

# Kairaranga

Weaving educational threads. Weaving educational practice.





**FRONT COVER**

**Stephanie Smith**

**Age 12, Year 8**

**Maniototo Area School, Ranfurly**

Maniototo Area School is a small (U4) school in Central Otago. The school provides tailored and individualised programmes to meet the diverse interests, strengths and needs of every student. We have close links into our community that support learning as well as participation in sport. These links also ensure children have a strong sense of who they are and where they come from. Our local setting is used extensively to give authentic contexts to learning. Students with special needs who have found it difficult to cope in larger school settings thrive in the inclusive, small classes and family atmosphere of Maniototo.

We benefit from a close and positive partnership with our (RTL) who provides excellent support for students, their families and teachers. The RTL's clarity in explaining options and ideas, and the implications of actions or programmes, is highly valued and makes the advice practical and accessible. Students with special needs, their families and teachers also benefit from the expertise and support of local Special Education personnel.



**MASSEY UNIVERSITY**  
**INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION**  
**TE KURA O TE MĀTAURANGA**

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## Editorial

Kia ora tātou and welcome to the first edition of Kairaranga for 2014. If you think that you are suffering from information overload, you are probably right. This month a British newspaper, the Telegraph, reported that we are living in a society overloaded with information where people are bombarded by the equivalent of 174 newspapers of data/facts/information every day. Faced with this amount of information, it might be tempting to switch off and ignore it. For some information, this might not be a problem. However, changing times bring with it the requirement for new knowledge and understandings. If, as Higgins (2009) points out, we are to take our place and participate within society, fulfill our potential and make a positive contribution for subsequent generations, we will need to become life-long learners, open to new information and knowledge. Of particular relevance to readers of this journal is the need for teachers to be life-long learners. However, given the sheer amount of information available to teachers, how do they negotiate accessing information for the purposes of their professional learning?

One of the ways that teachers can access information and learning is through the reading of professional journals such as Kairaranga. Kairaranga is a New Zealand educational journal that highlights evidence-based practice from a range of perspectives and sources including parents/whanau, children, teachers and educational researchers. Currently, Kairaranga is available in hard copy only. We know from feedback that busy teachers and other professionals like to have a hard copy available to them that they can pick up from the lunch room/staffroom table. However, we would be very interested in our readers' thoughts about the journal being available online as well. In this regard, we would like you to provide us with your opinion about this by way of a quick online survey available at this URL:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MLNKPRS>

And now to this edition. The first article by Robyn Stead examines the principle of cultural-responsiveness, highlighting both the research and practice associated with it. Robyn also provides an historical context in which cultural-responsiveness can be considered. Next, Emma Dobson and Janet Gifford-Bryan examine the theory and evidence that underpins the notion of collaborative consultation in education. They draw on a project undertaken involving the transition of students from two special needs classes to a mainstream context. The importance of teaching phonological-based spelling skills is discussed in the next article by Keith Greaney and Alison Arrow, followed by an examination of reciprocal teaching as an evidence-based practice which is authored by Ruth McAllum. The implementation of evidence-based practices is not always easy or straightforward, and in the next article, Robyn Foster examines some of the major barriers and enablers to their implementation.

Michelle Wetherall examines the Incredible Years Parent and Teacher Programmes that have originated from the work of Webster-Stratton. Here she provides a brief background on the programmes and a critical analysis of the issues as identified in current literature. Finally, Chris McMaster focuses on an overarching theme of this journal, that of inclusive education. In his article, which is based on extensive time in the field as part of a doctoral research project, Chris explores essential core elements that allow inclusion to flourish.

We hope that readers enjoy this edition. Thank you to all our contributors.

Ngāmihi nui  
Alison Kearney, for the Kairaranga Editorial Team

Reference: Higgin, S. (1993). Learning to learn. Available at: <http://www.beyondcurrenthorizons.org.uk/learning-to-learn/>

## Kairaranga

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# A Discussion of the Principle of Cultural Responsiveness: From Research to Practice and From History to Today

Robyn Stead

Educational Psychologist



## ABSTRACT

The *Special Education 2000* initiative (Ministry of Education, 1998) led to the creation of the role of Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB). The role was designed to support inclusion, provide consistent service, and bring about improved outcomes for students with learning and behaviour difficulties and their teachers in Years 0–10. Guiding the management and practice of RTLB is the RTLB Toolkit (Ministry of Education, 2011a). Within the Toolkit, seven principles designed to guide RTLB practice are specified. These are: inclusive teaching, culturally-responsive, ecological approach, collaborative and seamless model of practice, strengths-based, reflective, and evidence-based practice. This article focuses specifically on the principle of culturally-responsive practice. It considers current literature and key documents from the Ministry of Education and discusses a case study that draws on a kaupapa Māori framework in order to achieve better outcomes when working with Māori whānau.

## Research Paper

**Key words:** Culturally-responsive practice, kaupapa Māori

## INTRODUCTION

The notion of culturally-responsive practice is critically important to the practice of RTLB. The RTLB Toolkit (Ministry of Education, 2011a) clarifies the meaning of the culturally-responsive principle by linking it closely to another Ministry document *Tātāiako: Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners* (Ministry of Education, 2011b). Tātāiako defines the competencies required for teachers of Māori learners. These competencies are:

- “Wānanga: participating with learners and communities in robust dialogue for the benefit of Māori learners’ achievement

- Whānaungatanga: actively engaging in respectful working relationships with Māori learners, parents, families/whānau, hapū, iwi and the Māori community
- Manaakitanga: showing integrity, sincerity and respect towards Māori beliefs, language and culture
- Tangata Whenuatanga: affirming Māori learners as Māori. Providing contexts for learning where the language, identity and culture of Māori learners and their whānau is affirmed
- Ako: taking responsibility for their own learning and that of Māori learners” (Ministry of Education 2011b, p.4).

In addition, the RTLB Toolkit stipulates that RTLB must meet the needs of Pasifika students and, more broadly, consider culture and identity as it affects these children and young people with whom RTLB work. The particular focus of this article is on cultural-responsiveness as it pertains to working with Māori whānau. Nairn and the National Standing Committee on Bicultural Issues (1997) make it clear that under the obligations of Te Tiriti O Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) the representatives of the Crown (kāwanatanga), must work to guarantee Māori tino rangatiratanga, (autonomy, self-determination). RTLB, as representatives of the crown, have a duty as partners in the Treaty to work to ensure students receive a culturally-responsive education. Developing further understanding of how best to provide a culturally-responsive service to the partners of the Treaty will also provide insight into how to provide a culturally-responsive service in a broader sense.

## THE PAST

Mead (2003) provides insight into the principles of Māori education from pre-European times and how this has affected learning for modern Māori. Mead (2003) notes that learning was highly valued in traditional Māori society, was considered tapu (holy) and strictly governed by tikanga (order). The tikanga associated with learning varied from region to region in specifics but in general followed a pattern.

Students who demonstrated a natural talent for a specific area of learning were selected very carefully from among members of a waka confederation or iwi (people). Religion was an integral part of the teaching and learning and all aspects were governed by ritual. Teaching and learning took place in a sacred space, which was separated from the day-to-day activities of the iwi. Similarly, students were considered tapu while they were engaged in the learning activities and were required to undergo regular rituals to reduce the tapu when they were ready to re-join daily activities. The beginning and end of a course of study was marked by particular rituals, which ensured that the learning was retained. Teaching and learning was considered a communal affair with one main teacher or tohunga who was supported by teaching assistants who provided prompts when needed. Today Māori traditions are continued in a range of educational settings in a variety of ways. Māori medium settings such as Kōhanga Reo or Kura Kaupapa Māori more closely reflect the traditional (culturally-responsive) Māori pedagogy. Mainstream settings provide a variety of attempts to replicate key aspects of traditional education for Māori students. These range from tokenistic attempts to genuine provision of a culturally-responsive environment in which Māori students are able to reach their full potential as Māori.

### Strategies and Approaches: A Responsive Way Forward

Alton-Lee (2003), as part of the *Best Evidence Synthesis* (BES) series, provides educators with ten points which characterise best-teaching practice for diverse students. Alton-Lee (2003) notes that the general make-up of the school-age population in Aotearoa/New Zealand is characterised by its diversity in terms of culture, socio-economic status as well as learning ability. The ten points are as follows:

1. "Quality teaching is focused on student achievement (including social outcomes) and facilitates high standards of student outcomes for heterogeneous groups of students.
2. Pedagogical practices enable classes and other learning groupings to work as caring, inclusive, and cohesive learning communities.
3. Effective links are created between school and other cultural contexts in which students are socialised, to facilitate learning.
4. Quality teaching is responsive to student learning processes.
5. Opportunity to learn is effective and sufficient.
6. Multiple task contexts support learning cycles.
7. Curriculum goals, resources including ICT usage, task design, teaching and school practices are effectively aligned.

8. Pedagogy scaffolds and provides appropriate feedback on students' task engagement.
9. Pedagogy promotes learning orientations, student self-regulation, metacognitive strategies and thoughtful student discourse.
10. Teachers and students engage constructively in goal-oriented assessment." (Alton-Lee, 2003, p.vi-x).

Alton-Lee has provided educators in Aotearoa/New Zealand with a framework within which to consider their practice and whether it fits with best-practice in the area of working with diverse students. The ten points, when considered in the light of the Mead's (2003) work discussed previously, are specifically relevant to culturally-responsive education for Māori students. Point one, which is concerned with student achievement academically as well as socially, is tightly aligned with traditional Māori education where students were expected to reach a high standard of learning and were examined as part of the process to ensure that they had achieved this standard. Point three also aligns closely with Mead's (2003) discussion of the way that modern Māori education includes the tikanga of traditional education in a variety of ways. Mead gives examples of this, for example indigenising western traditions such as graduation ceremonies into a hui whakapūmau (knowledge binding), or inviting kapa haka groups to perform at education-related events.

Evidence from the area of applied psychology can be used to support the practice of RTLB under the principle of culturally-responsive practice. Macfarlane, Blampied and Macfarlane (2011) focus attention on assessment. They define assessment broadly, suggesting that it takes place as a natural and common aspect of all human interactions – something that is universal. This type of assessment takes place in all phases of the RTLB intervention cycle. It starts from the moment the referral is received when assessments are made about the type of case this might be and who the best RTLB might be to work on it. Assessment continues through initial meetings to closure when the RTLB may be assessing the sustainability of the intervention and whether it is viable to close the case. Considered in this way the importance of understanding assessment when providing a culturally-responsive service is clear. Macfarlane et al., (2011) suggest that this kind of assessment helps people to make sense of, and understand, themselves and others. The key competencies (Ministry of Education, 2007) exemplify this kind of conceptualisation of assessment. RTLB can use the key competencies as a way of understanding the situations in which they are called on to intervene.

The New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) is the pivotal document under which all public education in Years 0-13 takes place. This document provides a set of key competencies which cover all the learning areas. The key competencies are developmental, designed to be taught and learned at all levels and can be used by learners to approach all the areas of the curriculum. These key competencies, thinking, using language, symbols, and texts, managing self, relating to others, and participating and contributing (Ministry of Education, 2007) can be used to understand issues of culture and are therefore integral to providing a culturally-responsive RTLB service.

One of the challenges identified by Macfarlane et al., (2011) is 'stereotype threat'. 'Stereotype threat' is activated when negative attitudes and assumptions are held by members of one group about members of others. This threat usually involves members of a majority group who may make negative assumptions about members of a minority group. It impacts negatively on achievement or performance of members of the negatively stereotyped group. Given that the majority of RTLB come from the dominant culture and that many of their clients will come from minority cultures, it is important that RTLB are aware of this challenge. Macfarlane et al., (2011) suggest a simple and effective method of countering the effect of 'stereotype threat'. This involves both parties in the interaction prior to engagement imagining a scripted intervention which is positive from beginning to end. Further details of this technique and other useful suggestions, for example, involving kaitakawaenga (cultural consultants) and kaumātua (senior Māori; elders), having an awareness of self, and to seeking out models of practice specifically designed to support cultural-responsiveness are expanded by Macfarlane et al., in their article.

Mahuika, Berryman and Bishop (2011) have provided educators with a critical review of assessment practices relevant to Māori students. An important issue which they raise is how to provide culturally-responsive pedagogy, which does not suggest that Māori needs are so different and in some way homogeneous that they are unable to be supported by what is known to be best-practice. Instead, they suggest a starting place is to look at how Pākehā educators, as members of the dominant culture, have been unaware and unresponsive to the way that minority cultures have their differences highlighted constantly as they interact with the dominant culture. In order to remedy this situation, Pākehā educators need to make themselves aware of these differences and the inequities, which are created when teachers are members of the dominant culture. Mahuika et al.,

(2011) cite Alton-Lee (2003) specifically on formative assessment. This provides learners with information on next steps and creates opportunities for teachers to engage with students in a constructive manner as they work to improve their learning. Another important guidepost provided for RTLB in providing a culturally-responsive service is the concept of agentic teachers. Mahuika et al., (2011) suggest that it is important for educators not to become caught up in what they cannot control, such as a student's socio-economic status or previous educational history. Instead, they provide a model of an agentic teacher who theorises in a positive way about the opportunities education can provide a student. Other suggestions made by Mahuika et al., (2011) include inquiry teaching and learning, and the use of portfolio assessment rather than heavy reliance on summative assessment, which does not allow for continuous teaching and learning cycles.

Bevan-Brown has written extensively (2000, 2003, 2011) on the theme of ensuring that the educational systems and programmes used by schools and teachers are culturally-responsive. By way of these publications she has created a framework which is user-friendly, flexible and non-prescriptive. Educators, including RTLB, can use this framework to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the services provided in light of cultural-responsiveness. The framework includes eight principles which have been identified as pivotal to Māori culture in relation to education. Each principle is supported by questions to guide inquiry into it. The model is cyclical rather than static, with the expectation that professionals will continue to engage with it and make changes in practice to improve outcomes for Māori students.

A kaupapa Māori framework for professionals working directly with individual Māori students is Te Pikinga ki Runga: Raising possibilities (Macfarlane, 2009). Te Pikinga ki Runga includes both the key competencies (Ministry of Education, 2007) and Te Tiriti o Waitangi as integral to the work. In some ways, this model could be compared to the work of Durie (1998) on models of Māori health and wellbeing such as *Whare Tapa Whā*, or Pere on *Te Wheke* (Pere, 1988). What makes Te Pikinga ki Runga unique is that it has been designed specifically with education in mind. Notably, it does not include the concept of wairua or spiritually. Macfarlane (2009) argues for this exclusion by saying that there is a consensus among both Māori and non-Māori that educators do not have the skills to respond appropriately to this aspect of the Māori worldview. An important feature of Te Pikinga ki Runga (Macfarlane, 2009) is the Te Huia grid, which is a set of guiding questions from the body of the framework under the Protection principle of the Treaty of

Waitangi. This is defined in terms of education as enhancing the well-being of the tamaiti in the domains of hononga (relational aspects), hinengaro (psychological aspects), tinana (physical aspects) and mauri (essence and potential). As part of my work as an RTLB I have used Te Pikinga ki Runga (Macfarlane, 2009) as I work to be culturally-responsive.

### **Practical Application of the Model or Perhaps just Case Study?**

Manu (name has been changed to preserve confidentiality) has a cultural background which is both Pasifika and Māori. The whānau has strong roots in both cultures and both cultures are robustly represented in the current life of this student. Manu was referred to the RTLB service because of outbursts in which he threatened to harm himself. The school requested support to reduce the intensity and frequency of these outbursts. Initial data gathering demonstrated that Manu had developed a good relationship with his classroom teacher and with one of the deputy principals in the school. His teacher could identify when Manu was beginning to become overly-aroused which led to self-harm. When this happened, she was able to call the deputy principal who would take Manu to her office for some time-out. Manu was eventually able to calm himself and would return to class. Manu was struggling to achieve at similar levels to his peers and was receiving targeted reading and writing instruction but was continuing to make slow progress towards his learning goals. Discussion with Manu and observation indicated that Manu responded positively to rewards such as table points, lollies and certificates of recognition at weekly assemblies. After an initial meeting with Manu's family to gather some background information, the team agreed to have a collaborative meeting to discuss the situation and decide what would be the best way to intervene to support Manu. When I made the appointment with the whānau, I talked about Te Pikinga ki Runga and asked if they thought this might be a useful tool for us. Both parents were keen to try it.

We began by talking about the format of Te Pikinga ki Runga and how it reflected the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, the key competencies, as well as Te Huia. The information which came out of this meeting was rich and relevant to the situation. Both parents were present and shared the contexts of their families as it had meaning for their son. It became clear that within the extended family there were many strengths and that Manu was part of an interconnected chain of people. After reflection, the team agreed that Manu was experiencing grief and loss associated with the death of his maternal

grandparents. This was compounded by his eldest sister's recent move away overseas. Some of the information shared by the school at this meeting confirmed that Manu associated this move with the death of his grandparents. The extreme nature of Manu's outbursts was more understandable to the team once we clarified that he seemed to believe that his sister and her children were gone permanently in the same way that his grandparents were gone from his life.

The interventions discussed reflected the rich information which came through as we discussed Te Huia. The whānau made plans to consult rangatira who could help Manu to clarify grief and loss, and to come to a more healthy understanding of his grandparents' deaths and his sister's move. The school discussed a programme which was running in the school specifically for children to work through grief and loss, and, with the permission of his parents, scheduled Manu to become involved in this group. The team agreed on a behaviour plan to work with Manu's competitive nature by teaching some desired behaviours and provide the kinds of rewards he preferred when he demonstrated these positive behaviours. A learning intervention plan was created which focused on teaching of decoding skills using Nicholson's reading lessons from the Phonics Handbook (Nicholson, 2005). This evidence-based programme provides small and achievable steps for the learner so that Manu was able to gain a sense of success in his daily literacy lessons, which rewarded him for making steady progress. Finally, Manu's parents decided to use Skype more frequently so that Manu could talk to his sister and her children as often as he wished, to continue to build confidence that these relationships were on-going.

Some of the outcomes from this meeting are that Manu is now making steady progress with his literacy learning. He has improved two reading levels in one term, his literacy programme teacher reports that he is always on time for lessons, is well-prepared and ready to engage with the learning. There has been a reduction in the incidences of extreme behaviour. Manu's parents report that they are pleased with his progress and he is doing well at home. He is just beginning the school-based programme for children who have experienced grief and loss, and the team are tailoring the behaviour support plan to manage some new behaviours which have emerged but are significantly less-challenging than the original behaviours.

## CONCLUSION AND PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Te Pikinga ki Runga provides a place for RTLB to start their work with Māori families. As a practitioner who stands outside this culture and is a member of the dominant Pakeha culture I can use this as my guide. A point which Mead (2003) raises is that, to Māori, knowledge is sacred and as such, tapu. It is my belief that the situation described above has developed in a positive way because the family understood that I respected them and their son, and that my sole aim was to work to create the conditions that would make it possible for him to be successful on his own terms. As a professional, I place myself on a continuum of cultural understanding. A danger for all professionals is that we do not know what we do not know. In order to learn more about this we have to be prepared to take risks, look for insights in the literature and ask for feedback from those with whom we interact.

RTLB are in a unique and privileged position within education. We have the opportunity to have influence in a wide range of schools and with a wide range of students, teachers and families. We are able to interact with whānau in ways that it is sometimes difficult for teachers to do as we can be seen as independent from individual schools. The challenge associated with this is that we do not always have the consistent support of cultural advisors as we provide our service. It is our job as professionals to turn to the literature, attend quality professional development and to use the tools we have at hand to ensure that the students, schools and families we serve are able to succeed on their own terms as Māori, Pasifika or any other culture. We are at a point in time in the development of our country and our profession where there is a wide range of literature and research available to us to provide guidance on cultural-responsiveness. The New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) has embedded within it the key competencies which are tools we can use to support cultural-responsiveness. Documents such as *Tātaiako* and *Ka Hikatia* (Ministry of Education, 2011b) provide specific guidance in best practice for teachers and for teaching Māori students. My own experience in working in a culturally-responsive manner is that all that I learn has relevance for all the students I work with. As I learn more about being culturally-responsive, I become a more responsive practitioner for all my students.

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**Robyn Stead**



**Robyn Stead** is an Educational Psychologist who works as a Practice Leader in the Howick/Pakuranga/Flatbush/South Otara RTLB cluster. Robyn has taught in both the United States and New Zealand which has given her an interest in, and opportunities to learn about, working in a culturally-responsive way. A chance meeting with a senior Māori educator and some challenging questioning prompted her to learn more about Te Pikinga ki Runga as a way of supporting the work of RTLB.

