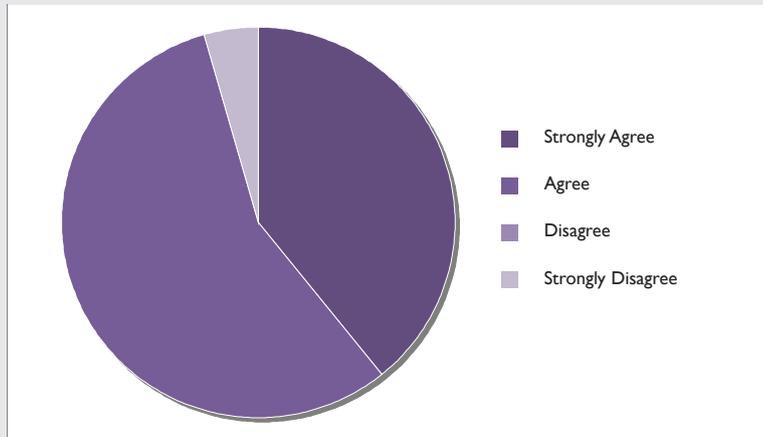
4. Validations are a consistent process across all schools.



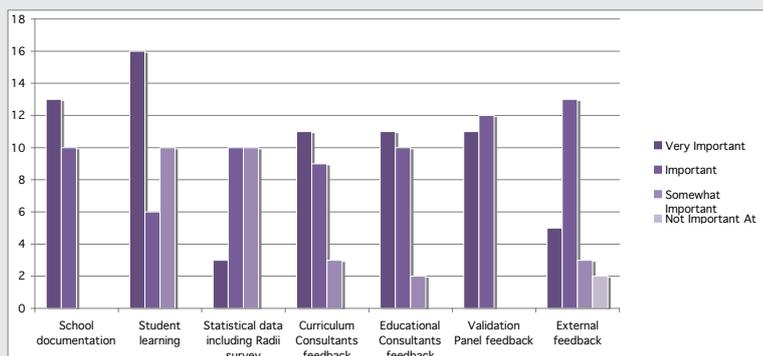
5. The Validation component of School Renewal addresses student achievement.



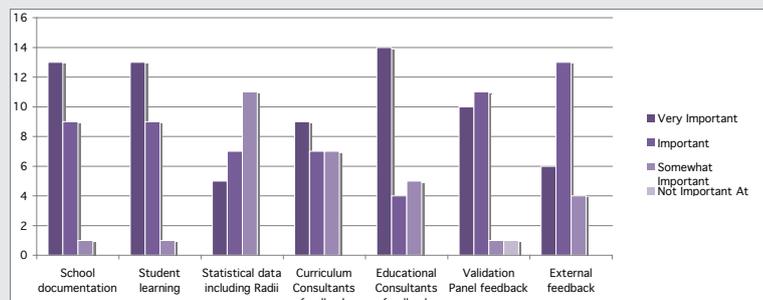
6. The personal skills and professionalism of the principal are crucial to the quality of School Renewal and Validation.



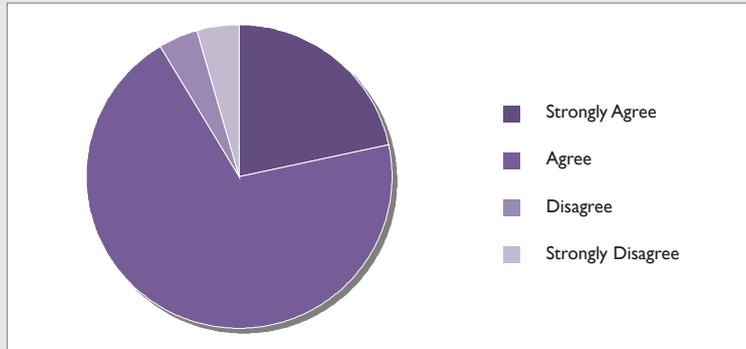
7. How important should each of the following forms of evidence be in an evidence based review and validation of teaching and learning at your school?



