

S2 EP05 - LEADERSHIP TALKS - Embracing Global Perspectives: Insights from international partnerships and facilitation

Lawrence DeMaeyer [00:00:11]:

Hello everyone and welcome to OPC's Leadership Talks podcast. My name is Lawrence DeMaeyer, Professional Learning Consultant at OPC.

Susie Lee-Fernandes [00:00:20]:

And my name is Susie Lee-Fernandes, Director of Professional Learning and Engagement.

Lawrence DeMaeyer [00:00:25]:

As co hosts, we will engage educational leaders and authentic conversations to explore their passions, experiences and expertise in K to 12 education. OPC is proud to highlight the diverse journeys and stories of educators and leaders from across this province.

Susie Lee-Fernandes [00:00:42]:

We hope that Leadership Talks will not only provide you with inspiration, joy and valuable perspectives and strategies that will inform your professional practice, but also enhance the learning and well being of those you serve. Enjoy.

Lawrence DeMaeyer [00:00:59]:

Hello and welcome back to another episode of Leadership Talks. We're excited today to be welcoming Nina Jaiswal, who is a former Superintendent of Education with the Peel District School Board, a consultant, a coach, an international professional development facilitator, and probably all kinds of other things related to education and training. So we're really happy to have Nina with us today and she's going to be talking to us a little bit about international exchanges and some of the work that she's done in international settings to develop the capacity of leaders both here in Canada and in other parts of the world and what that brings to her practice as a facilitator and a consultant and what it does to enhance the learning of school leaders. So welcome Nina. We're really delighted to have you here today. And before, you know, we kind of dig into the international educational development topic, maybe you could just take a minute or two to introduce yourself and talk a little bit about your own leadership journey and what's kind of brought you to this point.

Nina Jaiswal [00:02:10]:

Thanks, Lawrence. I kind of fell into a lot of my international work. So I started out, after I retired from the public board, I decided to start up my own consulting business in education. I guess over the first few months I grew from providing professional development workshops to local private schools into providing professional development to international organizations. And that sort of started out and kick started me into the international world because after that I sort of aligned myself with the Ontario Principals Council's International Division and the University of Toronto at OISE. They also have their own international leadership program. And so both organizations hired me as a consultant. And so between the two organizations, I've had the privilege of working with a lot of different countries, actually globally.

Nina Jaiswal [00:03:17]:

I've worked with countries from South America to Europe and into Asia. That kind of includes online in addition to in person facilitating. So I've, I had a chance to work in Saudi Arabia for about three months last year. I've also gone to Sweden several times working on executive leadership training with their leaders. So from directors to principals and vice principals. And it's been really exciting. I've also worked with leaders in Korea and Peru and I'm currently just planning some more opportunities, Middle Eastern countries. I've also done some writing for Dubai and it's all sort of been executive leadership related.

Nina Jaiswal [00:04:10]:

And that's, that's sort of my international work. And then in terms of locally, I work with school boards. I'm still kind of dabbling in the, in the superintendent realm. So I'm covering, doing some coverages for school boards and also doing a lot of workshops. And I like to customize workshops. So when I, when I work with administrators, I ensure that

I talk to them and I get to know their staff so that I can provide workshops that are meaningful and purposeful to them.

Lawrence DeMaeyer [00:04:47]:

So you've had lots of different sort of exposure to different, I guess, educational locations and jurisdictions, I guess. And you know, when you think about the learning needs that you've kind of been working with or identifying among school leaders in different parts of the world, what stands out to you as maybe some of the similarities or big differences maybe in learning needs across some of those jurisdictions?

Nina Jaiswal [00:05:13]:

So one of the things that stand out for me was I expected to see huge differences in the way that Ontario schools, you know, run their schools operationally and even in terms of instruction and leadership. And I found the opposite. I found that there's more similarities than there are differences. And the beauty of being able to work with such diverse geographical locations is coming back with a lot of learning. So it's very bi directional, that's how I would describe it. So I'm going to give, you know, to certain communities and to certain districts. So I'm, I'm facilitating, I'm sharing my knowledge, I'm sharing my stories, which they love. They love to hear about how different systems run their schools.

Nina Jaiswal [00:06:08]:

So I do a lot of sharing and teaching, but at the same time I always learn from them. And in Ontario, we do a great job in leadership. I think that's a strength that we have. We also have a lot of cutting edge instructional strategies. We're on top of a lot of change that we see that's coming, that's coming through in, in terms of even artificial intelligence. You know, we're up on the workshops and providing a lot of training to our schools and our staff, but we also could learn. And I'm going to just kind of throw this in there. I think we could learn more about wellness from other countries and you know, and I take Sweden as an example because I'm just blown away.

Nina Jaiswal [00:06:58]:

Every time I go. I always have a day where it's dedicated just to school visits. And they are doing a lot of work in terms of developing strategies to meet the needs of students and staff and in our, in their school system. So they have a lot of cutting edge ideas in terms of sort of addressing mental health.

Lawrence DeMaeyer [00:07:26]:

So I'm picking up there that, you know, this kind of cross pollination, like your, your experiences in being immersed in different countries, in different contexts for school leadership. I'm thinking about, you know, when you're back here and you're, as you said, you're, you're still active in school districts here in Ontario. You mentioned that sort of focus on wellness and mental health. Perhaps. But are there some other things that you've picked up from other places that you think are really enriching or informing your practice back here or things you're sharing with school leaders back in Ontario that you think are really helpful or useful in terms of new ideas?