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# Collaborative-Consultation: A Pathway for Transition

Emma Dobson

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**Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, Engari he toa takitini.**

***Success is not the work of one, but the work of many.***

## ABSTRACT

Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTL B) are specialised teachers who work in regular schools to help facilitate the presence, participation and learning of students who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour. In focusing upon the RTL B principle of a 'collaborative and seamless model of service' (Ministry of Education, 2012a), this article examines the theory and evidence that underpins this principle, drawing upon research from overseas and New Zealand. In order to critique the RTL B principle of collaborative consultation in practice, a project undertaken by the authors involving the transition of students from two special classes to a mainstream context is discussed. This discussion reflects on the importance of RTL B working in a collaborative consultation model with school management and staff, the students, parents/whanau and the Ministry of Education, Special Education (MOE:SE) in order to enable positive outcomes for all those involved.

## Research Paper

**Keywords:** *Collaboration, consultation, inclusion, RTL B role, transition.*

## INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has been a major focus of the New Zealand government for the last 15 years. The recent policy, *Success for All – Every School, Every Child* (Ministry of Education (MOE), 2010), aims to create "a fully inclusive education system of confident schools, confident children and confident parents" (MOE, 2010, p.1). The government has set a target of 100 percent of schools demonstrating inclusive practice by the year 2014. In order to help achieve this, the Ministry of Education has developed a set of initiatives and activities (MOE, 2010).

One such initiative is the Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTL B). RTL B are experienced teachers who are trained to support students who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour. They do this by working collaboratively with class teachers, students, parents/whanau and other professionals in order to develop class or school-wide programmes. RTL B are itinerant teachers, working across clusters of schools. There are approximately 1000 RTL B in New Zealand working in 40 clusters throughout the country. RTL B are managed by Cluster Managers situated in base schools.

A guiding document for RTL B practice is the *RTL B Toolkit: Professional Practice* (MOE, 2012a). This is a document that outlines the professional principles and practices of RTL B work. The *RTL B Toolkit* outlines seven guiding principles of RTL B practice.

These are:

1. Inclusive teaching.
2. Culturally responsive.
3. Ecological approach.
4. Collaborative and seamless model of service.
5. Strengths-based.
6. Reflective.
7. Evidence based. (MOE, 2012a, p. 31-33).

This article investigates the evidence base that underpins one of these principles, that of a 'collaborative and seamless model of service' through examining relevant theory and research. An example of the principle from RTL B practice will then be discussed, with conclusions drawn in terms of lessons learned and the role of this principle for RTL B. The example presented, which is based on qualitative evidence, focuses on a year-long project involving the transition of nine students from two special classes to the mainstream at a multicultural primary school in a major city in New Zealand. While it is recognised that this example could be applied to the six other principles outlined above, such as inclusive teaching and strengths-based, for the purposes of this article the principle of a 'collaborative and

seamless model of service' is the focus. In this regard, the authors acknowledge, as the two RTLB involved in this project, the importance of working collaboratively with the students, parents/whanau, school management and staff, and the Ministry of Education, Special Education (MOE: SE), in order to ensure a positive transition process.

### **Collaborative-consultation: Definition and theory**

The *RTLB Toolkit* identifies a model of collaborative consultation as underpinning the principle of a 'collaborative and seamless model of service' (MOE, 2012a). This model is fundamental to the ten-step practice sequence<sup>1</sup> as outlined in the *RTLB Toolkit: Professional Practice* (MOE, 2012a). Moreover, collaborative consultation is an integral part of interprofessional practice, which has historically been associated with the health profession where it has been beneficial in providing coordinated healthcare services that best meet the needs of the client/patient (Faresjo, 2006).

In order to facilitate effective collaborative consultation, the *Interprofessional Education Collaborative Expert Panel* (IECEP) (2011) has identified four competency domains for interprofessional collaborative practice – values and ethics, roles and responsibilities, communication, and teamwork. While these competencies were developed for the American health sector, Mentis, Kearney and Bevan-Brown (2013) state that they are relevant to all interprofessional teams.

Within the education context, Mitchell (2008), in citing the work of Idol, Nevin and Paolucci-Whitcomb (1994), defines collaboration "as a process that enables groups of people with diverse expertise to combine their resources to generate solutions to problems over a period of time" (p. 60). Such collaboration among educational practitioners, parents/whanau, students and other professionals is imperative when meeting the special education needs of students in an inclusive education paradigm (Mitchell, 2010). Mentis, Quinn and Ryba (2005) characterise collaborative consultation as an interactive process whereby a problem-solving model is used in order that "the 'whole' student is considered rather than each team member working in isolation on a 'piece' of the student" (p. 80).

Collaborative consultation is facilitated through team members recognising the professionals they learn with, from and about, and how, through drawing on other

members' knowledge, they can learn new information, thereby increasing their own understandings i.e. *interprofessional education* (Mentis et al., 2013). However, if effective connections are to be developed, educational practitioners also need to value the cultures of their students' families, and parents need to learn about and value the educational culture of the school. This reflects the principle of *ako* (reciprocal learning and teaching), which Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd (2009) posit is fundamental to developing connections that work.

### **Collaborative-consultation: The evidence base**

When reviewing the evidence on the impact of collaborative consultation on the learning outcomes for students, there is limited research-based evidence to support its effectiveness (Mitchell, 2008; Gable, Mostert & Tonelson, 2004). While the setting up of consultation models in education is encouraged, research-based support "has been accumulating only slowly" (Mitchell, 2008, p.64). There is, however, numerous literature from overseas and New Zealand that examines different models of collaborative consultation, the competencies and skills needed for working collaboratively, and the perceived benefits and barriers of working collaboratively for team members (Dettmer, Thurston & Dyck, 2005; Mentis et al., 2013; Mitchell, 2010; Snell & Janney, 2000; Todd, 2007; Westling & Fox, 2009).

An area that has been researched extensively internationally, and which links to collaborative consultation, is the effectiveness of parental involvement in facilitating student achievement (Mitchell, 2010). Hattie (2009), from his meta-analyses, calculated a moderate positive effect size<sup>2</sup> for parental involvement on student achievement of 0.51, while Jeynes (2005) found high positive effect sizes from 0.7 to 0.74 in his meta-analysis on the relationship between parental involvement and the academic achievement of urban elementary school students. In addition to student achievement, Hornby (2011) notes that other benefits of parental involvement include improved student attitudes, attendance and behaviour, as well as increased confidence and satisfaction for parents, and improved parent-teacher relationships for school staff. While the benefits of parental involvement are apparent, Hornby (2011) cautions that merely involving parents in school activities is insufficient, as productive partnerships need to emphasise two-way communication and the development of a partnership between the school and parents.

<sup>1</sup> The ten steps are referral, initial meeting, data gathering, analysis, goal setting, planning, intervention/implementation, monitoring, post-data gathering/follow-up, and reflection, review and closure. The steps are not linear and may not always be followed in order. New information may require going back to a previous step in the practice sequence (MOE, 2012a).

<sup>2</sup> Hattie (2003) identifies the effect size of 0.4 to be an average effect size for any educational intervention.

In focusing on Pasifika students' literacy and learning skills within the New Zealand education context, Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'aoi, Taleni and O'Regan (2009) also support the importance of home-school relationships in advancing students' learning. The authors suggest that the face-to-face *talanoa* approach could be a possible framework for building collaboration between Pasifika families and schools (Fletcher et al., 2009). Through analysing Maori whanau experiences of special education, Wilkie, Berryman, Himona and Paul (2001) also espouse the importance of schools showing awareness of culturally-responsive practices, such as *tikanga* (Maori protocols/customs) and a commitment to the three principles of the Treaty of Waitangi - partnership, protection and participation. However, Biddulph, Biddulph and Biddulph (2003) note that not all partnerships are effective, such as those based on deficit views and which are not culturally responsive to the parents/whanau needs.

Recent research by Bevan-Brown et al., (2011) evaluating the *Tips for Autism* professional learning and development programme funded by the Ministry of Education, highlight its success in building collaborative interprofessional teams and developing participants' knowledge and skills relating to Autism Spectrum Disorder. The research implies that it is important for all team members (teachers, parents, teacher-aides and other professionals) to attend the programme as this can have a positive impact on team collaboration (Bevan-Brown et al., 2011). Such collaborative planning will lead to effective outcomes for the focus student (Bevan-Brown et al., 2011).

While the student is not directly involved in the planning team for the *Tips for Autism* programme, this raises the issue of student voice in collaborative consultation. In their report, Mitchell, Morton and Hornby (2010) argue that students can, and should be able to, participate in their own Individual Education Plans, as setting goals for learning is important for all students. However, MacArthur, Kelly and Higgins (2005) state that research evidence has shown that students with special education needs are often not consulted about their educational experiences. For example, in citing the Educable study (2000) from Northern Ireland, MacArthur et al., (2005) report that students would like to have been consulted about their perceptions of their strengths and weaknesses and the level of assistance that they require to achieve their goals.

However, while the Ministry of Education document - *Collaboration for Success: Individual Education Plans* (MOE, 2011) identifies the teacher as an integral part of an interprofessional team when

focusing on students with special education needs, there is limited evidence on the positive effects of the teacher working in a collaborative consultation model. This is because teaching has historically been conducted in isolation, with each teacher responsible for the teaching and learning of the students in their class (Goddard, Goddard & Tschannen-Moran, 2007; Mentis et al., 2013). Goddard et al., (2007), in their study of teacher collaboration for school improvement and student achievement in 47 American elementary schools, maintain that although there is a strong theoretical base for teacher collaboration, there is little research that validates this theory, stating "Indeed, collaboration is often advocated, yet its effects are less frequently investigated" (p. 878). Studies have shown that while collaboration leads to positive outcomes for teachers (Shachar & Shmuelovitz, 1997 and Brownell, Yeager, Rennells & Riley, 1997, cited in Goddard et al., 2007), the majority of evidence on collaboration focuses on the advantages for teachers rather than the benefits for students (Evans-Stout, 1998, cited in Goddard et al., 2007). In their study, Goddard et al., (2007) conclude that teacher collaboration is associated with increased levels of student achievement, as collaboration may foster teacher learning that improves student instruction.

Finally, this raises the question of "What is the role of the RTLB in collaborative consultation?" Thomson (2004) perceives RTLB as the link between research evidence and teachers, referring to them as 'scientist-practitioners', supporting teachers in meeting the needs of students identified as requiring behavioural and learning support. In order to facilitate this collaboration, Thomson et al., (2003) argue that RTLB require the ability to negotiate and coordinate changes in the school environment, acquiring appropriate problem-solving skills.

### **Collaborative-consultation: An example in practice**

In March 2012, the authors were approached by their RTLB cluster manager and the service manager of MOE:SE to undertake a project involving the transition of a group of students from two special classes to the mainstream context at a multicultural primary school. This transition was prompted by the RTLB transformation 2011-2012<sup>3</sup>, and was supported by the vision of the school's senior management to move towards a fully inclusive education environment.

<sup>3</sup> The RTLB Toolkit: Management states that: "The RTLB position is a full-time itinerating role" (MOE, 2012b, p.9). Further to this, the RTLB Toolkit: Professional Practice notes that taking responsibility for a special class or unit is not a task within the RTLB role (MOE, 2012a).

The authors' role, as practicing RTLB employed by the cluster, was to facilitate the transition of the students to a mainstream learning environment through working collaboratively with all key stakeholders (the students, school management and staff, parents/whanau, RTLB and MOE:SE) involved in the project.

The historical context of these special classes within the school and local community was both sensitive and emotionally charged. This was illustrated through the organisation of public meetings, media interviews and online social networking regarding the closure of the classes.

In critiquing this example, the four competencies for effective interprofessional collaborative practice - values and ethics, roles and responsibilities, communication and teamwork – will be drawn upon (IECEP, 2011).

With regard to values and ethics, it is essential that all key stakeholders have shared core values (IECEP, 2011). In this situation, it was working collaboratively to transition students with a diverse range of learning and behaviour needs into an inclusive mainstream learning environment. This involved respecting confidentiality, building a relationship of trust with parents/whanau and school staff, and valuing the knowledge and expertise of all stakeholders. Given the historical context surrounding the closure of the classes, it was important that the authors were sensitive to the views of all stakeholders, while focusing on developing relationships of mutual trust and respect (IECEP, 2011). For example, with regard to the students' mainstream class placements, what the RTLB and school management perceived as appropriate was not necessarily the views of the parents or school staff. Thus, it was significant to recognise the teachers who willingly accepted students from the special classes into their rooms, and in one instance, it was the students who convinced their teacher that a 'special class' student should join their classroom.

The cultural diversity of the school community, which was primarily Maori and Pasifika, highlighted for the authors, as New Zealand European, the limitations of their own cultural competence, particularly with regard to language barriers and cultural protocols. However, as relationships developed with stakeholders, the authors became comfortable seeking advice and working in collaboration. As Mentis et al., (2013) argue, cultural competence is developed through the sharing of cultural knowledge through interprofessional interaction.

In developing roles and responsibilities, a 'transition for inclusion' team was formed. This team included the authors, school management, the RTLB cluster manager and MOE:SE service manager. Team members attended transition update and forward planning meetings on a weekly basis. In their proposed model of a mainstream-special school partnership in promoting inclusion, Gibb, Tunbridge, Chua and Frederickson (2007) identify the role of the inclusion team as a key element in supporting the process of inclusion in the mainstream school. From the authors' experience of this project, we agree with the importance placed on the 'transition for inclusion' team, as without the weekly meetings the momentum of the transition process would not have been maintained.

An outcome of the weekly meetings was the development of a transition action plan. This plan supported the ten-step practice sequence, outlining the process for transition, including a tentative timeline and responsibilities (MOE, 2012a). The plan involved RTLB working collaboratively with stakeholders to collect data, such as interviewing the students, parents and class-based RTLB to obtain their 'voice', as well as setting goals and planning and implementing interventions. This highlighted that while the practice sequence guided RTLB in the transition process, the steps in the sequence are not linear, as RTLB had to be responsive to the needs of the stakeholders, which meant revisiting steps in the sequence as necessary (MOE, 2012a). For example, student perspectives on their transition to the mainstream were sought by the authors, principal and parents before and throughout the transition process in order to help monitor the students' progress in their mainstream classes.

While Wilson and Pirrie (2000) state that teams work best when roles are clarified, the example provided in this article highlights that shared responsibility, along with fluidity of roles, can also be effective. Planning meetings, to ensure the smooth transition of each student to their mainstream class, were held regularly and involved all stakeholders. Although the authors, principal and new class teachers were prepared to take the lead at these meetings, on several occasions the parents naturally led the planning process. The success of this shared responsibility was in part due to there being transparency regarding the reason for undertaking the engagement, ensuring positive participation (Pihama & Penehira, 2005; Todd, 2007).

Open communication was recognised by all stakeholders as playing an important role in facilitating effective collaboration throughout the transition process. In this respect, acknowledging the

different methods of communication, such as email, face-to-face conversations and the telephone, as well as having a good communication network among stakeholders, was pivotal. This meant that concerns from any stakeholder could be addressed quickly and feedback provided (Moltzen, 2005). An example of this was the school's principal liaising daily with each parent via the telephone or face-to-face contact to ensure the transparency of the transition process for their child. This enabled a proactive (rather than reactive) problem-solving approach to be taken. Moreover, allowing sufficient time for meetings enabled stakeholders' views to be openly shared, clarified and discussed. However, while there were no significant breakdowns in communication among stakeholders, it was sometimes difficult to know what information had been shared with whom, such as when a student's home circumstances had changed. As Mentis et al., (2013) posit, poor communication can be a major barrier to collaboration.

Working in the 'transition for inclusion' team provided a forum for those involved in the transition process to come together to share their knowledge and ideas. Throughout this project, teamwork enabled all stakeholders to work together for the same purpose and develop a shared understanding of the best way forward with regard to transitioning the students. However, Snell and Janney (2000) identify lack of training in teamwork as a potential barrier to collaboration. This is because, as Dettmer et al., (2005) note, failure to prepare professionals in collaborative consultation strategies will "short-circuit well-meaning intentions for those with special needs" (p. 42). Nevertheless, this raises the issue of what this 'training' should look like. While it could be argued that the competencies of values and ethics, roles and responsibilities and communication support the development of teamwork, teamwork could also be seen as learned through experience, involving stakeholders learning with, from, and about each other (Mentis et al., 2013).

In this respect, teamwork not only involves working with students, school staff and parents/whanau, it also includes RTLB working in pairs or teams (MOE, 2012a). This project was co-worked by two RTLB. The size and scope of the project meant that it was more feasible for it to be co-worked, and as such, a more 'open' approach to be taken i.e. 'two heads are better than one'. An example of effective RTLB teamwork was in the planning and delivery of professional development on inclusive education to school staff. This professional development was based on teachers' responses to survey questions about teaching students with diverse educational needs. From the information gathered, the authors worked

collaboratively to provide professional development that would ensure all staff developed a shared understanding of inclusive education.

Providing professional development on inclusive education helped to facilitate a positive understanding of the students in the special classes. This is because, as Monsen and Frederickson (2004) argue, teachers who espouse very positive attitudes towards inclusive policies and practices communicate these to their students who, in turn, develop a positive perception of their learning environment.

### **Collaborative-consultation: Lessons learned**

As a result of transitioning the students into their mainstream classrooms, one of the key 'lessons learned' by the authors in the collaborative-consultation process was the importance of flexibility and being responsive to the wants, needs and concerns of all stakeholders involved. For example, the transition plan developed for one student was intended to take approximately three weeks, increasing from introductory class visits, to half-day and then full-day inclusion. However, in practice this student clearly expressed to their parent, new class teacher and the school's principal, a desire to be in their mainstream class full-time after two visits. All stakeholders agreed and the original transition plan was adapted to meet the student's request. As the IECEP (2011) points out, in focusing on the healthcare context, it is important to place the interests of the client at the centre of the collaborative consultative process.

Given the challenging historical context around the closure of the special classes and initial preconceived deficit views regarding the ability of the students from some stakeholders, the authors focused on using a strengths-based approach to ensure positive collaborative consultation occurred. Such an approach also supported a shift in the parents' perceptions of their child's ability, as prior to RTLB intervention most were apprehensive that their child's needs could be met in a mainstream context. Moreover, a strengths-based approach reinforced the importance of RTLB gathering data from a variety of sources in order to ensure that it was ecologically-focused.

The buy-in of all stakeholders, through sharing a vision of moving towards an inclusive mainstream education environment, was vital to the success of this project. According to Wilson and Pirrie (2000), teams that develop a shared vision gain in confidence and are inspired to learn. RTLB could also be perceived as what Thomson (2004) describes as 'scientist-practitioners', facilitating the link between the theory/research evidence and the teacher in the classroom. This was evident in the planning

meetings held for each student's transition, whereby RTLB supported the parents and new class teachers to collaboratively set goals that were realistic and achievable. Further to this, the value of financial support cannot be underestimated in facilitating the shared vision. The RTLB *Learning Support Fund* was used to provide teachers with release from their classrooms to participate in transition planning meetings during the school day. As such, RTLB acknowledged the heavy demands placed on teachers and the lack of teacher time available for consultation and meetings (Kearney & Carroll-Lind, 2005).

If such a project were to be undertaken again, there are two aspects that should be considered for change. The first is that it would be beneficial for RTLB to have prior experience of the school in which the project takes place. The authors did not have this opportunity, and as such, this meant it took time for RTLB to establish relationships with the school staff and community. The second aspect of change relates to providing feedback. Wilson and Pirrie (2000) espouse the value of team members being provided with feedback on their performance, and Gable et al., (2004) believe that successful collaboration is most likely to occur when all members are able to evaluate every collaborative process and outcome. While stakeholders regularly reflected on the wellbeing of the students being transitioned, the type of feedback provided to the authors on their performance was of a general nature. Such feedback would have been beneficial, as the authors could have used this to reflect on their practice and therefore consider whether a 'collaborative and seamless model of service' was being provided (MOE, 2012a).

Thus, this raises the question of "What is the role of collaborative consultation in RTLB practice?" It is evident that without effective collaboration in the RTLB role, the government's vision under *Success for All* of creating "a fully inclusive education system of confident schools, confident children and confident parents" will not be realised (MOE, 2010, p.1). This is because collaboration facilitates the six other principles that guide RTLB practice through all stakeholders learning with, from, and about each other in order to improve the educational outcomes for diverse learners.