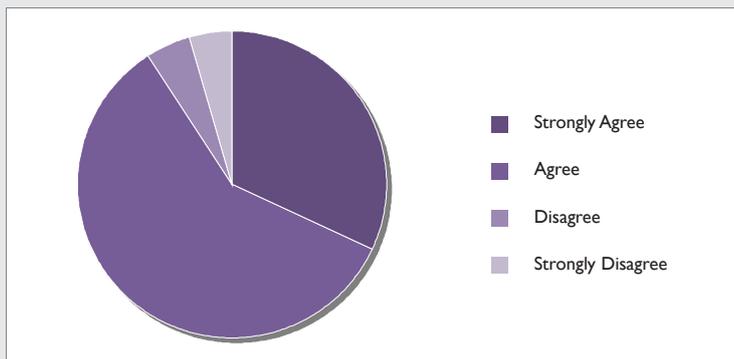
8. How important is each of these forms of evidence in the current Renewal and Validation processes at your school?



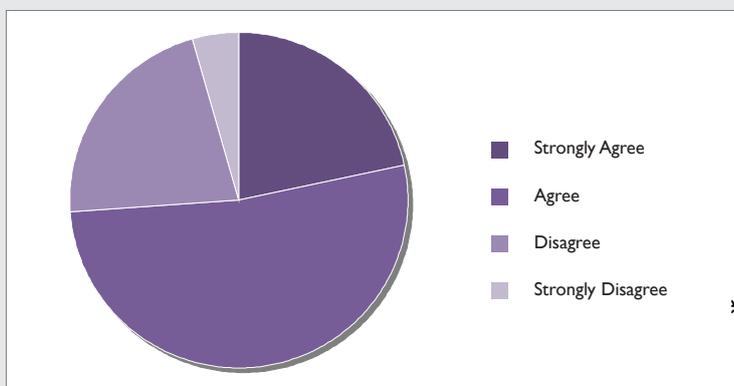
9. TCEO School Renewal is an effective process for schools to assess their current performance.



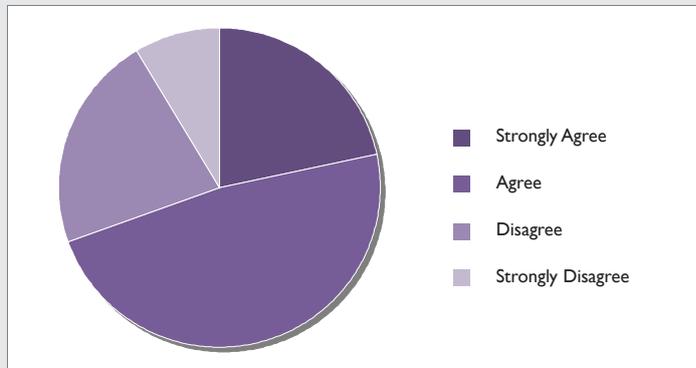
10. TCEO School Renewal and Validation is an effective process for setting future priorities.



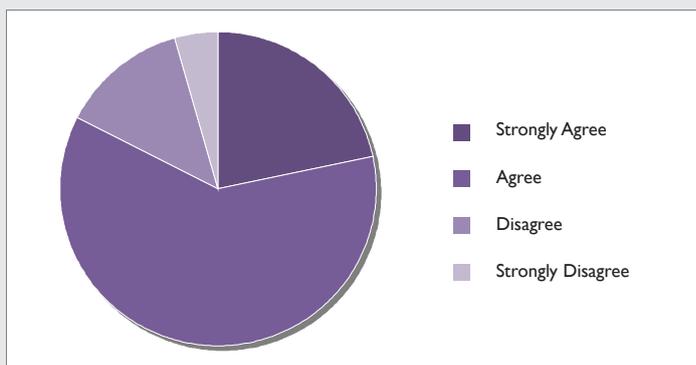
11. TCEO School Renewal and Validation processes are flexible enough to meet the diversity of schools across the diocese.