Nina Jaiswal [00:08:07]:

So if we look around our landscape, we've had a lot of teachers coming in from different countries. And you know, as a former principal, I would, I would say that we provide a lot of coaching and mentoring to new staff when they come into the building. You know, oftentimes partnering them with another experienced teacher on staff, maybe the same grade level. And I think that it's worthwhile to know. Note that a lot of the teachers that we hire from different countries have a lot of the knowledge they have, the resilience and the, the collaborative skills that we develop here. So I, I don't think we give enough credit in terms of how much these teachers are coming in with. What I'm going to suggest is that we just spend the time when we mentor to do the check ins, but also take the time to get to know what individual teachers are coming in with, what are their skill sets and not jump to the conclusion that they may not know a lot of our, what, what we do in our system. I think they actually have a lot of knowledge, they have a lot of skill sets.

Nina Jaiswal [00:09:21]:

And we as administrators need to find out where we can do the supporting and what the gaps are. Because it's not the same. It's not the same for every teacher who's coming in. Depending on where they're coming in from, there are certain areas that we can definitely leverage in terms of strengths and then there are certain skill sets that we may need to support. But take the time to get to know the teachers, because when I see the teachers who I'm working with or the administrators in a global context, there's a lot of strengths that I don't think we realize are out there.

Lawrence DeMaeyer [00:09:59]:

And what have you noticed about school districts, if that's even a thing, in some of the places where you've been. But, you know, even school authorities like the kinds of training or support that they're giving to school leaders to get them ready to be effective practitioners in schools. Are there big differences, do you think, or do you think that the training that they're provided and the kind of learning that they're engaged in before they become school leaders is similar to what we're doing here in Ontario?

Nina Jaiswal [00:10:26]:

I think we have a lot of similar hot areas. Change management is like, it's huge. And I think globally, there's been so much movement in terms of how education is presented to our communities, and we need to keep up with it. And I don't think it matters where in the world we are. I think everyone recognizes that education is evolving very rapidly. And so as administrators, we need to support them in terms of having the tools to keep up with that change. It seems to be happening faster than ever.

Lawrence DeMaeyer [00:11:07]:

And if you're thinking about, you know, all of the things that you've. The conversations that you've been engaged in and the thinking that you've been involved in and, you know, facilitating and supporting this leadership development in other locations, if you were going to identify, you know, a couple of big ideas that you think are really important or transferable to school leaders here in Ontario, what, what would they be like? Some things that you've observed that that would be really helpful.

Nina Jaiswal [00:11:34]:

So I think building relationships, we talk about that all the time. And that that comes up over and over in, in. In all the groups that I work with. And it looks different. So building relationships in one part of the world looks very different from, like, North America. So I think it's important to know, again, when we're working with staff from other countries, that their idea of what a healthy working relationship with their supervisor is going to be very different than what you or I would think of when you're supervising. It's important to acknowledge and. And recognize that.

Nina Jaiswal [00:12:14]:

And like my example would be in Asia, there is very much a little bit of distance between a supervisor and an employee. And it's not to say that there isn't that, you know, the respect between them. They just. They work with the acknowledgement that a supervisor is at a different level. And so when you're communicating. It's going to appear to be a little bit more formal than what we might expect in Canada. And that's not to say that they're any less effective than we would be, but those are the pieces that I think it's important when we talk about cultural diversity. It's important to recognize that, that different cultures will manage relationships differently in the workplace.

Lawrence DeMaeyer [00:13:11]:

I guess that's kind of, you know, the cultural responsiveness that we're hoping that, you know, all educators are kind of taking with them into their spaces. Right?

Nina Jaiswal [00:13:22]:

Yeah. Yeah.

Lawrence DeMaeyer [00:13:24]:

So, you know, as we kind of get near the end of the conversation here, I'm just kind of wondering, you know, what other learnings that you've kind of picked up from, you know, these experiences, you know, a key takeaway that you think our listeners would be really interested in or, you know, something that might entice them to get involved in some international experiences of their own.

Nina Jaiswal [00:13:49]:

Yeah, so I, I just. There's so much. It's such a rich experience to be able to go out and, and see what people in other parts of the world are doing and how they're doing, how they're doing things. So I, I just. My advice would be to. To embrace any opportunity that comes by to be able to go and immerse yourself in a different culture. Because at the end of the

day, we're. We're all educators.

Nina Jaiswal [00:14:21]:

So. So that piece doesn't change that knowledge is, is the same no matter where you go. Even, even operationally. We do things very similarly to, you know, what our counterparts in Asia or Europe are going to do in terms of running our schools. But there's a lot of nuances that you only pick up when you immerse yourself and you start having those dialogues and you have those professional talks in workshops or when you visit schools and you're talking to teachers. So I think it's worthwhile to bring that passion that we all have to different landscapes, find out what's out there, and if you can visit a different country and get into other schools and classrooms, do it.

Lawrence DeMaeyer [00:15:13]:

I guess this is a good place for me to insert a shameless plug for OPC's international exchange program. And certainly that's one opportunity or one way that people can get involved in experiencing the educational experience in other locations around the world. So certainly we'd encourage our listeners to check that out on the website if they're interested in that. So. Well, Nina, I really want to thank you for spending some time with us today and for sharing some of your knowledge and experience with international professional development and leadership development. Your time and your expertise is much appreciated.

Nina Jaiswal [00:15:52]:

Thank you. Thanks for having me.

Susie Lee-Fernandes [00:15:56]:

We hope that you have enjoyed this episode of the Leadership Talks podcast where we engage in authentic conversations with school leaders. Please share with your friends and colleagues and we hope you will join us again.

Lawrence DeMaeyer [00:16:10]:

If you have a passion or story to share as an educational leader, or would like to find out more about the other amazing professional learning opportunities offered by the opc, please visit our website by clicking on the link in the Show Notes.