## CONCLUSION

Through investigating the evidence base that underpins the RTLB principle of 'collaboration and a seamless model of service', it is evident that there is limited research to support its effectiveness in the learning outcomes for students, both in an international and New Zealand context. This may

be due to models of interprofessional collaboration being traditionally associated with the health sector. Moreover, teaching has historically been perceived as an act that takes place in isolation. However, in order to implement the New Zealand government's vision under *Success for All* of a fully-inclusive education system, collaboration has become essential, as evidenced through this being one of the principles guiding RTLB practice.

The example provided of transitioning students from two special classes to a mainstream context demonstrates the importance of all stakeholders working in a collaborative consultation model. In order to support such a model, it is evident that the four competencies for effective interprofessional collaboration (values and ethics, roles and responsibilities, communication, and teamwork) should be considered. Through integrating best-evidence with practitioners' professional knowledge and judgement, and with the preferences and needs of students, school staff, parents/whanau, this has enabled positive outcomes for all those involved in the transition project.

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# The Importance of Teaching Phonological-Based Spelling Skills

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## ABSTRACT

In a recent study we (Greaney & Arrow, 2009) undertook an analysis of the types of spelling errors that students had made during a National Education Monitoring Project writing task (Crooks, Flockton & White, 2007). We discussed several issues related to spelling, including the value of analysing students' error-response patterns as a way of identifying some of the likely causes for these errors. As Bissaker and Westwood (2006) note "A pattern of errors (miscues) can indicate children's grasp of regular grapho-phonetic relationships and their awareness of less predictable letter sequences" (p. 25). In the current paper the relevance of analysing spelling error-responses as a source of data from which to design further explicit spelling instruction is discussed. Some possible teaching activities that may be used with either small groups or whole classes that aim to develop (in students) a more in-depth orthographic knowledge of words are also presented.

## Practice Paper

**Key Words:** Spelling, spelling error analyses, spelling instruction

## The Importance of Spelling Error Analyses

More than thirty years ago Freyberg (1980) stated that "we need to observe the spelling of individual children more carefully to diagnose the apparent source of their difficulties and to help them overcome these in their own unique way" (p. 246). From his findings Freyberg suggested that teachers needed to include more word study activities as part of their spelling programmes, rather than rely almost entirely on the presentation of weekly lists of words to memorise. Allcock (2005) has also noted the importance of spelling error analysis when she states that "in order to teach students how words work in written English, teachers must have this knowledge themselves. Teachers need to be able to analyse spelling and reading errors to discover the nature of students' errors to inform instruction" (p. 24).

More recently, Brann and Hattie (1995) found in their study of spelling programmes in primary schools that very few teachers were using research-based best practices to teach spelling that involved using explicit word study activities. In this study Brann and Hattie found that the main method of teaching spelling was to use weekly word lists. Joshi, Treiman, Carreker and Moats (2008-2009) also noted that the predominant spelling instruction appeared to be based on the (incorrect) perception that efficient spelling was perceived by teachers to be based mainly on visual memory and was therefore considered a matter of relying mainly on rote memorisation of arbitrary lists of words.

## Why the Reluctance for the Explicit Teaching of Spelling?

It is often assumed (within a pedagogical-constructivist curriculum) that most of a student's spelling needs may be satisfactorily met from personal writing and that teachers need look no further than the students' writing requirements when designing specific interventions. In support of this claim, Croft (2007) argues, for example, that "spelling is a skill best acquired within the context of learning to write provided that all words to be studied are necessary for each individual's writing" (p. 7). This view is also reinforced in the Ministry of Education (2007) text (*Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*) where teachers are reminded that "everything a teacher needs to know about children's developing spelling knowledge is displayed in their writing" (p. 148).

However, it is suggested that if teachers adhere to such a narrow and restrictive source of (writing) data from which to design spelling instruction, the result would likely be failure to address many of the most likely causes of poor spelling. The main reason for this is that the poor spellers are already likely to write fewer words than more competent spellers and furthermore, the words that they do attempt in their writing would most often be the ones they already feel comfortable writing. This finding is supported by earlier research by Freyberg (1980) and

which is reported in Nicholson (2000). On the basis of Freyberg's findings, Nicholson (2000) reports, for example, that "the poor speller writes less and gets less practice in checking spellings, [and], they also tend to write only the words they know how to spell and so do not extend their spelling knowledge" (p. 224).

It is doubtful, therefore, that the errors made in personal writing will contain sufficient *variety* of error types to adequately inform the teacher of all the relevant teaching the poor spellers may need. While some students may develop effective spelling strategies from (and only) their personal writing, there are nevertheless many others who will not develop such strategies without explicit spelling instruction outside and beyond the context of regular writing.

### Reasons for Explicit Spelling Instruction

Explicit phonological-based spelling instruction can serve two purposes. The first is that such instruction enables students to better-understand the nature of the orthographic system of written English and such knowledge assists them to see the level of orthographic transparency at the same time. The second purpose (and value) of including explicit phonological-based spelling instruction is to increase general decoding skills. Because reading and spelling develop to a large extent in a reciprocal way, the skills required for one can be transferred to the other. While not all efficient readers are also efficient spellers, most efficient spellers are more likely to also be efficient readers. Knowledge of the relevant phonological patterns that are required when spelling words are the same patterns that the reader would use when attempting to decode unfamiliar words during reading. The more physically demanding role of transferring phonemes to graphemes (i.e. spelling) versus the less physically demanding role of transferring graphemes to phonemes (i.e. reading) is another advantage that explicit spelling instruction presents for many students. The ability to identify and write (i.e. spell) these patterns in an explicit spelling lesson offers an opportunity for the student to dwell longer on (and internalise) the orthographic patterns to a greater extent than would normally occur in a passing occasion such as just viewing the printed word on the page when reading.

### Stumbling Blocks to Correct Spelling

There are several 'stumbling blocks' that affect a student's ability to correctly spell words which include poor speech/hearing, poor vocabulary and poor phonemic awareness. The nature of English orthography may also present students with particular problems because many words contain spelling patterns that have variable levels of orthographic

regularity and consistency. As Allcock (2005) notes, English has a deep orthography and there are many different ways for writing one sound (cat, **kettle**, **lick**, **account**, **Christmas**, **quick**) and many ways of pronouncing a particular letter, and these different pronunciations are often determined by the boundary letters that surround the word (e.g. **apple**, **water**, **came**, **about**). This so-called 'phonological and orthographic irregularity' is often cited as a main reason for not teaching word-level skills (or phonics-based instruction). However, the research evidence now suggests that English orthography is considered to have a much higher level of orthographic/phonological regularity than was first thought (Kessler & Treiman, 2003). As noted, single letters often represent different sounds depending upon the boundary or surrounding letters in the words, but if the larger spelling units are taken into account when deciding on the pronunciation of these letters, then these units become more regular with often many words sharing the same orthographic pattern and sound. Gough (1993) argues for example that:

For all its irregularity, English is an alphabetic system: there are systematic correspondences between the letters of written words and the phonemes of spoken words. The correspondences are numerous and complex. Almost none of them are one-to-one (that is, a single letter mapping to a single phoneme). Instead, they are context-dependent; the pronunciation of nearly every letter depends on the surrounding letters" (p. 189).

The role of the teacher is therefore to teach students the relevant strategies to cope with this 'hidden regularity' and one way to do this is through explicit spelling instruction that focuses on developing spelling unit awareness using both an orthographic and a phonological 'set or diversity' (Venezky, 1999).

### A Spelling Test for Teachers

At an in-service course about the teaching of spelling, an Australian literacy educator (Ferrari, 2007) gave a group of 39 teachers a short spelling test containing eleven words. The average score per teacher on this test was 6.7 and the scores ranged from 0 - 10. There were no error response analyses undertaken with these words, as only the total numbers correct were recorded. To compare the performances of the Australian teachers on the test a group of 26 trainee teachers were also given the eleven words as a spelling test and their error responses were analysed. The results from both the Australian teachers and the pre-service trainees are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1***Scores for the Australian teachers and the trainee teachers*

Word	Number Who Spelled Correctly	
	Australian Teachers (n=39)	Trainee Teachers (n=26)
exemplary	25	19
conscientious	26	7
embarrassing	22	7
subterranean	17	1
maintenance	27	12
adolescence	23	15
exaggerate	30	18
customary	32	20
miscellaneous	22	9
proprietor	27	8
substitute	36	23
Mean score	6.7	6.0
Range	0-10	1-10

Like the Australian teachers, the trainee teachers' scores ranged from 1 to 10 and their mean score was also 6. Another interesting result from the comparative data was that in both samples the most difficult word to spell was *subterranean* with 17 Australian teachers (43%) spelling it correctly compared with only one pre-service student. It is also interesting to note that the easiest word to spell by both groups was *substitute* with only 3 teachers in both samples not able to spell it correctly. While these raw scores from the tests are interesting, it would be difficult for a teacher to design an effective spelling intervention that would be relevant for the specific teaching needs of each student unless the individual error responses were further analysed. For example, for the most difficult word (*subterranean*), the trainee teachers had used ten different spellings (*subterrian*, *subterranean*, *subterranean*, *subterreanean*, *subterriaoun*, *subtranean*, *subterranean*, *subteranian*, *subteranium* and *subteranian*). While many of the attempts were phonetically acceptable (Greaney & Arrow, 2009) and that most of these attempts indicate that the first two units/syllables (*sub + ter*) were generally correct, the remaining orthographic patterns appeared to cause the most difficulties. The word causing the second highest number of errors (*embarrassing*) also showed a similar pattern of results for the teacher trainees, where fifteen different variations of the correct spelling were recorded. However, five trainees had included only one *r* (*embarassing*) and five had

included only one *s* (*embarrasing*). The decision to include one or two consonants (*s* and *r*) in this particular word was therefore a recurring issue with many of the trainee teachers. Although these error response patterns were not analysed for the Australian teachers, it is highly likely that similar responses would have occurred for this group.

### Teaching Implications From These Spelling Errors

Before students are able or prepared to self-correct their spelling errors within their regular writing, they must first have an awareness that an error has actually been made. Unless errors are actually recognised by the speller as incorrect, there is little likelihood that they will be corrected at all (Greaney & Arrow, 2009). Therefore encouraging students to be willing and able to identify/locate possible spelling errors is a first step in the correction process. Such an awareness (of what looks right) may be termed a 'spelling conscience' and such an awareness can only be developed if the student already has a familiarity with the correct version of the spelling.

### Building a 'Spelling Conscience' of What Looks Right

An activity that a teacher might include to encourage the development of a 'spelling conscience' involves presenting the students with lists of words in which only one from each list has the correct spelling. The task is that the students are required to identify (i.e. underline/highlight) the word that is correct.

### Task 1: Underline or highlight the correct spelling in each line of words

maintaince	mantanance	maintenance	maintenance
exaggerate	exgerrate	exaggarrate	exaggerat
propeter	propiroter	proprior	proprietor

### Identifying the ‘Problem Bit(s)’ in Words

While most English-written words have aspects of orthographic regularity, there are nevertheless many words that contain orthographic units with irregular patterns. These units may be irregular because the spelling patterns do not fully match the expected pronunciation (e.g. stomach, come, love, yacht). A second problem (for the novice speller and reader) is that many of these units may represent different sounds when they appear in different words (e.g. **stomach** versus **stomp**, **come** versus **home**, **love** versus **stove**, and **water** versus **watch** versus **hat**). A key to an effective word-based spelling programme is to include activities that encourage the students to become aware of these irregularities (for both spellings and pronunciations) and to also encourage them to use flexible approaches when attempting to spell and decode such words. A flexible spelling approach could include writing out several alternatives and to select the one they think is the correct spelling. Similarly, when reading, a flexible decoding approach might be to encourage the student to try several alternative pronunciations (in conjunction with sentence context) to confirm their decoding attempts. This strategy to try several plausible pronunciation possibilities is known as ‘set for variability’ (see Task 2 below). However, for the strategy to be implemented, the student must also be consciously aware of the particular orthographic unit(s) within the word that require such a focus. The second task develops such awareness by encouraging the student to locate the likely problematic spelling patterns/units within irregular words.

### Task 2: Read these words and underline the ‘hard’ bits

stomach	come	love	yacht
eight	laugh	people	taught

Another likely problem that many novice spellers have when attempting to correctly spell unfamiliar words relates to the orthographic variability that many single sounds (phonemes) represent in the written form. Evidence for this problem arises when students spell using phonetic approximations rather than the correct representations (e.g. tort for taught, sed for said, etc). Task 3 may help these confusions.

### Task 3: How many ways can you spell the same sound but in a different word?

Target sound	Answers							
<b>Long a</b> as in <b>aim</b> :	day	eight	great	they	baby			
<b>Or</b> as in <b>for</b> :	saw	talk	taught	four	more	thought	sauce	

This conscious level of awareness of what letter or letter group (i.e. orthographic pattern) actually represents the sound often requires explicit teaching to many students. This is because in many cases, such sounds may be represented (in the written form) from combinations of up to four letters (as in the examples in Table 3). Furthermore, some of these orthographic patterns may not ‘look’ authentic or plausible, and therefore the student may require a higher level of conscious awareness of these variant patterns for them to be internalised and recalled automatically when required for spelling.

A variation of Task 3 could include presenting the students with this list of words and requiring them to identify (circle or underline) a particular target sound that each word contains. To complete this task successfully, the students would be required to identify all the **letter(s)** that represent the particular **sound** (e.g. d-**ay**, **eight**-t, gr-**ea**-t, th-**ey**, b-**a**-by). This task highlights the point that the spelling patterns that represent a particular sound may include a single letter or several letters (e.g. **baby** versus **eight**). It also highlights the concept that the phonological (or pronunciation) representations of many spelling patterns are dependent upon the surrounding or boundary letters within the word (e.g. **wa**tch versus **ca**tch versus **wa**ter) and/or the surrounding words in the sentence (e.g. He wound the bandage around the wound).

## CONCLUSIONS

These spelling activities are designed to encourage a higher level of word (and sub-word) level awareness than would normally be the case in regular spelling programmes that rely only on either the rote memorisation of whole words or where spelling programmes are based only on the particular spelling errors that individual students make in their *writing*. The activities also help to highlight the idiosyncrasies that are present within the English orthographic system but at the same time, (these activities) also highlight the *frequency* with which the idiosyncrasies occur and more importantly, how to deal with them in both spelling and reading situations.

Teaching students how to cope with the spelling (i.e. orthographic) patterns within English words and the particular and variant sounds that they represent, has been a topic of debate almost as long as the debate about how we should teach reading. The predominant constructivist 'learn-to-read by-reading' (Smith & Elley, 2007) and the 'learn-to-spell-by-writing' (Croft, 2007; Ministry of Education, 2007) approaches that are regularly promoted in texts for New Zealand primary schools, have tended to downplay the explicit teaching (particularly out-of-context) of both phonics and spelling skills. It is acknowledged that many students may develop fluency in decoding merely by having opportunities to read widely and often. Similarly, it is also acknowledged that many students may develop proficiency in spelling, merely by having opportunities to write widely and often. However, most students require more explicit teaching of the particular sub-skills that underlie such proficiency in both reading and spelling. A belief that all students will somehow develop such skills 'by osmosis' from merely being exposed to books and/or writing opportunities, is a fanciful but unrealistic notion. This belief is a major concern given the importance of the reciprocal and developmental relationship that reading and spelling share. Explicit instruction in one area positively impacts on development in the other. Conversely, a lack of explicit instruction in one area may also negatively impact on a student's ability to improve in the other. There is now sufficient international research evidence supporting the importance of including the explicit teaching of orthographic patterns' knowledge for both reading and spelling, particularly for those students who develop early spelling and/or reading difficulties. Students should also find these activities both interesting and helpful for improving both their reading and spelling skills.

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# Reciprocal Teaching: Critical Reflection on Practice

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## ABSTRACT

This paper highlights reciprocal teaching as an inclusive instructional strategy that has been shown to improve reading comprehension and metacognitive skills. It provides a conceptual background to reciprocal teaching and examines its purpose, strengths and weaknesses. The notion of reciprocal teaching as an evidence-based practice is also examined with recommendations for practice.

## Practice Paper

**Keywords:** Comprehension, evidence-based practice, metacognition, reciprocal teaching

## A BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Reciprocal teaching is an instructional practice identified as a way of improving reading comprehension through explicit teaching of skills needed for metacognition. It is also recognised as an example of an inclusive practice (Alton-Lee, Westera & Pulegatoa-Diggins, 2012; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Rosenshine & Meister, 1994; Westera, 2002). Palincsar, Brown and Klenk developed the concept of reciprocal teaching between 1984 and 1991 as a teaching strategy for meeting the needs of students who were strong decoders, but with poor comprehension skills. Over time, reciprocal teaching has been shown to be effective for diverse groups of learners: pre-readers, students with limited comprehension and decoding skills, English language learners, and students with specific learning difficulties.

Reciprocal teaching focuses on four thinking strategies: predicting, clarifying, questioning, and summarising. It is an amalgamation of reading strategies that are believed to be used by effective readers and follows a dialectic process to enable metacognitive thinking and to empower students to take ownership of their learning in a systematic and purposeful process. During a reciprocal teaching session, teacher and students use prior knowledge

and dialogue to construct a shared understanding of the text and to build reading comprehension. Teachers monitor the discussion and provide cognitive scaffolding through a shared language related to the four aforementioned thinking strategies. Research on reciprocal teaching has shown that there are improved comprehension results and transfer of skills to other curriculum areas (Brown & Campione, 1992; Palincsar & Klenk, 1992; Westera, 2002). It is also noted that the dialogical approach is inclusive of students with different abilities and students who have diverse sociocultural experiences as all perspectives are embraced in a reciprocal discussion (Soto, 1989, cited in Arbor, 2013).

## CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

### Social Constructivism

Reciprocal teaching as an instructional practice has developed out of research related to monitoring and constructing meaning from text (Westera & Moore, 1995). It aligns closely to social constructivism and, in particular, developmental theories of learning described by Vygotsky (Kozulin, 1986). Vygotsky (1978) linked dialogue and metacognition in explaining how individuals develop understanding of concepts. He believed that the process of learning involved moving into a zone of proximal development which is supported by another individual in dialogue with the learner. Through dialogue the learner is able to shape current knowledge (schemas) to construct new ideas and understanding. The process is supported by scaffolds which provide timely and needs-based support, allowing the learner to move from one space of understanding to another across the zone of proximal development (Kozulin, 1986). Dialogue happens in reciprocal conversations which take place in small groups of learners with teacher and students taking turns at leading the discussion. Initially the expert (teacher) models, paraphrases and questions, then gradually students assume roles as dialogue leaders. Understanding of the text is co-constructed through discussion, with each learner using a prescribed

framework to guide interactions. Within these systems of instruction, the students learn thinking strategies for deeper levels of comprehension at their own rate in the presence of experts and more-able peers. They participate naturally at, or just above, a level they are capable of, in their zone of proximal development (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). In this way reciprocal teaching is strengths-based and child-centred.

### **Ecological**

Reciprocal teaching sits comfortably within an ecological approach to practice (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) as through dialogue, students are empowered to bring familial, social and cultural experiences to the reciprocal conversations (Alton-Lee, Westera & Pulegatoa-Diggins, 2012; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Rosenshine & Meister, 1994). Effective implementation of reciprocal teaching uses thinking strategies and 'talking frameworks' to scaffold students' use of their own language and make connections with their cultural knowledge, their everyday experience, personal perspectives and text (Alton-Lee, Westera & Pulegatoa-Diggins, 2012).

### **Cooperative Learning**

Reciprocal teaching is a cooperative learning strategy. It requires collaboration and group thinking while emphasis is placed on students providing instructional support for each other. An outcome of reciprocal teaching is a sense of community where students feel cared about and valued (Oczkus, 2010). Oczkus attributes this to being listened to and the development of a learning culture that values growth through experimentation and enquiry. "Reciprocal Teaching makes it okay for students not to understand text. The emphasis is not on their lack of understanding: in fact, lack of understanding is seen as a natural condition for learning" (Alton-Lee, Westera & Pulegatoa-Diggins, 2012, p. 9). Difficulties in understanding are ascribed to challenges in the text rather than student inadequacy. The learning emphasis is on the emergence of strategies that provide a way to understand through interaction with diverse others, expert scaffolding and anticipation of expected competence (Westera, 2002). Through interaction in mixed-ability groups, students who are developing skills in comprehension are supported by the social context and reciprocal teaching frameworks. They engage at their level and are able to observe and learn from more competent peers who, with the teacher, model higher level involvement.