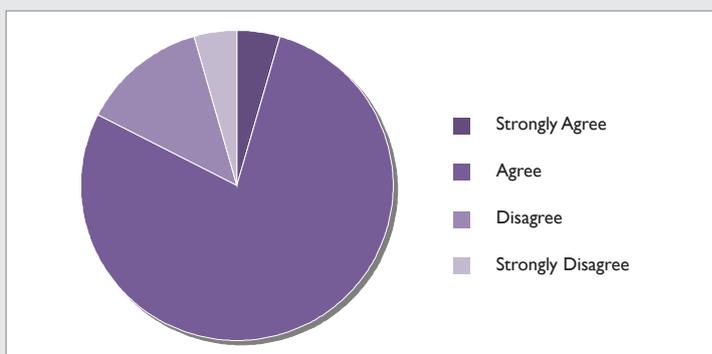
12. School Renewal is a five yearly event that culminates in Validation.



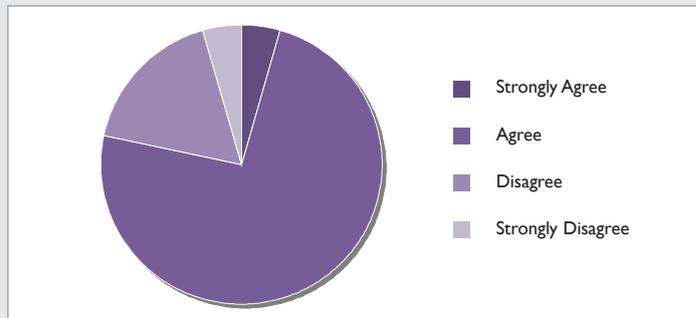
13. School Renewal commits my school to an explicit improvement agenda.



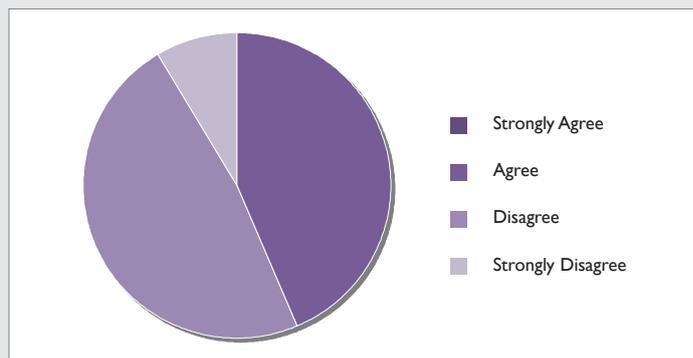
14. School Renewal and Validation affirms my leadership of the school.



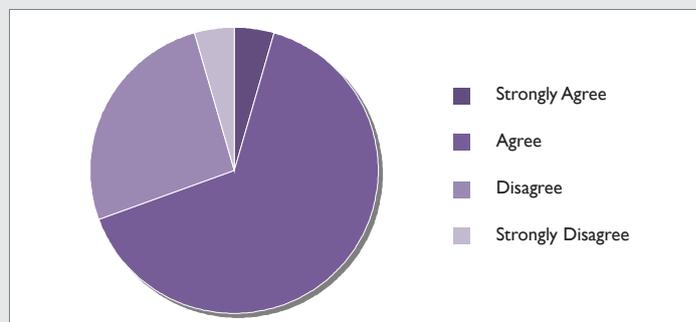
15. Validated assessment of my schools current effectiveness has been expert and rigorous.



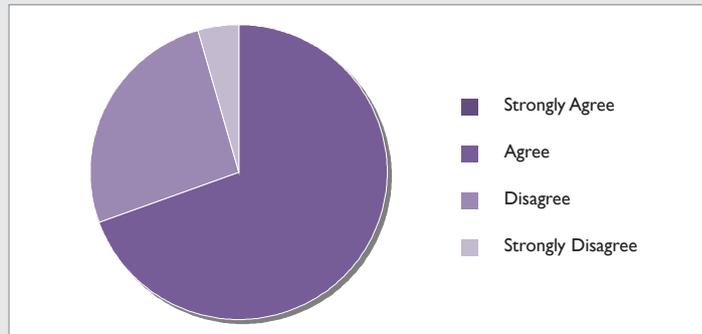
16. Teachers see Renewal and its outcomes as an opportunity to focus on specific improvements in their teaching.



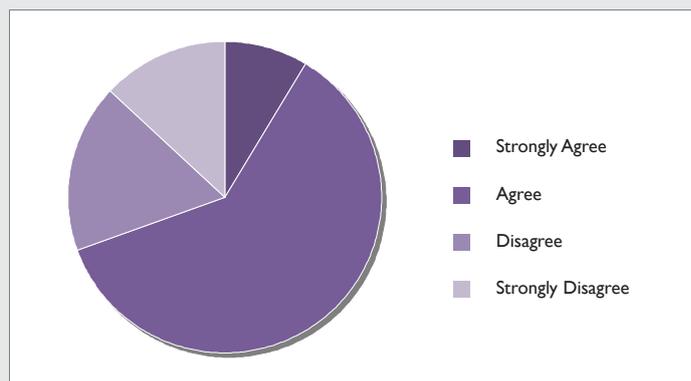
17. Improvements in teaching and learning are already apparent in classrooms as a result of School Renewal and Validation.



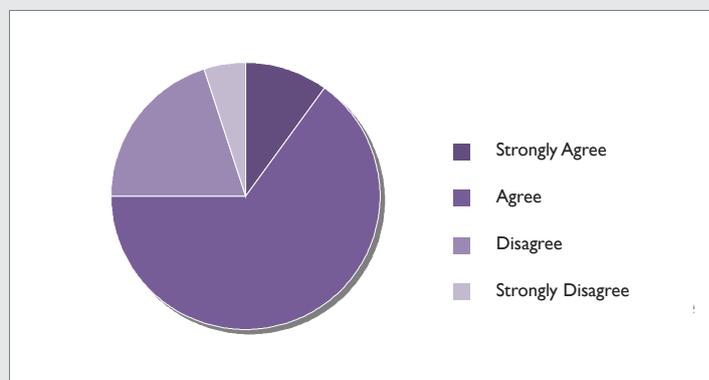
18. Teachers actively participate in school review throughout the five year cycle.



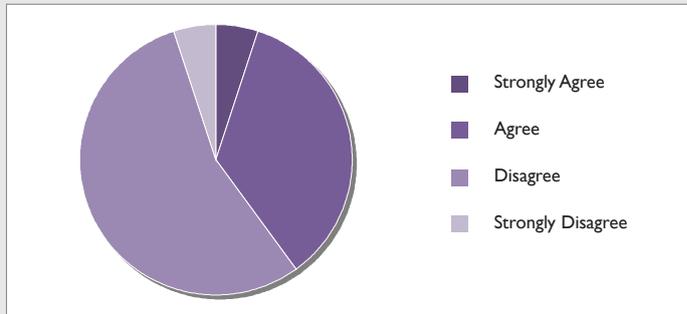
19. The School Board actively participates in school review throughout the five year cycle.



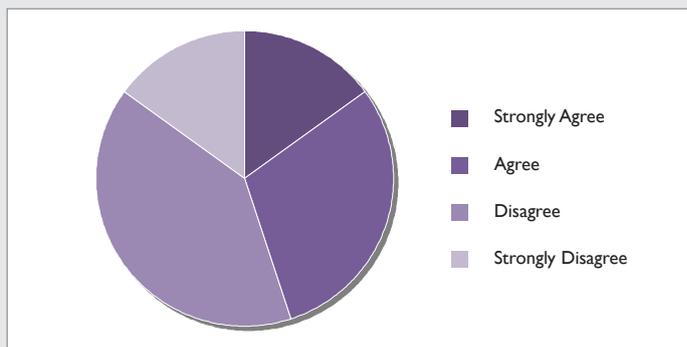
20. TCEO School Renewal should incorporate a set of benchmark standards.



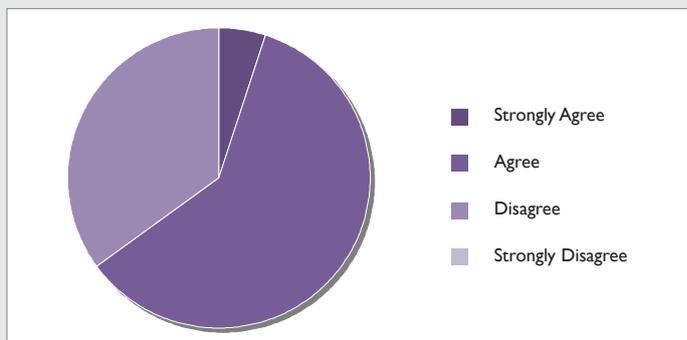
21. TCEO School Renewal should involve a greater range of evidence.