### **Culturally-Responsive**

Reciprocal teaching sits comfortably with Kaupapa Māori thinking, particularly in relation to collective achievement and interdependence, hui wananga, critical engagement and opportunity for cultural connection. It is reflective of cultural themes such as 'Nau te rourou, naku te rourou, ka ora ait e iwi (with your food basket and my food basket, there will be ample). Reciprocal teaching aligns with values outlined in the *Educultural Wheel* (Macfarlane, 2004) such as rangatiratanga, kotahitanga, manaakitanga and whanaungatanga through collaboration, affirmation, encouragement and perseverance. In addition, the routines of reciprocal teaching reflect views on learning from a tikanga Maori perspective such as shared authentic group tasks, interaction rituals such as turn taking, prompting and repeating, opportunities for tuakana/teina (older/younger sibling) connectedness and scaffolding, shared leadership and responsibility, and teacher/learner interchangeability (Tangaere, 1997). Similarly, these values resonate with Pasifika cultures.

### **Cognitive Psychology**

Cognitive strategies used in reciprocal teaching are grounded in cognitive psychology and, in particular, information processing models of learning (Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Sternberg & Sternberg, 2012). Sternberg's (1996) *Triarchic Theory of Intelligence* identifies three parts to information processing – metacomponents, performance components and knowledge acquisition components. These parts work together to plan, monitor and adjust performance for mastery of a task. Reading comprehension is an interaction between decoding, thinking about the text and cross-checking with what is already known. Westera (2002) identified reciprocal teaching as an example of metacognitive strategy instruction with an emphasis on thinking about thinking and skills for self-regulated learning during the reading process. Palincsar and Brown (1984) described information processing in skilled reading as 'debugging'. A skilled reader will allocate time and effort to the task of untangling comprehension failures, while less-skillful readers, in their opinion, do not seem to use monitoring strategies well, and do not seem to allocate the time and effort to clarifying comprehension failures through the use of deliberate and active processing strategies. In information processing terms, skilled readers are able to move fluidly between performance components and meta-components to rapidly construct meaning and monitor for understanding. Brown, Palincsar and Armbruster (1984) identified a number of information-processing strategies that skilled readers use in the process of

clarification: explicit and implicit understanding of the purpose for reading; activation of relevant background knowledge; focusing attention on important content; critical evaluation of content for internal consistency and compatibility with prior knowledge and common sense; periodically reviewing and interrogating self for understanding, and finally, testing inferences and predictions. These strategies underpin the four concrete activities of predicting, clarifying, questioning and summarising, that framework reciprocal teaching to foster comprehension and monitoring for understanding (Palincsar & Brown, 1984).

### **Purpose of Reciprocal Teaching**

Over time, reciprocal teaching has developed three main purposes. Firstly, it is a framework for explicit instruction and the practice of four specific comprehension fostering strategies to develop the self-monitoring central to effective comprehension. Secondly, it uses a clearly-defined process for interactive engagement. This process has been shown to ensure that learning is maintained over time, is generalised across settings, and is transferable within conceptual domains. Thirdly, it is a vehicle for inclusive practice (Westera, 2002).

### **Framework for Explicit Instruction**

Reciprocal teaching is a framework for explicit instruction of comprehension strategies. It is strategically designed to meet the needs of low-progress readers who have poor comprehension skills. Strategies for effective comprehension are explicitly taught, modelled and practised within deliberate conversations with others to predict, clarify, question and summarise. Interactive feedback on the efficacy of thinking and instruction in why, when and where comprehension activities should be applied are delivered while reading.

### **Process for Interactive Engagement**

Palincsar and Brown (1984) designed reciprocal teaching using an interactive instructional model that provoked novice learners to engage. They recognised that by scaffolding learners to be active then learning-transfer and long-term sustainability were more likely to be achieved. Reciprocal teaching uses dialogue to empower the learner. Palincsar and Brown describe a gradual shifting from supportive others acting as models, critics and interrogators to self-regulation and self-interrogation. Westera (2002) identified further that metacognitive instruction, as used in reciprocal teaching, had a positive impact on both the amount of reading and dialogue about reading while improving the acquisition of content, self-efficacy and motivation to learn.

### **Inclusive Practice**

Westera (2002) recognises reciprocal teaching as an inclusive teaching model because it combines three practices that are identified as effective practices for inclusion: metacognitive strategies, cooperative learning, and authentic context. In this way she believes that reciprocal teaching has a “wide capacity to cater for academic, social and cultural heterogeneity in inclusive classrooms” (p. 51). She also believes that through reciprocal teaching and the growth of self-regulatory skills, all students will be able to participate more fully and independently in learning activities. Brown and Palincsar (1989, cited in Westera, 2002) define the semi-ritualised participation structures of reciprocal teaching and observational learning opportunities as especially enabling for students who have difficulty accessing the curriculum.

Westera (2002) recognises the explicit teaching strategies as having a strong influence on reciprocal teaching as an inclusive practice. She discusses how explicit teaching differs from direct teaching in that it comprises flexible teaching of content, modelling, guided practice, independent practice, feedback, meaningful connection to real life, and active learner involvement. While recognising considerable overlap between explicit and direct teaching, Westera distinguishes direct teaching as a teacher-controlled process with control maintained over pace, sequence and content of a lesson. Step-by-step instructions requiring mastery at each step and teacher-controlled processes for readjustment of student errors is in contrast to an explicit teaching model which is self-differentiating. Westera is mindful of explicit teaching as being ‘just in time’ and responsive to learners comprehension and participation needs. In reciprocal teaching conversations, each participant operates at the comprehension and participation levels that they feel comfortable with while being challenged by the thinking of others. Developing-readers internalise these social experiences in an inclusive way and gradually adopt the reasoning and regulatory practices of the supportive others. Eventually, learners use these practices independently when they read on their own.

### **Strategic Alignment**

Reciprocal teaching aligns with key strategic documents currently within New Zealand government policy. As a constructivist and socio-cultural approach to learning it sits comfortably with the *New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007), *The Literacy Learning Progressions* (Ministry of Education, 2010), *Ka Hikitia Maori Education Strategy* (Ministry of Education, 2013a), the *Pasifika Education*

*Plan* (Ministry of Education, 2013b), *Meeting the Needs of Gifted and Talented Students in New Zealand Schools* (Ministry of Education, 2012), and *Success for All - For Every School, Every Child 2010-2014* (Ministry of Education, 2010).

The guiding vision of the *New Zealand Curriculum* is to develop young people who are confident, connected, actively involved, life-long learners. *Ka Hikitia- Managing for Success: The Maori Education Strategy 2008-2012* called for presence, engagement and achievement of Maori within our education system. The vision of *Ka Hikitia – Accelerating Success 2013–2017* is Māori enjoying and achieving education success as Māori. At the centre of the *Pasifika Education Plan 2013 – 2017* are reciprocal relationships focused on respect, service leadership, spirituality, belonging, family, love, and inclusion. The goals of the *Pasifika Plan* include connectedness and close alignment between cultural environments and learning environments. It calls for strategies that acknowledge the multiple perspectives and many voices of Pasifika communities. The document *Meeting the Needs of Gifted and Talented Students in New Zealand Schools* (Ministry of Education, 2012), calls for curriculum programmes that recognise, value and empower gifted learners to develop their exceptional abilities and qualities. It calls for equitable access to differentiated and culturally-responsive provisions. The Literacy Learning Progressions recognise that the pathway to literacy learning is developmental, is shaped by social and cultural practices, and students take individual and multiple pathways in their literacy learning. *Success for All - Every School, Every Child* is the Government's vision and work programme for an inclusive education system for students with special education needs. It calls for removing barriers to presence, participation and achievement, and calls for effective teaching approaches that create inclusive learning environments for all students.

Reciprocal teaching delivers an overarching philosophy of participation, contribution, critical reflection and inclusiveness within the context of *ako*. *Ako* is about knowing where students come from and building on what students bring with them. Similarly, reciprocal teaching embraces students' experiences and builds on the knowledge and understanding that they bring to the text. Alton-Lee et al. (2012) noted that reciprocal teaching can provide "opportunities for *mana tangata* (development of self-esteem through contributing), *mana motuhake* (development of independence and autonomy), and *mana reo* (development of communication) [while also] fostering positive and inclusive peer learning communities" (Alton-Lee et al., 2012, p. 4).

Reciprocal teaching has also been recognised for building learner capacity in the key competencies: thinking; using language, symbols and text; managing self; relating to others, and participating and contributing (Alton-Lee et al., 2012). Through collaborative dialogue, shared text and group exploration of principles, ideas and themes the reciprocal teaching groups develop to be a learning community. Within learning communities students not only develop comprehension skills but also learn structures for thinking and how to interact meaningfully with other learners to build collective understanding. Reciprocal teaching is also readily incorporated in most learning areas of the curriculum (Alton-Lee et al., 2012; Arbor, 2013; Rosenshine & Meister, 1994).

Reciprocal teaching lifts achievement. New Zealand research shows that reciprocal teaching is effective with culturally-diverse students in primary and secondary classes as outlined in separate studies by Gilroy and Moore (1988), Kelly, Moore and Tuck (1994), Le Fevre, Moore and Wilkinson (2003) and Smith, Timperley and Francis (2011, all cited in Alton-Lee, Westera & Pulegatoa-Diggins, 2012). Reciprocal teaching involves the development of skilful comprehension through inquiry and self-reflection. It is a self-paced programme where students are scaffolded to work in their zone of proximal development. Reciprocal teaching has been shown to have high impact in improving reading comprehension, metacognition, social anticipation and self-management skills for students of diverse abilities (Alton-Lee, Westera & Pulegatoa-Diggins, 2012).

Reciprocal teaching is nurturing and inclusive. The engagement processes provide feedback for learners on the efficacy of their actions through responsive and intensive peer support in an authentic learning situation. Alton-Lee, Westera and Pulegatoa-Diggins (2012) identified that through the intensive peer support provided by the group, students have access to more responsive support than they may have in a whole-class environment.

### **Evidence-Based Practice**

Evidence-based practice has been described as grounded in three principles: *tika*, *pono* and *aroha* (Macfarlane, 2011). *Tika* refers to research literature that is culturally-grounded, relevant and realistic. *Pono* is inclusive of practitioner knowledge and skill so that actions have integrity, are reasoned, just and fair, whilst *aroha* relates to interactions and consultations with *whanau* that are reciprocal, respectful and compassionate. Research in a New Zealand context points favourably toward the use of

reciprocal teaching as an evidence-based practice grounded in tika, pono and aroha (Alton-Lee, Westera and Pulegatoa-Diggins, 2012). In particular, the New Zealand studies have identified learning effectiveness with a range of cultural groupings and have reported teacher, student and whanau insights into the effectiveness of reciprocal teaching.

Hattie's (2009), meta-analysis of 38 international studies ranked reciprocal teaching as the third highest-impact strategy out of 49 teaching strategies, and found an overall effect size of  $d = 0.74$ . Smith, Timperley and Francis (2011), in an unpublished manuscript researching reciprocal teaching and the deeper features of reading comprehension, reported an overall effect size of  $d = 1.5$ . Palincsar and Brown (1984), when developing the programme, found significant improvements in the quality of students' ability to summarise and question as well as gains on criterion and standardised tests of comprehension. They also found that the new learning transferred to novel tasks requiring skills of summarising, questioning and clarifying.

In two studies involving a group of Year 9 secondary students and a group of Year 4 – 5 primary students, Westera (2002) found significant gains in reading comprehension and metacognitive awareness. She reported an effect size of  $d = 1.1$  and described student perceptions of improvement in reading and reading strategies. Similarly, she reported that teacher-feedback supported the value of reciprocal teaching for professional development and reported favourably on the feasibility of implementation in regular class programmes as an inclusive practice. On the basis of her literature review, Westera concluded that reciprocal teaching "appeared to be empirically and conceptually robust as an inclusive practice, comprising a combination of best inclusive practices" (Westera, 2002, p. 138).

In a review of 16 studies using reciprocal teaching, Rosenshine and Meister (1994) found a median effect size of 0.32 when standardised assessments were used to evaluate comprehension and 0.88 when experimenter-developed comprehension assessments were used.

Westera (2002) also noted that the efficacy of reciprocal teaching was dependent on appropriate adaptations to meet the needs of diverse students. She cited studies that used tape-assisted reading material to support poor comprehenders who were also poor decoders (Le Fevre, Moore & Wilkinson, 2003, cited in Alton-Lee, Westera & Pulegatoa-Diggins, 2013) and bilingual delivery of reciprocal teaching to support comprehension development for bilingual learners (Fung, Wilkinson & Moore, 2003,

cited in Alton-Lee, Westera & Pulegatoa-Diggins, 2012). In both these studies the comprehension gains made by the students were comparable with gains demonstrated in previous studies.

Rosenshine and Meister (1994) reviewed reported assessment for students' achievement in the four comprehension strategies - prediction, clarification, questioning, and summarising. They found that of the 16 studies they reviewed only six assessed questioned generation, and found no difference between experimental group and control group, six assessed summarisation, and four found that the reciprocal group made significantly stronger summaries, whilst one assessed prediction with a significant difference favouring the experimental group over the control. The assessments in these studies were gathered after the reciprocal intervention, using a researcher-developed tool. The original Palincsar and Brown (1984) study attempted to assess the quality of student's participation from the reciprocal dialogues using a rubric for analysis. They found that the quality of the student questions and summaries improved significantly from early sessions to later sessions.

Although most of the research described above has a quantitative focus and follows recent trends to report effect size, many of these studies also report comments by practitioners and students that refer to power-sharing, responsiveness and affirmation of student background experience. Westera (2002) noted ecological impacts such as engagement, group cohesiveness, changing teacher-attitudes toward power-sharing and suggests that reciprocal teaching may be a vehicle for school-wide change toward more inclusive practices. Palincsar (2007, cited in Alton-Lee et al., 2012) explained that reciprocal teaching was a "way to give voice to children in classrooms" (p. 10). Palincsar and Brown (1984) refer frequently to the connections to personal experiences that are generated through effective implementation of the reciprocal teaching strategies. Westera (2002) identifies whanau connection as an area for further development with more explicit fostering of connections through choice of reading material and inclusion of cultural practices and language. She suggests exploring Maori cultural concepts that link to each of the components of reciprocal teaching to enable them to be understood within the context of an indigenous world-view. Further development in these areas will strengthen the pono and aroha components of the evidence base for reciprocal teaching.

## IMPLEMENTATION

There are two aspects to implementation. Firstly, there is the development of group structures,

routines and resources, and secondly, there is the development of teaching skills for facilitation of reciprocal conversations.

### **Group structures, routines and resources:**

Originally, Palincsar and Brown (1984) developed the reciprocal teaching process with a group of six students who were identified as adequate decoders and poor comprehenders while reading grade-appropriate text. The students were divided into three groups each with an adult instructor. The role of the instructor was to support the reciprocal conversations through techniques such as prompting, instructing and modifying the task.

Since Palincsar and Brown's (1984) original model, there have been many variations in how reciprocal teaching is delivered. Westera (2002) implemented reciprocal teaching with groups of three to six, delivered by expert teachers and support staff over 12-16 sessions. Smith, Timperley and Francis (2011, cited in Alton-Lee, Westera, Pulegatoa-Diggins, 2012) used groups of four to five students supported by teacher-aides. This study involved 15 sessions over five weeks and each session lasted approximately 25 minutes. Fung et al. (2003) introduced a second language, and students participated in the reciprocal teaching sequence using English and Mandarin on alternate days. Gilroy and Moore (1988) used 20 to 25 minute sessions over 21 days. Rosenshine and Meister (1994), investigating 19 studies, found no relationship between effect size and size of group, as well as no evidence of a relationship between the number of sessions and significance of comprehension improvements. Westera (2013) did note that more than 12 sessions were needed to get a significant result. Optimal group size and organisation does not seem to have been researched to date.

Rosenshine and Meister (1994) identified several studies that explicitly taught the comprehension strategies prior to engaging in the reciprocal conversations. This was different from Palincsar and Brown's (1984) initial development which introduced the strategies during the reciprocal conversations. Analysis of studies using the two approaches showed little difference in achieved outcomes. Rosenshine and Meister (1994) also found that there were no differences between groups of students who were instructed as part of a classroom programme and groups of students who were instructed in targeted remedial programmes.

The aspect of reciprocal teaching that has remained constant across studies is the conversational routine which follows a sequence of text introduction through prompting for prior knowledge and predicting,

reading, then clarifying, questioning, summarising and further predicting. The four comprehension strategies are developed during the reciprocal conversation. Some studies have reported two, three, or ten strategies but Rosenshine and Meister (1994) found no significant difference in comprehension achievement between these studies and those that used four strategies, although it must be noted that the number of studies with variations is very low and in some cases only included one study.

A reciprocal conversation has a clearly-defined format supported by a 'talking frame.' Students read material section by section and then engage in conversation using each of the four comprehension strategies. Initially, the leader uses the 'talking frame' to invite the use of the four comprehension strategies but the aim is to develop independent and self-monitored leadership. The leadership role shifts around the group with the reading of each paragraph.

During the initial stages of reading a text, the teacher leads the explicit teaching of routines and skills, then models and probes for understanding during the reciprocal conversations. Students gradually assume responsibility on subsequent text and in this way the ownership of the conversation is gradually transferred to the students. The teacher continues to provide feedback, additional modelling, coaching, hints and explanation. The teacher makes formative judgements about developing skills and adjusts feedback and feed-forward accordingly. The emphasis throughout the conversation is on cooperative effort to bring meaning to the ideas in the text and students are guided in providing instructional support for each other. The processes are reflective of a learning community.

Resources to support a reciprocal conversation include age-appropriate text levelled slightly above the decoding age of the weakest reader and the 'talking frame' outlining appropriate sentence starters for leading conversation related to each of the four comprehension strategies. Additional resources can be developed to meet the learning characteristics of individual learners such as tape-assisted reading and language builders.

A range of qualitative and quantitative methods have been used to monitor effectiveness during implementation of reciprocal teaching. Palincsar and Brown (1984) measured changes in comprehension achievement through five comprehension probes requiring students to read a passage and answer ten questions. These probes were administered before, several times during, and after intervention. A standardised reading assessment and a transfer test involving a novel task but assessing skills similar to reciprocal teaching skills were also used pre- and

post-intervention to measure overall performance and generalisation. Other assessments have included analysis of reciprocal dialogue to measure changes in skill level with each of the four comprehension strategies and some studies have attempted to observe and evaluate teacher instruction in reciprocal teaching. These assessments are not frequently reported and Rosenshine and Meister (1994) note that “the lack of observation and evaluation of instruction is a common problem among studies in which cognitive strategies are taught” (p. 488).

### **Teaching Skills for Facilitation of Reciprocal Conversations**

The process of implementation is crucial to successful outcomes for students. Alton-Lee, Westera and Pulegatoa-Diggins (2012) recognised that while teachers could learn reciprocal teaching well in a relatively short time, on-going professional learning and support for teachers is important. Westera (2002) described her professional learning approach as school-based, research-informed and collaborative. She outlined planning for implementation that included consideration of how reciprocal teaching fits within usual classroom programmes, grouping decisions based on student’s strengths and needs, and design of materials and adaptations for individual needs. Westera believes that to effectively implement reciprocal teaching, teachers need to understand underlying theory and the practical steps needed. The content of her professional development included theoretical discussion of comprehension instruction and reciprocal teaching, scaffolding for reciprocal teaching, exploration of how to teach for maintenance and generalisation, attention to implementation routines, and discussion of data-gathering. Arbor (2013) and Oczkus (2010) have identified several key teaching strategies that teachers need to be familiar with such as thinking aloud, scaffolding and questioning for metacognition. Arbor has developed a coaching rubric for feedback related to modelling, scaffolding, facilitation of cooperative learning and questioning for metacognition. She also suggested that as part of the professional development teachers might watch recorded sessions, examine transcripts of reciprocal teaching dialogues, role-play reciprocal conversations and, following professional development, teachers and trainers co-teach a lesson. Alton-Lee, Westera & Pulegatoa-Diggins (2012) report that teachers who participate in reciprocal teaching professional development value the knowledge gained and in particular comment on their increased awareness in recognising specific skills needed for effective comprehension.