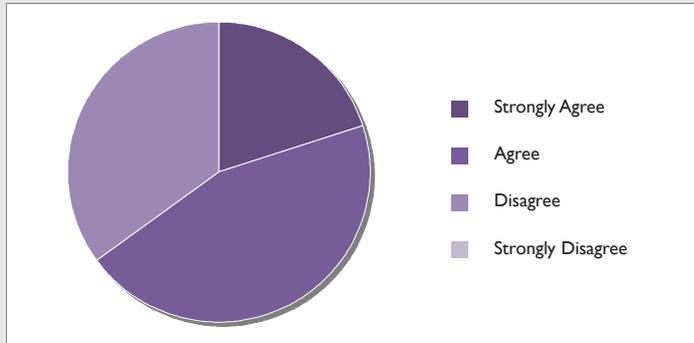
22. TCEO School Renewal could involve a less than five yearly process.



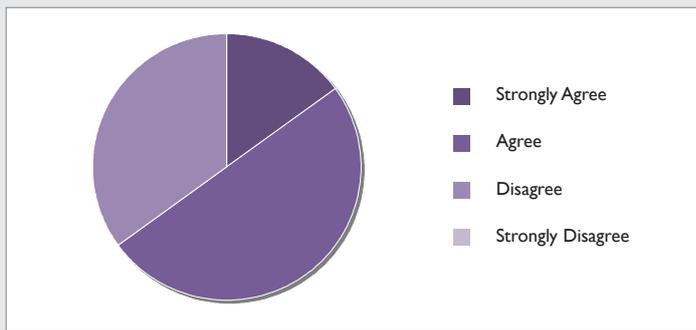
23. Students should be involved more in Renewal and Validation.



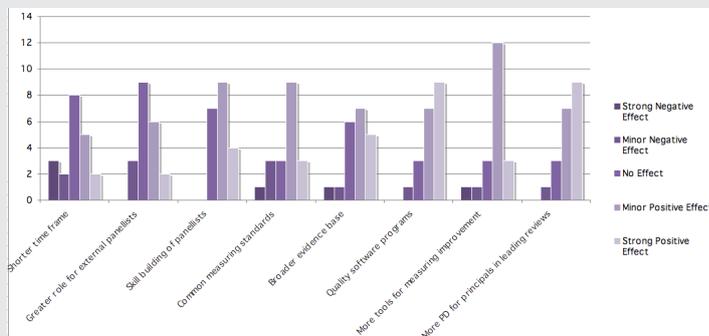
24. TCEO School Renewal should focus on a limited number of dimensions of school effectiveness.



25. TCEO should focus on different dimensions progressively throughout the cycle.



26. What effect would each of the following have on the quality of your school review?



APPENDIX FIVE:

INTERVIEWS WITH TOWNSVILLE CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE CURRICULUM CONSULTATION TEAM MEMBERS

Feb 24, 2012

Transcripts Curriculum Team: (over two sessions).

1. Roles in Review and Renewal processes

Four team members reported considerable involvement in “ongoing conversations” related to school renewal planning and outcomes. They described their hands on involvement around schools as providing support in the role of a “critical friend” rather than as part of an inspectorial, data collecting model.

All the curriculum team absolutely saw themselves as ‘agents of school review’.

Curriculum team members are often asked for their opinion as a third party, directed to demonstrations of lessons and on occasion sought their opinion on teacher competency especially within their specific area of expertise and responsibility.

The team members reported positive perceptions in schools of the intent of the process

2. Discussion as to the effective processes of current school review:

The curriculum audits are normally completed in the year before validation and can be accompanied by stress as timelines approach.

The Learning Framework informs the focus of the electronic audits.