### **Strengths and Limitations of Reciprocal Teaching**

The research and literature is strongly supportive of reciprocal teaching as an effective practice for teaching comprehension skills. Alton-Lee, Westera and Pulegatoa-Diggins (2012) describe reciprocal teaching as a ‘high yield’ intervention and Westera (2002) highlights that reciprocal teaching shifts teaching-attention away from questioning for comprehension to explicitly teaching comprehension-fostering skills.

Reciprocal teaching is inclusive and enables teachers to use evidence gained through the reciprocal conversations to continually adjust and target teaching to meet the needs of diverse students. It is viewed as a pedagogical practice that facilitates caring, inclusive and cohesive learning communities whereby teachers work smarter not harder (Alton-Lee, Westera & Pulegatoa-Diggins, 2012; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Westera, 2002). There is a strong alignment between curriculum goals and strategic directions for targeting priority students.

Reciprocal teaching facilitates student ownership of learning. Soto (1989) described how reciprocal teaching was a process for the social construction of knowledge where students collaborate with the teacher and each other to construct meaning from text. Through this process learners are able to focus on information in the text that is meaningful to them. Paris and Winograd (1990) highlighted that the close relationship between metacognitive awareness, self-regulation and self-perception was a strength of reciprocal teaching for students with special education needs.

The close alignment of reciprocal teaching structures with *ako*, and *tuakana/teina* concepts position reciprocal teaching as a strong component of culturally-responsive classrooms. Bishop (2001) emphasised student voice and power sharing as features of *ako* and necessary to effectively engage Maori students. Similarly, with Pasifika and other cultural groups, reciprocal teaching has the potential to demonstrate understanding and respect for diverse world-views. The oral nature of reciprocal teaching links with Maori and Pasifika oral traditions and the concept of ‘storying’ (Smith, Timperley & Francis, 2011).

Reciprocal teaching is also noted for effective generalisation of skills to other curriculum areas and school context. Brown and Campione (1992) found that students who had experienced reciprocal teaching gained an average of two years on standardised test scores in other academic areas. In Westera’s (2002) study, teachers reported increased self-directed

learning, more confident and open-to-learning attitudes, improved attendance, improved teacher/pupil relationships and the use of strategies in other contexts. Reciprocal teaching has been adapted for use in a wide range of curriculum areas including literacy instruction and social studies (Palincsar & Brown, 1984) as well as science (Stoddart, Pinal & Canady, 2002), mathematics (van Garderen, 2004) and physical education (Brown & Campione, 1992; Byra, 2006).

Reciprocal teaching is a highly-adaptable teaching tool. It has been used with a range of students at all levels of development – elementary to secondary to adults (Arbor, 2013; Rosenshine & Meister, 1994). It has been used for small groups of learners (Alton-Lee, Westera & Pulegatoa-Diggins, 2012; Palincsar & Klenk, 1992) and whole classes (Smith, Timperley & Francis, 2011, cited in Alton-Lee et al., 2012). It has also been shown to be effective for diverse cultural groups (Fung, Wilkinson & Moore, 2003; Gilroy and Moore, 1988, both cited in Alton-Lee et al., 2012) and academically-diverse learners (Rosenhine & Meister, 1994).

The success of reciprocal teaching as a tool for diverse learners, groups and settings is also its weakness. Many variations in relation to delivery and target groups have been researched and there is little agreement as to how reciprocal teaching should be delivered although Rosenshine and Meister (1994) have identified that variations have little impact on comprehension achievement.

Rosenhine and Meister (1994) also caution that some of the positive results of reciprocal teaching are supported by studies with small sample sizes. Alton-Lee's Best Evidence Synthesis is based on six New Zealand studies with target populations ranging from 10 to 35. The initial research by Palincsar and Brown (1984) was based on 24 students with six students participating in the reciprocal teaching trial. The second study described by Palincsar and Brown (1984) involved 21 students. The danger of small sample sizes is to over-infer from the results. Small sample sizes are subject to strong influences from outlier results and are not necessarily representative of larger populations. The number of repeated reciprocal teaching studies with consistently strong results does help to mitigate the problem of small sample size.

Another possible weakness of the reciprocal teaching research is its relevance to whole-classroom instruction. Most of the reported research involves low teacher/pupil ratios. The initial Palincsar and Brown (1984) study reported ratios of 2 to 1, and Westera (2002) reported staffing ratios of 1 to 6. It has to be asked whether low teacher/pupil ratios or reciprocal teaching processes had the greater

influence on results. Then there is the question of whether reciprocal teaching could be managed in a whole-class situation without other adult support.

Finally, it must also be noted that reciprocal teaching is a 'co-constructive approach' to teaching and learning and may not align well with an individual teacher's practice. Not all teachers are comfortable as facilitators of learning rather than directors of learning.

In conclusion, reciprocal teaching seems to be a powerful evidence-based approach to comprehension development for diverse learners who are strong decoders and weaker comprehenders. The three evidence-based components of tika, pono and aroha are evident throughout the research and descriptions of implementation projects. Research is reflective of best-practice and inclusive of teacher and student voice. Through reciprocal teaching there is potential to develop a "pedagogy of relations" (Bishop, 2009, p.167) that will have benefits for Maori, Pasifika, other cultural groups, students with special needs, students with high abilities, and students who are already achieving as expected. Reciprocal teaching shifts the balance of power towards learners and enables student voice through conversations that acknowledge the experiential base that a learner brings to the learning. It is a highly-effective inclusive practice.

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## AUTHOR PROFILE

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# Incredible Years Parent and Teacher Programmes: Emerging Themes and Issues.

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the Incredible Years Parent and Teacher Programmes that have originated from the work of Webster-Stratton. It provides a brief background on the programmes and a critical analysis of the issues as identified in current literature. The issues can be grouped into four main categories, the first being government decision-making which includes policy directives, the costs and benefits, and policy borrowing from other contexts and economic settings. The second category focuses on working definitions of the term Conduct Disorder (CD). The third category relates to implementation, and illuminates the concerns about staff training and supervision including the impact of this on implementation fidelity. Finally, the gaps and implications for further research are explored.

## Practice Paper

**Key Words:** Conduct-disorder, Incredible Years, supervision

## Background to Incredible Years Parent and Teacher Programmes

There are three programmes (Child, Parent, and Teacher) in the Incredible Years series, with this review focusing on the Incredible Years Parent (IYP) and Incredible Years Teacher (IYT) programmes. Created by Webster-Stratton and her colleagues in the USA in the early 1980s working in the fields of child psychology and as nurse practitioner, these programmes have been created, originally in clinical settings, in response to the need to provide treatment programmes for children diagnosed with Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), Conduct Disorder (CD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (The Incredible Years, 2007, p. 1). The prevalence of such conditions ranges from estimates of 5 percent to 35 percent (Bywater, 2009; Hutchings, Gardner & Lane, 2004; Jones, Daley, Hutchings, Bywater & Eames, 2008) in some populations, making it a considerable problem to solve.

The purpose of the teacher and parent programmes is to help teachers and parents to support children to develop skills in social competence, emotional regulation and problem-solving to regulate their own behaviour (The Incredible Years, 2007).

Each programme is set up for teachers or parents to meet as a group with two trained facilitators. Participants are provided with opportunities both from the course material and the discussion within the group, to learn a range of strategies for managing their child/ren. The course has a focus on using group or paired role-plays, in-group discussion of DVD footage, homework between sessions, and through the setting of personal goals in relation to reflection on session outcomes and feedback. All participants are supported with handouts and activities to try out with their children.

The IYT programme (in the New Zealand context) has six full day sessions with different content in each session building on the previous session/s. The content development starts with a focus on relationship-building between teacher and student, and setting up for success by building predictable routines and schedules that support the students to start to develop self-regulation skills.

Details are built into the programme to support the teachers to learn specific strategies themselves for increasing student participation in the setting of the routines and expectations in the classroom, building trusting relationships and skills in empathy and social skills.

The Incredible Years Programmes have been shown by multiple repeated randomised controlled trials (Bywater, 2009) to be replicable, making them evidence-based programmes. Under these conditions the results have shown benefits in terms of a reduction in levels of student aggression, increasing teacher capability and confidence in managing their classes, improvements in learning for the targeted students and others in the class.

So far the results (Baker-Henningham, 2010; Hutchings, Daley, Jones, Martin, Bywater & Gwyn, 2007; Wilson, Minnis, Puckering & Bryce, 2008) also show benefits across culturally-diverse groups and the programmes have been used in both preventative and therapeutic roles.

### **Policy Directives**

The origins of the Incredible Years Interventions Series stems from the increasing prevalence of students diagnosed with ODD, CD and ADHD as seen by Webster-Stratton and colleagues in the clinical setting. Politically, world leaders are increasingly aware of possible future costs on society in the health, social development and justice domains (Bywater, 2009; Hutchings et al., 2004; Jones et al., 2008), if environments are not created to support the development of skills in social and emotional competence. Prevalence percentages across the countries in the studies range from figures of 3-6 percent up to 5-10 percent in the United Kingdom and 5-35 percent in the United States of America (Bywater, 2009; Jones et al., 2008), justifying the level of government concern.

As part of policy concern about a preventative approach, the literature also reveals the political push from government level to ensure that any interventions and treatments that are used are those proven to be effective and evidence-based, that is to say that the programmes/ interventions which have had at least two randomised controlled trials to prove efficacy (Werry, et al., 2010). Policy makers looked for a range of programmes/ interventions across the age levels that reported the same or similar levels of effectiveness and included provision for parents to be well-supported (Stanley, 2008; Wilson et al., 2008).

The other significant policy issue closely related to programme effectiveness is the cost of the programmes as it is taxpayer dollars (Lewis, 2011) being used. This issue will be further explored in the section on costs and benefits of the programmes.

### **Definitions of Behaviour and Intervention Suitability**

The difficulty with the prevalence figures quoted in the studies is that ways of defining behaviour differ from country to country. It may well be that anti-social behaviour, defined as the “development of depression, school drop-out, violence, drug abuse and delinquency” (The Incredible Years, 2007, npg) in later life is strongly related to significant conduct problems in childhood and adolescence (Werry et al., 2010) and thus it is possible to use the terms ‘conduct disorder’ and ‘antisocial behaviour’ interchangeably in this literature. Within this

interchangeable definition lie the broader spectrum of behaviours labelled as Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), Conduct Disorder (CD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Webster-Stratton also suggests the programmes are suitable for “high-risk families” (The Incredible Years, 2007, p. 1) and many of the studies reviewed, notably those with culturally-different bases to the original programme, discuss working with high-risk families. The common factor in these studies that defines high-risk families is the low-income threshold and minority status of most of the targeted participants (Baker-Henningham, 2010; Davenport & Tansey, 2009; Hutchings, 2012). In the New Zealand context, the focus is on Māori and Pasifika families, and the teachers in low decile schools (Ministry of Education, 2012).

### **Implementation**

A key feature of literature under review is the implementation of the Incredible Years Programmes. As an evidence-based intervention it is expected that the implementation of the programmes will be standardised, regardless of where and who delivers them, to meet the parameters of being replicable. The literature reviewed, however, presents a varying picture in regards to the issues around the implementation of the programmes.

There are differences in the timeframes over which the courses are run (Hutchings et al., 2007), difference in the service contexts, clinical and community settings (Lewis, 2011), selection of staff, including their training and supervision (Hutchings, 2012; Hutchings et al., 2007; Hutchings et al., 2004; Lewis, 2011), dilution and redefinition of the programme reducing effectiveness (Hutchings et al., 2004), and flexibility of implementation in which the participants and the contexts in which they live and work are heard and used (Webster-Stratton, Renke, Herman & Newcomer, 2011).

In critically analysing these differences identified in the literature, the most significant in terms of effect outcomes are the implementation issues surrounding the selection, training and supervision of staff to run the programmes, which includes the aspect of the dilution and redefinition of the programme. It is clear that Webster-Stratton envisaged that the personnel running the Incredible Years Programmes were well-trained, clinically-educated and supervised, as she presents training to personnel who will then be responsible for training others, such as those from in the New Zealand education setting and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) (Ministry of Education, 2010) to become group leaders.

Selection of staff to run the programmes, as shown in the literature, has run the gamut from poorly-educated NGO workers (Hutchings et al., 2007) to the training of those with clinical psychology as their background (Lewis, 2011); it is no wonder then that there will be a difference in implementation.

Following this are concerns around the training of those personnel. The literature reveals that the training, especially in the case of those working in delivering the teacher programmes, is to take three full days under the tutelage of already accredited group leaders. As Lewis (2011) suggests, training alone is not enough to create effective implementation. This is all the more important when seen alongside Webster-Stratton's desire for the implementation to be flexible to the needs of the participants and their context. In the requirement to incorporate the basic elements and strategies of the programmes in an individualized way for the participants (Webster-Stratton, 2011), how is it possible that three days training, which covers both the content of the programme and how it should be facilitated, is enough to provide the knowledge and skill level to successfully run the programme for those without a clinical psychology background?

The final concern with regard to implementation is that of the supervision requirement for those running the programmes. The literature reveals a vast difference in the supervision given to those running the programmes from those being supported with three hours supervision per week (Lewis, 2011) to those with supervision for two hours per month, as is the situation as a facilitator of IYT in the New Zealand context. Alongside the issue of the amount of time given for supervision, another factor identified as being of concern is the training and skills of those providing the supervision of others. In the original, supervision was provided by the creators of the programme, leading to high quality levels of support. As the interventions have been picked up and used in other settings, the quality of the supervision has depended on the training and understanding of those given the role of supervision (Hutchings et al., 2004; Lewis, 2011), at times resulting in no improvement to group leader practice or substituted practices (Hutchings et al., 2004).

### **Fidelity**

Closely linked to the issue of implementation is that of the fidelity of the intervention/s. Fidelity is defined as the "degree of fit between the original programme and its application in a given service setting" (Hutchings et al., 2004, p. 77). Fidelity in relation to the Incredible Years Programme has

five main components: adherence to programme design; exposure, which involves ensuring a match with the frequency and length of the original programme; quality programme delivery; participant responsiveness, and programme differentiation.

It is already clear from the issues in implementation that there are issues with fidelity if we are using the definition provided by Hutchings et al., (2004). If we use Webster-Stratton et al.'s (2011) definition of programme design as the "order of activities taken and materials utilized" (p. 511) we can regard the fidelity measure as high, as the order of activities and the materials to use are highly regulated by their provision to enable easy following of the order and sequence of delivery (Hutchings, 2012).

However, it has already been shown that there are differences in exposure from the original programme to others run, especially in the case of different cultural context. Baker-Henningham (2010) and Webster-Stratton et al. (2011) suggest that a higher number of sessions than those in the original situation, and quality delivery, help create more robust treatment effects. It can also be argued, given the implementation difficulties surrounding selection of staff, training and supervision, that the quality of delivery (Webster-Stratton, et al., 2011) is compromised and therefore so is the fidelity.

What these studies collectively indicate in regards to fidelity is that more needs to be understood about the particular components of treatment implementation that contribute positively to stronger results (Webster-Stratton et al., 2011).

### **Incredible Years Intervention Applicability in Other Cultural and Economic Contexts – Adaptation and Tailoring**

A major consideration for the choice of evidence-based interventions is the cultural relevance and applicability of said interventions. The research suggests that some evidence-based intervention programmes, such as the Incredible Years Parent and Teacher Programmes, are more transportable across countries and cultures than others.

Issues around the Incredible Years applicability in countries other than the USA, as its place of origin, have been tested through the application of the intervention in other settings such as Jamaica, Wales and Ireland. While some adaptations, such as increasing the training time to include more time on the areas unfamiliar to the Jamaican environment, (Baker-Henningham, 2010), delivering the course bilingually (Hutchings et al., 2007), creation of culturally-relevant role plays and activities that link

to the participants own lives and contexts (Hutchings et al., 2007) have occurred to the original programme. The conclusion of all of these studies is that the intervention, with the tailoring made, is beneficial and culturally-relevant for the participants. Part of the success factor with regard to the tailoring of the programme is the training of local personnel to implement and supervise the implementation of the intervention (Hutchings, 2012; Werry et al., 2010).

### **Costs**

The previous section related to policy directives, and revealed governmental concerns with the financial costs of intervention purchase and implementation (Ford et al., 2012; Hutchings, 2012) for the prevention, treatment and or management of CD or antisocial behaviours, in an economic environment in which budget cuts were being called for. Given the budget constraints, those making decisions regarding programme choice selected this intervention from Webster-Stratton (amongst others such as Triple P and PATHS) and collectively agreed that costs need to be weighed against the effectiveness of the intervention in reducing the ongoing incidence of antisocial behaviours and conduct disorder and the associated health, educational, social and justice costs.

In regards to the use of the intervention as a preventative cost-effective measure, the Incredible Years Parent and Teacher programmes (Bywater, 2012; Ford et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2008) promote working with a preventative mindset to reap longer-term rewards. The use of the Incredible Years Teacher Programme is seen as cheaper than working directly with individual challenging children (Ford et al., 2012) as teachers are supported to understand challenging child behaviour and can use the strategies and coaching opportunities provided in the programme over the duration of their teaching careers. Thus, the preventative use of the intervention potentially decreases the costs associated with teachers leaving the profession as a consequence of burnout as well as the costs of reduced educational achievement to the individual and society.

### **Benefits**

The use of the Incredible Years Programmes have already been shown that from a societal standpoint and cost-effectiveness analysis to be money wellspent (Ford et al., 2012; Lewis, 2011). In this section the reported benefits of the implementation of Incredible Years Parent and Teacher Programmes to the children, families, teachers and high-risk populations are considered along with the robustness of the measures used.

A variety of measures, including teacher satisfaction questionnaires, inter-rater reliability scores, effect sizes, parent interviews (Hutchings et al., 2007; Jones et al., 2008; Little et al., 2012) and endorsement of these programmes as effective in the area of violence prevention in youth justice (Webster-Stratton et al., 2011), are used in the literature to provide evidence of the benefits of using these interventions. From an empirical standpoint, the quantitative measures of effect size and inter-rater reliability are deemed more robust than those using qualitative measures, which rely heavily on the opinion of the interviewee.

The qualitative benefits reported from the use of Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Programme include students being able to engage and attend to tasks with improved self-esteem and empathy for others (Hutchings et al., 2007) for both the students targeted in the intervention process and their classmates. For families, the benefits are seen in stronger family relationships and reduced annoying behaviours (Little, et al., 2012). For teachers, the benefits are seen in having increased confidence in their capability and competence to manage challenging students in the classroom, with an increased range of effective strategies and more use of proactive approaches.

Those studies reporting quantitative measures with effect sizes have shown consistency in the effect size within the period of time covered by this review. Encouragingly, those effect sizes of 0.33 to 0.39 which measure the amount of change for the students pre- and post-intervention on measures of antisocial/ conduct disorder behaviours (Little et al., 2012), indicate significant effects for the participants in terms of a reduction in conduct disorder behaviours. The data also supports that this change is lasting over time and those participants who are have high ratings on the conduct disorder scales, indicating the severity of the cases, and boys, benefit the most (Jones et al., 2008).

### **Gaps and Implications**

There are multiple gaps in the current literature which have implications for both future research potential and practice. Those gaps fall into three main areas: the first, implementation and fidelity; the second, the costs associated with the implementation of the programme, and the third, the extent of the outcome when running just a single component of the Incredible Years Programme series. Much has already been said, in this review, about the fidelity and implementation differences within and across the programmes. It would be worthwhile comparing the fidelity of the group leaders' methods, process and principles, and the success of both teacher-outcomes

and student-outcomes under these conditions. At the same time it would be worth a closer look at the impact that the level and type of supervision of the group leaders running the programmes makes to the outcomes for both teachers and students.

With regard to the second aspect, there are three possible areas of further study. It will be valuable, from a costs point-of-view, to have more work done on the measurable outcomes of implementation of these programmes over a longer and shorter time-frame. Secondly, the impact on outcomes of implementation of the IYT programme with, and without, the individual in-class coaching component, and finally, the outcomes versus cost of a self-administered version of IYT compared with the group-based delivery. This question could be addressed by asking questions such as 'What value is added?' and 'By how much is the cost to the individual and society, both short-term and over the longer term, reduced?'

The third area for further consideration is that of individualising the effect-outcomes by looking specifically at one programme intervention only, as many of the studies to date are not pure, in that they reflect the impact of more than one intervention in play. Once this single effect is understood then it would be beneficial to link programmes together to create the greatest success outcomes from the intervention.

## CONCLUSIONS

While the IYT and IYP have been proven to be successful over time in reducing the incidence of conduct disorders, across multiple cultural and settings contexts, and are cost-effective, there are issues with the implementation and fidelity of the programmes due to selection, training and supervision of those delivering them.

Concerns re policy-borrowing with change of context (Lewis, 2011) have been addressed by the studies from multiple settings, showing that the cross-cultures impact is mitigated by the presence of locally-trained facilitators from the same cultural group as those undertaking the programmes. Further research is required in relation to the implementation and fidelity of the programmes, the cost of the programme implementation, and the size of the outcome from running a single component of the Incredible Years series.

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# Elements of Inclusion: Findings from the Field

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## ABSTRACT

The Ministry of Education has set the target of 100% of New Zealand schools to be 'mostly' inclusive by 2014. But what are the essential elements of inclusion? This paper explores essential core elements that allow inclusion to flourish. Based on an extensive time in the field as part of a year-long doctoral research project, these elements are: relationships; shared experiences; advocacy, and a sense of identity. Strengthened and welded together through *transparency*, inclusive cultures and more inclusive practices have been seen to develop and grow.

## Practice Paper

**Key Words:** Advocacy, change, inclusion, transparency

## INTRODUCTION

Inclusion has been likened to a process (Ainscow, 2005; Allan, 2008; Carrington, 1999). Rather than a set destination, considering inclusion as a process has required from educators a continuous effort of reflection and improvement. The Ministry of Education is determined to announce the arrival of the New Zealand education system at some sort of inclusive destination (Ministry of Education, 2012). The Education Review Office's (ERO) most recent report, *Including Students with High Needs: Primary Schools* (Education Review Office, 2013) announces that we are 77 percent there. However, when inclusion is considered as an issue of social justice rather than a measurable goal, it assumes a wider meaning (Ballard, 2004). Inclusion, when viewed as an issue of values and beliefs, becomes focused on any member of the school or community who face barriers to full and meaningful participation.

I have written previously about examples of successful inclusion found in the literature (McMaster, 2012). While there is no set recipe for achieving a 'world class inclusive education system', each example offered ingredients that schools could use to create their own 'flavour' of inclusion.

The literature revealed that these were:

- Developing a shared vision and common definition (or language) of inclusion
- A process of learning reflecting best-evidence synthesis for professional learning and development
- Change that takes place on the cultural level.

Kugelmass (2006) has identified aspects of culture demonstrated in schools striving to become more inclusive:

- an uncompromising commitment and belief in inclusion
- differences among students and staff perceived as a resource
- teaming and a collaborative interaction style among staff and children
- willingness of staff to struggle to sustain practice
- inclusion understood as a social/political issue, and
- a commitment to inclusive ideals communicated across the school and into the community (p. 286).

This paper will look within those ingredients and cultural aspects and discuss essential core elements that enable inclusive change. These elements are relationships, advocacy, a sense of identity, shared experiences, and transparency. Each of these elements work to strengthen the effort to develop inclusion in schools and communities. These elements fuel inclusive change in an ever-enlarging spiral - the more they are developed, the stronger the foundations (or ingredients) for inclusive change to emerge, and the more pronounced these core elements become. Woven throughout these elements is the notion of transparency, being able to see barriers as well as through them. Transparency involves the ability to see how values and beliefs are demonstrated within a school or community. This improved vision allows community members to see who is included or who is excluded, to look outward at how values are practiced, as well as inward to where values are formed.

The research findings discussed in this paper reflect the importance of school culture as central in inclusive development. This paper demonstrates the inter-relation between inclusion and school culture (Booth & Ainscow, 2011; Slee, 2011; Zollers, Ramanathan & Yu, 1999). However, culture is not a fixed entity. When action is grounded in reflection, and reflection leads to action, there is *praxis*. Change becomes possible in a directed manner when underlying values and assumptions are examined. Carrington, Deppeler and Moss (2010) argue that schools need to reflect on their values and beliefs in order to develop inclusive cultures. Culture, Carrington (1999) points out, is constructed by the beliefs and attitudes of people in a community. "Reflection on current beliefs and practices is necessary", Carrington concludes, to develop inclusive education (p. 262).

### The Social Model of Disability

Language, like culture, has a certain fluidity of interpretation. Words such as 'disability' and 'inclusion' have been difficult to define. The definition of disability in this paper reflects a 'social model' (Oliver, 1996; Oliver & Barnes, 2012). A social model of disability moves the focus away from the individual and recognises the oppressive social or political structures that exclude or marginalise that individual (Neilson, 2005; Oliver, 1990). Oliver (1990) drew a distinction between *impairment* and *disability*. An impairment may be a physical condition or functional limitation, however, a disability is the social exclusion created by the way a society responds to individuals with impairments (Joseph, 2007). Some disability researchers today prefer the term 'social interpretation(s)' to more fully describe the complex societal roles in disablement but there is general agreement that disability is a social construct. A common feature among disability research is the rejection of a medical model of disability (Connor, Gabel, Gallagher & Morton, 2008). A medical model of disability individualises and pathologises disability (Neilson, 2005). The underlying assumption within this 'medical' paradigm is that the deficit is located within individual students. In this model a child receives a diagnosis of his or her impairment, which can then be used to group individuals together for instructional purposes (Mitchell, 2010). When the focus of disability or impairment is within the individual, the environment or culture does not need to be restructured. Instead, the individual becomes a subject to be 'integrated' into a 'mainstream' or 'regular' educational setting.

In a social model of disability the focus of attention shifts from the individual to the barriers that the

individual faces in their community, workplace or school. Creating an inclusive education system, then, would necessitate the identification and removal of barriers. This activity, carried out at the level of school culture, would allow for the cultural transformation that Kugelmass (2006) sees as necessary for inclusive change to be sustained. This notion of 'cultural transformation' implies an agency in school community members (teachers, students, parents) to redefine terms such as 'inclusion' and 'mainstream' to reflect the shared values of the community. During my research at the subject school a process of negotiation and re-negotiation was continually taking place at a conscious, as well as subconscious level, as staff explored how these terms were reflected in school practice. The word 'mainstream', for example, is used with quotation marks in this paper as the notion of what or who were 'mainstream', and indeed, even the appropriateness of that term, was questioned and explored. The ability of the school community to co-create meaning through experience and reflection highlights the potentiality of developing inclusive schools. This is the conscious effort of which Kugelmass (2006) writes, coupled with a supportive and collaborative atmosphere deliberately created to foster an exploration of deeply-held values and beliefs.

### The Context of this Research

This paper represents some initial findings of my doctoral research. I have been looking at whole-school inclusive change in an Aotearoa/New Zealand high school setting, using the *Index for Inclusion* (Booth & Ainscow, 2011) as a tool for reflection and review in a year-long critical ethnographic qualitative project. The discussion offered below is based on extensive field notes (Biklen & Bogdan, 2007) and interviews of both an informal and formal nature (Kvale, 2008). My chosen methodology has given me a unique and in-depth view of both the school culture and the process of change. For the length of one academic year I was embedded in the subject school as critical ethnographer (Madison, 2005; O'Reilly, 2008) and facilitator for the *Index* process. While researching for my doctoral thesis I was also an active agent for change, working with the staff team in developing inclusion within their school. In order to ensure anonymity I have used no names in this paper. The school is referred to simply as 'the subject school', and simple titles or descriptors are utilised such as 'the unit', 'learning support area', 'principal', etc. This is also done in the belief that the findings presented below do not merely reflect the experiences of one school, but may be generalised to the wider New Zealand context. As this research has been conducted under the auspices of an accredited university, ethical

approval has been sought and granted by the ethics committee of that institution, and the Code of Ethics followed in all research practice.

## ELEMENTS OF INCLUSION

Five essential elements have emerged in looking at inclusion: relationships, shared experiences, advocacy, a sense of identity, and transparency. Although treated separately in this paper they all intertwine and work together to energise the features Kugelmass (2006) identified as related to inclusive education. Each core element makes up a vital part of school members' efforts to create sustainable inclusive change.

### Relationships

The most obvious of the elements listed above is, perhaps, *relationships* - inclusion boiled down to the most basic of questions: "Do I know you?" Knowing an individual brings that person to our consciousness, making them, in an important way, part of us. We know family and friends and colleagues. Through knowing them we form a bond, and through this bond we demonstrate respect and show care. We miss those who we know and we notice their absence at daily or key events. When entering a crowded room, such as a school assembly, a quick look around the group will tell us if those we know are present or absent. Through developing a relationship with the students of the unit and learning support classes in the subject school I was easily able to spot their non-participation during school presentations. "\_\_\_ would really enjoy this!" "\_\_\_ sure would get a lot out of this motivational speaker!" Because those students were known to me I was able to think those thoughts (thoughts that now include them). Had I not known those students I would have enjoyed the events with those around me, unfettered by a sense of loss or guilt or anger that my friends were not invited.

Teachers care greatly for their students. A crucial question to explore is: "Who are *their* students?" Or, whom do they consider to be their students? The more a teacher widens their circle of relationships with students the more their sense of 'ownership' of students increases. If a small group of students are not known to them then they may feel no responsibility towards them. There is no emotional or even professional attachment as they have no, or very limited, interaction with them. It is very possible that the longer a teacher has taught at a school the more students they become familiar with. A teacher in the 'mainstream' will have a greater opportunity to develop relationships with (primarily) 'mainstream' students. How are these relationships defined? How do the teachers identify the students as well as identify or relate to them? How well do they know a

student if the interaction is limited to specific time-limited periods during the week? This, of course, is difficult to measure but interactions outside of these periods can be an indicator. An important factor in this interaction is the amount of time or opportunity that an individual student has to participate in the general 'mainstream' life of the school.

A perception with several teachers in the subject school was that inclusion involved removing special settings and 'including' all students in 'mainstream' classes. A Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTL) working with the school spoke of teacher frustration elsewhere at having such a diverse ability range in their classes, of facing real exhaustion at trying to meet all student needs as professionally as possible. "*Real* exhaustion," he reiterated. This is confusing inclusion with service provision — how additional needs are met. An occupational therapist (OT) I interviewed told of one girl at another school who is 'included' in a class with her peers for two hours each day. "All she does is wander around the class the whole time — that isn't inclusion." I had to agree. That is an example of service provision, how additional needs are, or not, met. Viewing inclusion as an issue of values and attitudes, the primary focus becomes how the individual student is valued in his or her local school, how teachers and peers reflect their appreciation and respect for that individual through their relationships with them.

In that OT's experience, schools with a unit provided more opportunity for inclusion. The provision of services was met through the additional classroom and a quality participation in school life was made possible. The unit can enable all students, regardless of need, to attend the local school. This *presence* is guaranteed through a certain model of service provision. However, presence is not enough. Without increasing participation in the general life of the school it is not even 'integration', and definitely not 'mainstreaming', to borrow a very old term. An essential element in making any type of inclusion successful is the ability of teachers and students to weave relationships. Through relationships we identify with and value the other, we notice their absence or exclusion, and we look for ways to include them. We widen our circle to include them.

### Advocacy

*Advocacy*, whether self-advocacy or that provided by another, is another essential element that fertilises inclusion. There is a student at the school who utilises a prosthetic leg, and as such, fits many definitions of 'disabled'. However, this student can advocate for themselves and has ensured that they receive no special

treatment, no separate placement, and no additional supports except those requested specifically by them. Only by watching the student walking freely around campus is any type of limp detectable. The student reminded me of my own daughter who very strongly advocated that she be removed from the English equivalent of Ongoing Resourcing Scheme. She did not consider herself to be 'disabled' or 'special'. Once she was removed from that funding scheme and received no additional supports she became just another student and experienced 'inclusion'. That this self-advocacy was respected by the teaching staff contributed to the self-confidence and empowerment of the student and is consistent with *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (United Nations, 1989; 2006) and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (United Nations, 1989; 2006).

A student without a perceived disability is only known by her name, not her class, such as a 'learning support' student or 'one of [unit teacher's]'. The latter description was overheard when a young lad with autism walked into the administration block. A senior staff member tried to explain his presence to a bemused colleague. "He is one of [unit teacher's]," had the ring of explanation. I used the opportunity to say hello to the boy and extend a hand which he promptly shook. When he had walked past, a teacher asked what his green flag was for, and I was able to explain that after watching the stock cars on a previous evening, waving the flag and starting a race is one of his favourite activities. On that occasion I was able to use the experience to normalise a relationship and advocate quietly for the student.

Lack of advocacy not only results in non-participation but the lack of voice. Without an advocate to push for inclusion, and lacking the skills to effectively speak for oneself, a situation of exclusion more readily emerges. For example, one way that this can occur is if there is a lack of response to students who experience communication challenges. This can result in exclusion from the curriculum and from social relationships. Impairments can be turned into disabilities if no effective means of communication are provided. Similarly, if there is no-one to advocate for the student, to notice the absence of students at school events, there is no person to query that absence or to encourage, even demand, more meaningful participation. Advocacy in a school where the culture is one of ownership by all the teachers can be seen as a vigilance (Cologon, 2013). This is what Kugelmass (2006) refers to as an uncompromising commitment and belief in inclusion. In such a case advocacy is not limited to one teacher's aide or teacher, but a shared responsibility.

## Sense of Identity

In departments or units that have a strong *sense of identity* there is a linking of advocacy and experience. The learning support area of the school, comprising four classrooms, has been working deliberately to foster a sense of identity and shared focus. The four teachers use their weekly meeting (held during Friday form period in all departments) to plan forward as well as bond as a team. The weekly assembly held in the library for all the students of the four classes provides an opportunity to share success, offer praise and build esteem. The parent consultation evening was held this year in the learning support area itself (rather than in the crowded hall where teachers sit at individual tables) and parental participation increased markedly. The Head of Department is consciously trying to ensure the full participation of the learning support students in the curriculum, advocates strongly for those students, with varying degrees of success, to have access to subjects such as science, and is creatively looking at how to incorporate her department more fully and reciprocally into the life of the school.

The subject school in which my research took place also maintains a unit for students with high and complex needs. Separate units can make a powerful physical statement about who is 'in' and who is 'out' in any community (Slee, 2011). Separate or special locations for specific students can imply that those students do not fit in with what is considered 'normal' or 'regular'. The presence of a special needs unit, however, can mean that no impairment can prevent attendance at a mainstream school. There is great potential in the special needs unit in facilitating inclusion. How the special needs unit is utilised is where inclusion *or* segregation can happen (McMaster, 2014). Having worked previously with units possessing a strong sense of identity I have seen what can be achieved when it is fostered. A unit in a high school in another area, for example, recreated itself, name and all, in an effort to integrate more fully into the life of school. The teacher was a tireless advocate, utilising the resources and relationships of the school as well as outside sources such as Crippled Children's Society, RTLB, and the Ministry of Education, Special Education. Student voice was made central to practice and planning, and outside advocacy was accessed to ensure student wishes and goals were met. Each student had an individualised schedule to meet their needs and desires, and they and their families/whanau played a significant role in creating those schedules. Here is an example of the inter-relatedness of this sense of identity with advocacy, relationships and shared experiences, and a reflection of the six aspects of culture identified by Kugelmass (2006) as necessary

for sustaining inclusive cultures in schools. Where the sense of identity is strong there is more confidence in advocacy, there are more opportunities to share in experience, and more relationships are formed. When it is lacking, isolation and exclusion become the norm.

### Shared Experiences

Were the participation of all students normalised then their presence would be expected. Inclusion, in other words, would be the norm or the commonplace. The school community sharing in experiences becomes not only what is expected; it is what the community is used to. *Shared experiences*, doing and celebrating together, creates a familiarity in which those unknown become known. Shared experiences, such as whole school sports day, a water sports day, an art exhibition featuring a wide variety of student art, creates a space in which community members are able to be with each other in non-threatening or non-judgemental circumstances. Every school week or term provides such occasions, and every school term affords enough time to plan and create such celebrations. All that is required is imagination and facilitation. The more experiences are shared, the more familiar faces become, the more known community members become.

Never underestimate the power of unfamiliarity. Unfamiliarity is the cause of awkwardness. Standing in the playground and speaking with a staff member on a sunny autumn afternoon, a student from the unit came up to us. He was in good spirits and we began chatting. It turned out the staff member was related in a second cousin or distant aunty way and that the staff member knew his mother. The two spoke for a few moments about family before the bell rang. "I may have been asking the wrong questions," the teacher said to me as if there might be a 'special way' to talk. She seemed unsure about how the conversation went. She was only unsure because she had conversed so little with him in the past. She mentioned some early concerns his mother had about his education. Hopefully, I thought, simply sharing a short conversation would contribute to breaking down some inhibitions in the future and more conversations will occur.

### Transparency

Running throughout each of these elements is the notion of *transparency*. Transparency, in this sense, is seeing what is present, but also seeing what is not. With an increased awareness of inclusion (and its flip side, exclusion), how values are put into practice in a school community become more visible. An essential element of whole-school re-culturing

programmes, such as the *Index for Inclusion*, involve a period of self-review and reflection, of making the school community, its values and aspirations, more transparent. For the advocate and for the self-advocate, this means being able to see what is not present *and* having a vision of what is desired. To develop relationships, it means being able to see the 'other' and bring them into a widening circle of friendships. During shared experiences it becomes clear who is, and who is not, participating. Creating and strengthening a sense of identity requires being able to see oneself and one's department or unit as an entity deserving of worth.

### EXPRESSING ELEMENTS OF INCLUSION THROUGH A SHARED EXPERIENCE

The final three weeks of the school year provided an opportunity to put new expectations to use and develop the understanding behind them through a shared experience involving both staff and students. This experience contained key aspects of what have been identified as best practice for teacher professional learning and development (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar & Fung, 2007). Staff, and students, were given the opportunity and time to explore ideas and integrate them into practice. Following the last exam, the school year for the senior (Year 11 to 13) students is over. Left on campus are the Year 9 and 10 students. Rather than continue with a normal schedule of class periods during these weeks, the principal and deputy principal put forward the idea of grouping the remaining students into their house groups and planning, with the students, high-interest learning activities centred around the key competencies found in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). The New Zealand curriculum considers key competencies the "capabilities people need in order to live, learn, work and contribute as active members of their community" (p. 11). These competencies are identified as managing self, relating to others, participating and contributing, thinking, and using language, symbols, and texts. The question posed by the principal and deputy principal was how to incorporate those competencies into a learning programme that was 'inclusive and responsive'.

Part of the importance of the three week project lies in expressing current values through a shared experience. Each house group encouraged student participation in planning the three weeks. All form teachers, including the unit teacher through to the teacher-aides, helped inform planning by asking students their interests. Student voice was then woven into what the house teachers collaboratively designed for the end-of-year project. Planning for the three

weeks included all house teachers working together, and for the unit teacher and her colleagues it was the first time they collaborated in such a manner. The house in which they were members used the *Index for Inclusion* to inform their planning. Ideas were explored, passed around, altered. The participation of all staff in this project, including the unit teacher, was assumed as natural and expected. The participation of unit students was similarly taken as natural. Participation was not an issue as it was assumed that all house students would participate. Teachers from the learning support area began negotiating with the teacher-aides of the unit to prepare for some activities, and these teachers' expectation of the unit students were being clearly articulated and asserted.

The final three weeks of the year similarly provided an opportunity for these elements of inclusion to be experienced *and* reflected upon. Each Friday morning during this period was set aside as an extended staff briefing, facilitated by the principal and deputy principal to encourage reflection and forward thinking. "What can be taken forward to inform school planning?" staff were asked. "What are the implications for school reform that is inclusive and responsive?" The three week trial was, in essence, a *shared experience* in inclusion. *Relationships* were formed or strengthened, *identities* were created, and *advocacy* was practiced by both students and teachers, and integrated in the shared experience. The exercise of reflection, done daily by the students and collectively by the teachers at the staff briefings as well as extra staff meetings, provided a *transparency* that moved the school from a site based on a departmental structure to a more whole entity.