One team member believed that a good set of valid 5 year recommendations flow from the process, a comment acknowledged by others. It represented a school based account of the last five years as a point- in- time snapshot. It

encouraged reflection rather than a pass or fail judgement.

However it was observed that the concept of “8 ticks in the 8 boxes” remains a focus for some schools.

Typical data sets used in review included NAPLAN, attendance data, budgets, surveys and audit reports.

The team members reported positive perceptions of the intent of the process. There has been a shift in its purpose as an accountability process towards a strategic planning process. However they reported that some get “stuck” in a series of intensive five yearly events that can overwhelm principals.

The audit tools themselves are not user-friendly which causes frustration and discouragement.

Curriculum team members recorded an observation that review was not perceived as a judgement of worth but as a reckoning of “where did you get to?”

3. Discussion as to the current impact of school renewal processes:

The interviews confirmed that the formal process of review provided a necessary construct to ensure schools did find time to reflect especially around the Characteristics of Effective Catholic Schools”.

It was also noted that the principal runs the process. The depth of involvement of the principal is varied within that process however. It was agreed that where the principal was more directly involved the evidence tended to be perceived, by the principal and others, as more reliable and consequently had greater impact on forward planning.

Impact of planning on classrooms tended to be judged according to NAPLAN and surveys with some validation by teachers through interview. It was noted that whilst teachers might not identify renewal and review as the source of specific emerging priorities (“not in the front of their minds”), those priorities may be made evident to them in other ways.

A clear distinction was drawn between the participation of APREs and Curriculum leaders, with the former being a substantive member of the school leadership team and the latter often being co opted into the role. Hence there may be a disconnect between the school’s hands on curriculum leadership (especially in primary schools) and the principal. The engagement of curriculum leaders within review and renewal processes depends therefore on the orientation of the principal to their role.

One critical factor mentioned strongly in conversation was the issue of developing leadership pools for all levels across the Diocese.

By contrast it was perceived that very positive examples of impact stemming from school review have occurred. An example was provided where a school produced documentation on an appropriate school based expression of the Catholic charism for enquiry based learning (as opposed to “indoctrination”). The documentation became the subject of teacher interaction via Sharepoint and was accompanied consequently by teachers in the Science department explicitly focussing their personal and collective improvement goals on enquiry based pedagogies in their lessons.

4. What support or tools are required?

A clear affirmation was given for attention to the existing review tools to remove “clunkiness” in their operation by schools.

It was suggested that schools are on various positions on the continuum re their use of renewal and review. They reside currently at various points, along the continuum from satisfying a bureaucratic requirements once every five years to the other end embracing pervasive critique and reflection throughout every school day/week/year.

A further suggestion was made for support to be provided to enable schools to establish a shared data collection system that allowed progressive data entry on agreed measures to be recorded reliably and consistently.

It was commented that schools need time to engage with students and staff around the review and renewal processes.

A strong “left of field” comment was recorded that impact in schools could be achieved by releasing the existing potential that exists in a school. Suggestion to achieve this included greater staffing flexibility replacing formal positions and greater access to flexible resourcing for release of teachers.

When asked to identify the characteristics of principals who use the process to have quality impact the following were tabled by the group...*consultative, present not a caretaker, future focussed, self reflective and provides reflection for others, transparent, celebratory, delegates (not micro manages),promotes the place of parents and non- judgemental.*

5. Key messages:

- Renewal and Review is undertaken by Diocesan schools with thoroughness and commitment. It is now considered a strategic rather than an accountability process. Without this external requirement it was feared that schools would not “surface” to take the time to reflect adequately on their progress.
- There is considerable variety in the way that principals involve themselves in the review especially with regard to the curriculum components.
- Evidence for review of classroom impact captures NAPLAN, Curriculum audits/surveys, budgets, attendance and some qualitative data through focussed conversations with teachers.
- Planning and budgeting processes may not necessarily connect with recommended curriculum priorities especially where curriculum developers have not been included in those processes.
- Schools would value an enhanced efficiency in their existing audit and planning tools.
- Schools could collect a broader evidence base from a centralised data collection capacity.
- The capacity of schools to engage in focussed reflection and forward planning is critical to the quality of its improvement.