By re-grouping the students according to houses rather than form classes the teachers created five new and larger classes, involving colleagues and students who otherwise would not work closely together. Several teachers expressed a similar sentiment: "I enjoyed working with other staff, from different departments and skills, watching their teaching habits and ideals." The relationships formed were deepened as each staff member worked side-by-side with colleagues on a shared endeavour. As mentioned in the previous section, for many teachers it was the first time they had worked so closely with colleagues. These relationships also included the students, as they were able to work with many with whom they had previously had little contact. Students from the learning support area worked beside students from the whanau form class, just as students from 'extension' classes worked side-by-side with those from other form classes and year levels. One Year 9 student even expressed the desire to spend time and work with the students of the special needs unit when

they did not take part in some activities, and this was negotiated into her schedule.

An important result of vertically combining year and ability groups was the strengthening of identity. Staff and students did not identify themselves to form classes during this time, but to houses, and the cohesion of each house increased as a result. "It's like it's no longer [learning support] and whanau, it is [the house]" one teacher commented. The identity built was also that of a more-integrated staff team and the collective student body. The extended staff briefings and group reflections contributed to that, as did the weekly group review sessions held by each house. As identity and relationships strengthened, staff and students advocated for each other, for breaking down streaming barriers, for more vertical groupings, and for wider participation. Again, the importance of a shared experience was also demonstrating to school leaders, teachers and students what they can achieve through working together, and the elements of inclusion being strengthened through that process.

## DISCUSSION

In the subject school this has even resulted in a discussion of what is meant by the term 'mainstream'. The 'norm' is often a sort of unexamined and unquestioned 'ghost in the middle' (Bauman, 2011; Slee, 2011). By focusing on a minoritised or marginalised group the assumed 'mainstream' or 'normal' is not examined. However, as the nature of the school becomes more transparent, that space considered the 'norm' is increasingly examined and questions are asked, such as: "What is meant by 'mainstream'?" "Who, and who is not, in the 'mainstream'?" "Where are the borders of the 'mainstream' and should they be widened or even dissolved?" As the school becomes transparent there are fewer shadows in which exclusionary practice can exist. Looking at a conceptual map of the school I produced, the principal of my subject school immediately focused on those shadows, and his awareness thus became a type of spotlight. "How did I miss that last year? That was a real blind spot!" he said when looking at the positioning of specific departments. Practices previously ignored are increasingly questioned, and staff are creating ways to include previously marginalised students in the wider life of the school in meaningful ways, just as staff are also re-creating their concept of what they previously considered the 'mainstream'. The transparency encouraged in the process of developing a more inclusive school culture has enabled the elements of inclusion to be exercised, thereby strengthening the inclusive process.

The Minister of Education would now, as part of the initiative *Success for All: Every School, Every Child* (Ministry of Education, 2012) like to see all schools in New Zealand as 'inclusive'. The aspiration of "a world class inclusive education system" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 5) dates back to Special Education 2000. The Inclusive Practices Tool (IPT) (NZCER, 2013) has been designed as a self-review mechanism for schools. The IPT comes as a result of the 2010 Education Review Office report and can be seen as part of a drive to make school practices accountable or measureable. In treating inclusion as a measureable goal or target to be attained, the Minister runs the risk of denying school communities the opportunity to develop their own culture of inclusion (McMaster, 2013). As the experiences of the subject school have indicated, shared experiences can provide opportunities to involve community members in developing relationships, empowering each participant, create identity as a whole and inclusive class or school, and visibly involve all members of the learning community. Whereas the three week experience at the subject school involved a great deal of planning and effort, any thoughtful shared experience can draw all the elements of inclusion together. The above research has illustrated how, through the process of co-creation, community members bring out the core elements of inclusion and, as a result, build and strengthen the culture of inclusion within their school.

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# Barriers and Enablers to Evidence-Based Practices

**Robyn Foster**

RTLB, Nga Pouwhirinaki o Whakaari

## ABSTRACT

The importance of educational practices based on evidence is well-supported in the literature, however barriers to their implementation in classrooms still exist. This paper examines the phenomenon of evidence-based practice in education highlighting enablers and barriers to their implementation with particular reference to RTLB practice.

## Research Paper

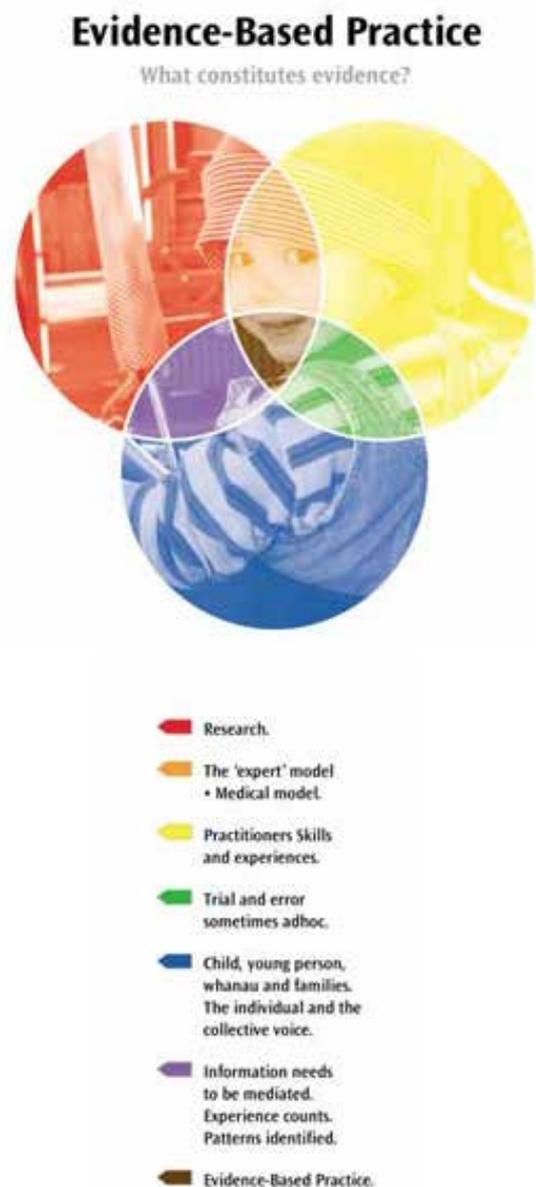
**Keywords:** Evidence-based practice, RTLB

## INTRODUCTION

The term evidence-based practice (EBP) has become a common catch phrase over the last ten years, and reference to it can be found across a range of disciplines. Education has not been immune from this, and in New Zealand, the Ministry of Education (MOE) refer to it in a number of policy and information documents (New Zealand Curriculum, MOE, 2007); and the Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) Toolkit (MOE, 2012). However, while the notion of evidence-based practice is becoming increasingly accepted as a necessary focus of teacher work, there is confusion and contradiction regarding its meaning. One of the reasons for this is the range of confusing terminology associated with EBP, including terms such as 'best practice', 'best evidence', and 'research-based', all of which have been used synonymously with EBP, despite differences in their meaning (Hornby, Gable & Evans, 2013).

Another of the difficulties is the differing paradigms from which evidence-based practice is interpreted. Some define it in terms of controlled and randomised studies: for example, "An evidence-based practice can be defined as an instructional strategy, intervention or teaching programme that has resulted in consistent positive results when experimentally tested" (Marder & Fraser, 2012, npg). Contrasted to this is a widely-used model of evidence-based practice as described by the Ministry of Education (2012) and later by Macfarlane (2011). Here, a three-component model

is used to show evidence-based practice as situated in the intersection of (i) research evidence, (ii) practitioner evidence and (iii) evidence from the child/young person and their family/whānau.



(MOE, 2012)

While it is beyond the scope of this article to provide any resolution to the confusion regarding definitions and meanings, the relevance and importance of evidence-based practice to education cannot be overstated. This is because evidence-based practices in education provide teachers and other educators with guidance about what works so as to enhance educational outcomes for all learners.

Despite a growing awareness of the importance of evidence-based practice in education there is a reported gap between what has been found by research to be effective and what educators use and practice in their daily work (Mitchell, 2008). Therefore, it is important to examine those enablers to evidence-based practice with the aim of increasing the relevance and use of such practices in schools. RTLB have a significant role to play in this task as a major focus of their work is increasing teacher/school capability and capacity. In this regard, assisting teachers to be informed practitioners and ensure that their practice is based on best-evidence is extremely important.

### **ENABLERS TO IMPLEMENTING EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES**

As a former education advisor with School Support Services, I have been a part of professional learning and development projects that appear to align with what Odom (2009) calls "Enlightened Professional Development" (p. 58). Both the *Assess to Learn* Project (AtoL) and the *Secondary Literacy* Project have had an evidence base, were nationally implemented in schools that requested them and included a review of school systems as well as classroom practices, were facilitated by trained advisors, and had, as an integral aspect, on-going coaching and support of teachers. Over a two to three year contract in each school and thousands of visits to classrooms, I saw no two teachers who implemented the key principles of each contract in exactly the same way. What I did see were teachers who adapted new knowledge and skills to what they already knew in a way they considered most appropriate to their context. The most dynamic and on-going changes occurred where the teachers involved engaged in collaborative inquiry with colleagues around data. As a consequence, they developed accountability to each other as they came to accept collective responsibility for all the students they taught.

### **Accessibility of EBP**

If evidence-based practices are to be successfully implemented in schools, they need to be accessible to educators. In other words, consideration needs to be given to the way in which findings are presented.

They need to be communicated in brief summaries showing: how findings fit into the wider context, with suggestions for action; using straightforward language without jargon, light on both referencing and statistics; having examples, illustrations, anecdotes and analogies that teachers can relate to their own experiences, and providing practical decision-making guidance (Nelson, Leffler & Hansen, 2009). Additionally, research findings should be disseminated in a manner that is usable to education settings and can be applied and transferred (Nutley, Walter & Davies, 2003). Nutley et al. (2003) go on to suggest that successful implementation will require the translation or adaptation of the findings to the practice context of the target group, enabling teachers to take ownership of the process and to put their own stamp on implementation.

The role of the RTLB in this dissemination process is often that of a 'guide-on-the-side', someone who streamlines the academic language into more practical terminology that the teacher is able to efficiently integrate with their current knowledge, skills and experience. Through collaborative modelling and dialogue, the RTLB supports the teacher to develop concrete understandings of abstract ideas.

### **Management Approaches**

Walker (2004) discusses several school-wide approaches to behaviour management that have been successfully implemented in schools. From his analysis of these successes, Walker suggests that where developers have paid careful attention to addressing known barriers to implementation, this has resulted in acceptance and adoption of these approaches by schools. From this perspective, therefore, enablers might include: consideration of the characteristics of each school; readiness of the school and teachers for the programme; the presence of advocates or champions of the programme within the school; philosophical support; alignment of key features of the programme and school routines and systems, and robust staff participation. He goes on to theorise that these characteristics are likely to be embedded within the school's culture, and where they are lacking, might be difficult to change. Cook and Odom (2013) highlight the importance of external systems such as administrative, financial and organisational support for teachers; Harn, Parisi and Stoolmiller (2013) assert that any intervention will be "highly contextually dependent" (p. 181) with multidimensional layers, all of which must be taken into consideration. ACT Department of Education and Training (2007) supports this view, describing EBP as operating at two levels which interact with

each other. The first level focuses on the teacher and classroom; the second level encompasses the wider ecology of the school and community.

My experience as an advisor, certainly supports this way of thinking. Before accepting a school onto a contract we had to take them through a rigorous process to determine readiness. This process included all of the enablers cited above, as well as sustainability of change (Forman, Olin, Hoagwood, Crowe & Saka, 2009), and had grown out of years of experience of working with schools who lacked some or all of these, resulting in little change in teaching practices. As an RTLB I don't have the option of choosing who I might work with, or to consider their level of readiness, or the levels of support inherent within the school. This means that I am often working in an environment in which there might be more barriers to implementing EBP than there are enablers and must use my professional wisdom to carefully scaffold a learning pathway with teachers, at the same time undertaking a meticulous inquiry process around my own practice to ensure best professional learning and development practice is maintained.

### Identification and selection of EBPs

Although empowering teachers to identify EBPs could be seen as an enabler to them implementing EBPs (Hornby et al., 2013), barriers such as teacher mistrust of research and time restraints suggest that the RTLB could have a key role as a "purveyor" (Odom, Cox & Brock, 2013) or mediator between EBPs and the teacher. RTLB could select EBPs that might be appropriate for any one school/teacher and student/s and present a range of options to the school/teacher and whanau for consideration, helping them to navigate research literature (Hornby et al., 2013). The RTLB might guide the selection of an appropriate EBP based on their knowledge of the teachers' current practice and their knowledge of the student/s. They could provide practical assistance with implementation (Hornby et al., 2013), and could also be available to support teachers to monitor student progress as a measure of the effectiveness of the intervention (Digennaro Reed & Reed, 2009) and to adapt or discard the EBP based on that data (Cook, Tankersley & Harjusola-Webb, 2008). In this way, RTLB could provide critical support in enabling teachers to identify, select and implement EBP.

### Cost Effectiveness

It appears that decisions made by teachers and schools as to whether they will adopt an EBP are likely to be strongly influenced by both programme- and cost-effectiveness and they are more likely to consider favourably a programme that has proven

effectiveness in relationship to the expenditure of time, effort and required resources (Walker, 2004). Considerations such as personnel required for implementation, inclusion or withdrawal from the classroom, professional development required, and the ways existing programmes might need adjustment (International Reading Association, 2002), will all influence how favourably a school might view an EBP. Attractiveness to teachers and schools will also be influenced by the characteristics of the EBP and the resources that it either provides or which are required. For example, does it provide specific and systematic instruction; flexibility for use with diverse learners; high quality materials that can be used across different ability levels, topics and cultures?

As an RTLB, I would see an important aspect of my professional judgement would be to assess EBP in terms of cost-effectiveness and how attractive it might be for teachers, and look for a 'best-fit' between the time and resourcing a school is willing to commit (Forman et al., 2009), and any EBP that I might recommend.

### Professional Learning and Development

Hornby et al. (2013) identifies effective professional learning and development (PLD) as a significant enabler for the implementation of EBPs. Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) suggest that professional learning which makes a substantive impact on student outcomes involves external expertise, "requires teachers to engage with new knowledge," (p. xv) and its implications for their practice provides multiple opportunities to learn through a range of activities, and assists them to integrate what they have learned into new teaching and learning practices. Their findings also identified that teachers need an extended period of time to achieve this within a professional community that provided both the support and challenge needed to make changes that improved student outcomes. This view has considerable support: Odom (2009) stresses the importance of the social dynamics of professional teams; Meline and Paradiso (2003) endorse the connection between theory and practice; William (2002) and Hornby et al. (2013) believe that the conceptual knowledge of teachers is built up through dialogue within a community of practice; whilst Klingner, Ahwee, Pilonieta and Menendez (2003) and Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman and Wallace (2005) acknowledge that long-term support is necessary if teachers are to achieve both understanding and successful implementation of EBPs. However, Timperley et al. (2007) maintain that these conditions are not sufficient in themselves to ensure successful student outcomes, and suggest that as well,

teachers need both a rationale to participate and an acknowledgement that their current practices were not optimising student learning and achievement, a view supported by Opfer, Pedder and Lavicza (2011) and Spillane, Reiser and Reimer (2002). These findings are consistent with adult learning theory. Knowles (1980, cited in Harper & Ross, 2011) identifies that adults need to have a reason for learning something, that their own experience should provide the basis of learning activities, that they need to be involved in creating their own learning pathways, and will be most interested in things that are of immediate relevance to them.

Closely aligned to understanding effective PLD is the debate around 'fidelity' or 'innovation' in implementation of EBPs. There seems to be a general belief that whilst an EBP will have some components that will be critical to successful implementation (Harn et al., 2013), teachers should be encouraged to use their professional wisdom and experience to 'tinker' (Nutley et al., 2003), 'innovate' (Wiliam, 2002), or 'adapt' (Cook et al., 2008) an EBP so that it best meets the needs of the learner, the instructional preferences of the teacher, and the educational context (Cook, et al., 2008), allowing 'knowledge to evolve' (Nutley et al., 2003). Wiliam (2002) goes so far as to suggest that the role of the researcher should be seen as one of "highlighting profitable directions in which [teachers] might develop their practice" (p.12), rather than stifling innovation by prescribing activities.

If I, as an RTLB, am to be the 'purveyor' (Odom et al., 2013) or external expert that facilitates the PLD needed to implement EBPs, I would have to adopt a role that does not fit neatly within the current guidelines for RTLB work (Ministry of Education, 2012). This role would include becoming a "change agent who [is] expert at identifying and addressing obstacles to implementation" (Cook & Odom, 2013, p. 140), sharing details of the EBP, resources needed and how well it matches the need (Odom et al., 2013). As an expert, I would need to provide specific and focused feedback to the teacher, be easily accessible, and provide assistance with any practical or logistical problems that might arise throughout the implementation (Gersten & Dimino, 2002). Given the expectation that RTLB have a rapid turnover of cases, this is unlikely to happen to the extent needed to maximise support. Consequently, I would need to adapt and innovate around what I know are best practices. This might look like the following:

1. Identify the need - for a teacher to request RTLB support, suggests dissatisfaction with their practice (Spillane et al., 2002) and a readiness to consider change.

2. Facilitate the establishment of a community of practice (Hornby et al., 2013).
3. Model processes for the identification and selection of EBP that might suit the teachers, students and educational environment (Hornby et al., 2013).
4. Critically evaluate EBPs for best fit (Odom et al., 2013).
5. Undertake PLD, using simple, succinct messages, narrative stories and practitioner examples (Cook, Cook & Landrum, 2013).
6. Provide manageable strategies and resources that fit the practical realities of the classroom and which preferably benefit all students.
7. Support the teacher to experience success and see improvements in students' learning and behaviour (Gersten & Dimino, 2002).
8. Provide on-going coaching to lift teacher capability based on professional judgement and student need (Marzotti, Rowe & Test, 2013), and that allows for innovation and adaptation (Cook et al., 2008).
9. Support the teacher to evaluate the programme through collection and analysis of appropriate data (Cook & Odom, 2013), and adapt, continue or discard the EBP.

It appears therefore, that successful implementation of EBP, is dependent on a multi-layered, problem-solving process, that must explore the delicate balance between research (*tika*), the practitioner (*pono*) and the student and family (*aroha*).

### Barriers to Implementing Evidence-Based Practices

Many of the barriers that have been shown to stand in the way of effective implementation of EBP can be traced to a "technological model of professional action" (Biesta, 2007, p. 4), which is based on the belief of cause and effect. In other words, a teacher has only to undertake certain interventions in a specific way, and a predetermined result will eventuate. However, if we have the student at the centre of our thinking and a clear understanding of the learning that we want the student to achieve, then we will view interventions "as opportunities for students to respond to [...] and to make sense of [...] and to learn something from" (Biesta, 2007, p. 4). Through this lens, the use of EBP (*tika*) becomes a tool in our *kete* (toolkit) as we engage in a problem-solving process with the teacher (*pono*), the student and *whanau* (*aroha*), to consider what processes are most likely to achieve our agreed goals within a specific context.

## **Mistrust of Research**

Traditionally, some teachers have tended to mistrust research preferring to rely on their own experiences or trusted colleagues for what and how to teach (Cook & Cook, 2011; Hornby et al., 2013). There are a number of reasons for this mistrust: lack of appreciation of the connection between research and effective classroom practice (Meline & Paradiso, 2003; Nelson et al., 2009; Walker, 2004), and the need to be convinced that EBPs will have a positive impact on student achievement (Hornby, 2013). They may also feel that an EBP is a passing fad, based on manipulated data not relevant to their context (Forman et al., 2009). As well, the proliferation of commercial training and products make it difficult for teachers to differentiate between good and bad information (Justice & Fey, 2004), resulting in time, effort and resourcing going into programmes that don't work. If an EBP does not adequately incorporate teachers' points-of-view and the realities of teachers and classrooms, or is seen as ignoring professional wisdom and limiting their instructional freedom, then teachers may be unlikely to choose to implement them (Cook et al., 2008).

## **Ineffective Professional learning**

Ineffective professional development processes are considered to be a major barrier to the uptake of EBPs by teachers (Hornby et al., 2013). One-day workshops have been shown to be insufficient to enhance an existing teacher's practice (Gersten & Dimino, 2002). Additionally, misconceptions and confused ideas can arise when teachers are taught theories behind interventions without a clear understanding of the actual processes for classroom application (Koutselini, 2008). Furthermore, other factors can either support or undermine a teacher's attempts to implement practices learned in PLD sessions, with beliefs, time and type of training considered to be the most frequent and problematic barriers that prevented teacher uptake of EBPs. Other barriers include: insufficient opportunities for on-going learning, and contextual factors such as school organisation, policies, and a teacher's day-to-day responsibilities. Time was considered highly problematic, with teachers having insufficient time to meet and plan with others and to develop and implement supports (Bambara, Goh, Kern & Caskie, 2012).

Opfer et al., (2011) believe that teacher professional learning will only become more effective when we have a clear understanding of the learning dynamics between an individual teacher and their school, and the way in which this interaction might enhance or constrain professional learning. RTLB will need to

take careful consideration of these factors in each case they have if they are to effectively support teachers to adopt EBPs.

## **Traditional teaching practices**

Teachers' attitudes, beliefs and feelings of self-efficacy can influence the persistence with which they will attempt new practices and problem-solve their way through any difficulties in implementing new practices (Klingner et al., 2003). It may not be until they are faced with explicit data showing that their students are not achieving as well as expected that teachers will try something different. Simply providing information and/or training, although the two most commonly-used methods of dissemination of EBPs, have been found to be ineffective in changing teacher practice (Fixsen et al., 2005). This has implications for the role of the RTLB particularly in relation to professional learning and development of teachers and in supporting them to adopt a "teaching-as inquiry" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 35) approach to the use of an EBP.

## **Environmental Factors**

The environment within which a teacher works can introduce a range of barriers that will impact on their ability to implement programme changes in the form of EBPs. These barriers may relate to the characteristics of a school, including its routines and systems, the size of classes, resourcing, and senior leadership support. It might also include how well the key features of a programme fit within the current teaching and learning context, and the philosophy of the school. The absence of a key person to champion or advocate for the programme is another barrier to implementation (Bambara et al., 2012; Klingner, Ahwee, Pilonieta & Menendez, 2003; Nelson et al., 2009; Spillane et al., 2002; Walker, 2004).

Each of these environmental factors should be taken into consideration before an EBP is introduced to a school, whether to a single teacher, a group of teachers or a whole school intervention. Unless there is coherence between the practice and school systems, in my experience, the intervention will falter as it becomes easier for the teacher to go back to what works within the school's wider environment. This would suggest that a key factor in successful implementation must be a thorough exploration by the RTLB, in consultation with key school personnel, of the ecological factors within which the EBP will be introduced, and a best-fit sought. This must include teacher/student/whanau/community consultation, particularly with individual interventions (Bambara et al., 2012).

## Teacher Beliefs

The beliefs, experiences and practices that a teacher brings to professional learning can also pose a barrier to implementing EBPs. A teacher might be in an environment that provides optimum conditions and support in terms of class size, time allowance, resourcing and administration leadership, as well as supportive colleagues and families, but teacher-readiness, in terms of their experiences and prior knowledge, may result in an unwillingness to consider new practices or may mean that they are unable to “interpret and implement the reform in ways consistent with the designers’ intent” (Spillane et al., 2002, p. 393).

This highlights for me, that when attempting to introduce new practices to teachers, it is essential that I have a clear understanding of the teacher’s level of learning in relation to the new practice, and co-construct the learning pathway in such a way that it builds on their current knowledge, strengths and understanding. Ideally they should also be given multiple opportunities to consolidate new learning before taking them to the next step. Assessment for learning is just as relevant for adult learners as it is for children and young people. My message to myself: *Do your homework, assess the readiness, willingness and capability of the teacher and only then consider what is the key learning with which to start – what will have the greatest impact for the student/class/teacher?*

Despite these possible barriers, there is much that RTLB can do to help facilitate the use of EBP in schools. An important consideration is to ensure that any suggested interventions are appropriate to the strengths, knowledge and skills of the teacher, the student/whanau and the context. In this way, the use of models such as the three-component model, where evidence-based practice as situated in the intersection of (i) research evidence, (ii) practitioner evidence and (iii) evidence from the child/young person and their family/whanau, may be seen as an important source of what works and what doesn’t.

## The Nature of Research

Studies on research itself has highlighted the challenges inherent in the nature of research when considering ways to enhance the use of evidence in practice (Nelson et al., 2009). The apparent dichotomy between the controlled environment in which some research takes place and the reality of professional practice which relies on “multiple values, tacit judgement, local knowledge, and skill” (Hammersley, 2001, p. 3), leaves many practitioners sceptical of the relevance of EBP to them in their

classrooms (Nelson et al., 2009). Nelson et. al., (2009) found research to lack relevance, to be complex and contradictory, to be inaccessible and untimely, to be subject to both political and marketing bias, to be long - often with a focus on detail, written in language full of jargon and statistics, and published in journals teachers do not read.

In my experience as both an education advisor with School Support Services and an RTLB, I have found that teachers require a ‘purveyor’ (Cook & Cook, 2011) in the sense of a person to promote an idea or view to support them through the process of attempting to transform research into practice. As an RTLB I am unlikely to promote a practice that has not been transformed into a framework that can be easily interpreted in a practical sense (Hammersley, 2001), and which has a generalisability into various contexts. This highlights a tension for both schools and RTLB, in that such a framework can often only be accessed through the purchase of a ‘programme’ or a ‘consultant’, which immediately raises concerns of validity versus financial gain.

Nutley et al., (2003) make the point that even when good-quality information that is both reliable and relevant is available, replication is more likely to occur as an application of generic principles rather than recommended practices, as teachers adapt new knowledge and practices to the specific context of their teaching, their students and their learning environment. They cite Ekblom (2001) who suggests that replication is one end of a continuum and innovation is at the other, and if we demand replication then we are likely to stifle innovation. It is difficult therefore to know whether replication of research might be a barrier or an enabler of EBP. Certainly I have yet to find a teacher who has implemented practices that I have recommended in exactly the way I have suggested. Rather, they adapt them to their own strengths or to their students’ needs, or discard them altogether when, in their professional judgement, they are not a ‘good’ fit. For me, this is *pono* and *aroaha* in practice, and provides a balance for the claims of *tika*, or could perhaps be viewed as “an experiment of sorts in which special educators must validate [the] effectiveness of [an EBP] for each individual child” (Fixsen et. al., 2005, p. 138). This said, perhaps we need to view EBPs as “efficacious practices shown to work under ideal conditions” (Smith, Schmidt, Edelen-Smith & Cook, 2013) and support teachers to translate them into “effective practices that work in typical conditions”, (Smith et al., 2013, pg. 147) whilst at all times being alert to teacher tacit knowledge that may have developed around ineffective practices and customs (Nutley et al., 2003). The use of student achievement

data to monitor each stage of the implementation of an EBP would be a crucial element in determining the effectiveness of the 'what' and 'how' of implementation in each unique context (Gersten & Dimino, 2002), and an integral part of a teacher's inquiry into the practice.

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## Kairaranga Book Reviews



**AN ATLANTIC CROSSING? THE WORK OF THE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS INQUIRY, ITS RESEARCHERS, METHODS AND INFLUENCE.**

**OXFORD: SYMPOSIUM BOOKS.**

**M. LAWN (ED.) (2008).**

**Reviewed by: Howard Lee**

Debates regarding the status, purpose, credibility, and future of school examinations are by no means new in western societies. In fact, almost from the time that the state assumed responsibility for the provision and funding of free primary education (during the last quarter of the nineteenth century), there have been vigorous and often heated debates about the need for examinations, their relationship to the school curriculum, and their impact upon students' learning and teachers' work. Given the state's considerable financial investment in education it is perhaps not surprising that these debates have intensified in the latter part of the twentieth century as politicians-conservative and liberal-demand increased 'accountability', greater transparency, and unambiguous 'outcomes' from national education systems. Important questions regarding the cultural, economic and social purposes of education and its institutions, about the kind of society and human beings they are seeking to mould, and the extent to which school-based examinations have enhanced equal education opportunities throughout the twentieth century have also been raised.

One central feature accompanying the rise of universal primary education over more than a century has been the ever-expanding use of public school examinations, resulting in an increasingly meritocratic education system insofar as students' achievements and subsequent certification have come to be valued more highly than their parents' economic and social status.

Much the same pattern has also been observed in the case of secondary education with many countries acknowledging the reality that the tradition of restricting access to secondary education was profoundly anti-democratic in the post-Second World

War era. The key issue confronting western educators therefore was not only what form and range of secondary education should be offered but also what place examinations should occupy in that education.

These themes, and many others, are explored in great detail in *An Atlantic Crossing?* This book chronicles the rise of the International Examinations Inquiry (IEI), analyses its invitation-only membership and its research activities and findings, and evaluates its influence and impact upon secondary school examination policies and practices in eight countries (England, Finland, France, Germany, Norway, Scotland, Sweden, and Switzerland) from the 1920s until the 1950s.

The book opens with a superb introduction by Martin Lawn that sets the scene for the eight country case study chapters that follow. Lawn's introductory chapter makes the telling point that educational administrators, comparativists, historians, progressivists, psychologists and statisticians seldom had the opportunity to meet as colleagues to exchange and debate ideas about how examinations might need to be modified to take account of the rapid expansion in secondary education provision internationally. The IEI conferences held in 1931 (Eastbourne, England), 1936 (Folkestone, England), and 1938 (Dinard, France) provided such an opportunity and it is these three conferences that Lawn and his fellow contributors discuss and analyse in detail.

Lawn observes that the IEI was indeed fortunate to receive generous long-term funding from the Carnegie Corporation in New York and, furthermore, that this funding supported cross-border research projects on secondary school examinations and investigations involving the newly emerging 'science' of intelligence testing. Carnegie funds were used also to bring top scholars from a range of countries together at all three IEI conferences, thereby allowing ideas and research findings to be shared and, as was so often the case, vigorously critiqued. Unfortunately, by the time the last IEI conference was convened in 1938 and with the spectre of war drawing ever closer, much of

the characteristic energy and vision that had been such a hallmark of the IEI's earlier work had all but evaporated.

Following Lawn's introductory chapter is his account of the work and influence of IEI's English Committee (EC), chaired by Sir Michael Sadler and greatly assisted by Sir Philip Hartog (Project Director) who wrote a number of its publications. Lawn claims that while undoubtedly important in the context of post-war developments in English education, the EC nevertheless was unable to spearhead the hoped-for radical reform of the English examination system that its members sought. In the words of Hartog, the EC proved incapable of "entering the citadel of examinations" owing to its inability to "blow up what is bad and reconstruct what was good ... with a battering ram of facts" (p. 39).

The following seven chapters present case studies of individual countries, each of which seeks to analyse the extent to which the IEI acted as a forum for its (all male) members to facilitate a better understanding of how secondary school examinations functioned in different countries and to consider how these examinations might now be improved.

The German delegation, as Waldow explains, was caught between wanting education for radical individual self-cultivation and character formation (*Bildung*) and advocating examinations, tests, and psychometric testing. The Swiss were caught in a similar bind regarding the fundamental tension between the progressivist and emancipatory principles of 'New Education' that demanded the abolition of school examinations at the same time as expecting the state to assess educational achievement objectively. Precisely the same dilemma exists today in all of the above-named countries, as the authors in this collection observe.

The French Committee that attended the three IEI conferences knew that their leading secondary school teachers strenuously opposed any suggestion of changing the existing examination system. The French delegation's position was further complicated because they were themselves divided over the direction that French education should take. Some advocated a general cultural curriculum with traditional secondary school examinations set by the universities (e.g. Baccalaureat) to select the intellectual elite, and to differentiate and allocate youth to different vocational paths, whereas others wanted scientific, quantitative, and possibly psychometric testing introduced in both primary and secondary schools.

The chapter describing the Scottish influence on the IEI conferences explores the lead role taken by the embryonic Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE) in facilitating wide-ranging educational experimentation and undertaking extensive fieldwork and inquiries in areas such as intelligence testing, the prognostic value of university entrance examinations, and surveying and measurement. The significance of the SCRE, the authors conclude, was that despite being a 'Scottish' research institute it connected education research successfully with policy at the same time as searching internationally for new research ideas and technologies.

Finland was a late addition to the IEI, having established its own Examination Enquiry (also called the Finnish Carnegie Committee) in 1936. While the Finnish Committee included education officials, secondary school teachers and education reformers, it was driven and shaped largely by Lauren Zilliacus' commitment to embedding the 'whole child' principles of the New Education Fellowship into all aspects of Finnish schooling. The problem for Zilliacus and his colleagues was the highly prescriptive and restrictive nature of the Finnish Matriculation Examination that dominated the secondary school curriculum and prevented any pedagogical experimentation. Despite the publication of numerous comprehensive research reports throughout the 1930s, matriculation was not abandoned. Nevertheless, Zilliacus' ideas provided the impetus for post-war secondary education reform.

Along with Finland, Sweden and Norway also joined the IEI in 1936. The Swedish wanted a unified education system and used the IEI project to affirm their progressive and comprehensive schooling principles. However, the real problem confronting Swedish educators was how to use existing school tests to generate greater educational efficiencies and enhance teacher professionalism. The Society for a Psychological Pedagogical Institute, constituted formally in 1934, had sought to bridge the long-standing gap between theoretical and practical teacher education pedagogy. A decade later the government established the SPPI (State Psychological Pedagogical Institute) in an attempt to modernise Swedish education. One of the SPPI's first tasks was to develop standardised 'scientific' tests for the school curriculum. These tests, along with the Institute's overtly behaviouristic approach to education research, meant that the long tradition of relying upon teacher judgement disappeared and teachers increasingly became deprofessionalised. By the late 1940s, Lundahl concludes, the Swedish education system had become 'psychologically colonised'

owing to the widespread use of, and hegemonic faith in, psychological testing and intensive teacher training in psychology.

A latecomer to the IEI, Norway had consolidated and unified its state primary and secondary schools from the 1920s in a bid to establish comprehensive schooling nationally. Norwegian educators, however, soon found themselves caught between the public demand for educational equality (by providing access to a common, non-stratified, system of state primary and secondary schooling), and the need for differentiation (by way of a national examinations framework and marking system) and the selection of an intellectual elite. By the late 1930s, examinations dominated the Norwegian education landscape, with the primary schools now required to mark using a normal (bell curve) distribution and the two senior secondary school matriculation examinations even more highly sought after by the public. The Nordic populist egalitarianism-through-examinations orientation to education, overlooked by the IEI in its deliberations and reports, was sharply at odds with the then European tradition and American approach to universal education. As Ballard (1937) observed “In England examinations were under suspicion and in America under arrest. Professor Bovet added that in Switzerland they had been tried and convicted.”

*An Atlantic Crossing?* not only provides a coherent, absorbing, penetrating, and scholarly analysis of the history of the IEI but it also highlights the problems associated with the development and subsequent use of school examinations in many European countries. As Lawn and his contributors conclude, while the IEI provided a forum for (invited) educators to review and debate examination developments in individual countries, no lasting consensus emerged about how best to examine, test and assess secondary school students internationally in ways that were educationally and statistically, reliable and valid. In other words, the fundamental *raison d’être* of the IEI-for local initiatives to inform international initiatives, and vice versa-was never realised.

This book deserves a very wide reading audience and I recommend it highly to all those interested in educational assessment in general and school examinations in particular. Like Lawn, I hope that this book will remind those who seek to reform the education and examination systems to do so with careful attention to our historical past and to the many issues that confront policy makers who seek to implement ill-conceived, knee-jerk responses to wider complex political and social issues.

My only criticisms of this book are that it lacks an index and assumes that the IEI’s influence was confined to the northern hemisphere. My own research into the history of public school examinations in New Zealand, for example, reveals that the IEI’s work was well-known, highly respected, and often cited by senior education administrators and leading academics and educators in this country who were fortunate to have met some of the delegates who had attended the 1931 and 1936 IEI conferences when they travelled to New Zealand in July 1937 to deliver keynote addresses to the Labour Government-funded New Education Fellowship Conference.

#### REVIEWER PROFILE

After teaching and researching for 25 years at the University of Otago, Dr Howard Lee was appointed to his current position as Professor of Education Policy and History of Education at Massey University College (now Institute) of Education, Palmerston North, New Zealand, in 2007. From 2008 to 2013 Howard was Head of the School of Educational Studies. Howard has published widely in his specialist areas of assessment, curriculum theory and policy, educational history, educational policy analysis, and outcomes-based education. Throughout his 33-year academic career, Howard has authored and co-authored four books and monographs, and written more than 250 book chapters, journal articles, archival articles, reviews, opinion pieces, and conference papers.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHIC DATA

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# Submission Guidelines

## GUIDELINES FOR PAPERS SUBMITTED TO KAIRARANGA

- *Kairaranga* considers the following education-related papers as written documents:  
**Practice Papers** – Papers celebrating effective practice and implementation of programmes. (Up to 2,500 words).  
**Position Papers** – Papers outlining a writer’s view on a current educational issue. (Up to 2,000 words).  
**Research** – Papers summarising research studies involving quantitative and/or qualitative analysis of data, or reviews of the literature. (Up to 3,500 words).  
**Storied Experience** – Papers reporting the experiences of children, parents, caregivers, teachers, support staff and professionals in various learning settings. (Up to 1,500 words).
- If you have the kernel of an idea that does not quite fit the above, please email [kairaranga@massey.ac.nz](mailto:kairaranga@massey.ac.nz) and you will be connected with one of our editors who will support you on your road to publication.
- An abstract of not more than 150 words should be submitted with each article.
- Articles sent in hard copy should be on numbered, separate and single sided sheets, with double line spacing. Articles can also be emailed to [kairaranga@massey.ac.nz](mailto:kairaranga@massey.ac.nz). Figures or graphs, illustrations and diagrams should be sent separately as tiffs, eps or jpeg files, as well as embedded in the text of a word processing document. A disk or email version should be saved in Microsoft Word with the filename extension .doc.
- Authenticity of articles will be the responsibility of the submitting author.
- Minor abridgement of articles will be at the discretion of the editing team. If time allows, authors will be contacted before the publication of edited articles.
- *Kairaranga* will retain copyright of all articles published.
- Articles submitted to *Kairaranga* should not have been published with exactly the same format or content elsewhere.
- Authors are asked to submit a 50 word personal profile of themselves, their organisation, and/or other affiliations for reader interest.

## PEER REVIEW PROCESSES AND GUIDELINES

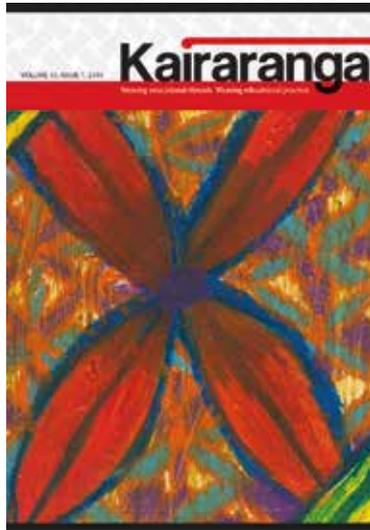
- *Kairaranga* is a journal evolving through work submitted across the education sector. Peer review involves constructive feedback on your written contribution. The suggestions made will help you in editing your final piece of work.

- The peer review process for *Kairaranga* is “blind”. This means that neither the name of the author nor the name of the reviewer will be known to each other.
- Written contributions will be matched to peer reviewers who have topic, professional or cultural strengths in the area of the written work submitted.
- The peer review process is as follows:
  - Papers are submitted to the Editorial Board.
  - A decision is made by the Editorial Board to forward the article through to peer review, with a view to future publication.
  - Papers are returned to the Editorial Board.
  - Feedback is given to the author.
  - This feedback may include an offer of peer support by the Editorial Board for amendments made to the article submitted.
  - The Editorial Board retains the right to decline papers for publication. This will be reflected in the feedback you receive from the peer reviewer.
- Writers will receive feedback which may be:
  - a) Accept as is.
  - b) Minor editorial revision by the author.
  - c) Revision of content by the author and modifications based on this review.
  - d) Not accepted for publication.
- When papers are declined reasons will be given and resubmission may be possible.

## GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWS OF TEXTS, RESOURCES AND PROGRAMMES

- Reviewers are asked to submit a 50 word profile of themselves, providing their professional details and affiliations at the end of the review. This information may also be submitted as part of the review.
- Reviewers will take responsibility for the appropriate and correct use of details pertaining to people, places, companies, publishers, etc.
- Reviews will become the property of *Kairaranga*.
- Reviews will reach the *Kairaranga* address by the date published on the letter of invitation.
- Abridgement of the review will be at the discretion of the Editorial Board.
- We are looking to explore many varied and potentially contradictory views on issues relating to educational practice which may be included within the texts, resources or programmes. This could result in views being expressed that do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Editorial Board.





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