# Table of Contents

## Editorial, Editorial Board and Contact Details

The Child and Youth Profile: A Toolkit to Facilitate Cross-Disciplinary Educational Planning  
*Tara Way McLaughlin, Julia Budd and Sally Clendon*

Research paper ........................................................................................................................................................................3

The Art of Community ... What Principles and Practices do RTLB need to Develop an Effective Community of Practice?  
*Ivanka Soljan and Wendy Holley-Boen*

Research paper ........................................................................................................................................................................12

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Diagnosis and Schooling: A Tale of two Boys and Differing Discourses  
*Tracey Jongens*

Storied experience ....................................................................................................................................................................25

Supporting Inclusion for All; Especially for Students Vulnerable due to their Economic Circumstances: Introducing *Manuaute o Te Huia*  
*Mike Stone*

Storied experience ....................................................................................................................................................................28

Teachers’ Perspectives on Classroom Management: Confidence, Strategies and Professional Development  
*Lynette Quinn*

Practice paper ..........................................................................................................................................................................40

Curriculum as a Vehicle for Agency in Gifted Learners  
*Madelaine Armstrong Willcocks*

Position paper ...........................................................................................................................................................................47

Kairaranga Book Reviews ........................................................................................................................................................53

Submission Guidelines ............................................................................................................................................................57
Editorial

Kia ora tātou,

Welcome to the first edition of Kairaranga for 2017.

Just over twenty years ago, in 1996, the New Zealand Government released the policy Special Education 2000 (Ministry of Education, 1996). The aim of this policy was to “create a world-class inclusive education by the year 2000” (p.5). Now, in the year 2017, it is worth pausing to consider how far we have come towards the realisation of this aim, and why we cannot yet say that we have a world-class inclusive education system in New Zealand.

Given the limits of a forum such as this editorial, it is difficult to do justice to highlighting those factors that are in force within our societies and our education systems that act to exclude and marginalise some students from and within school. However, these forces are so powerful that they appear to override international treaties and laws such as the United Nations Educational and Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Convention Against Discrimination in Education (UNESCO, 1996) and other international human rights treaties which prohibit any exclusion, or limit on education based on personal or socially-ascribed factors such as ability, gender, religion, socio-economic status and so forth. Similarly, these forces appear so powerful as to override national policies and legislation promoting and protecting the rights of all children and young people to be included at their local neighbourhood school and have their needs met.

Perhaps it is time to start focusing more on the notion of ‘equity’ in relation to our education systems. Equity within education has been described as having two components, fairness and inclusion (OECD, 2008). In New Zealand, we have always prided ourselves on the belief that we live in a place where people can ‘get a fair go’ When we see unfairness and inequity, we stick up for the ‘underdog’. Maybe the simple question – ‘is that fair?’ – is a question that we should ask ourselves when we consider the policies and practices of our education systems and of our societies. There is no doubt that there are some children and young people who are still not getting a fair go, despite the best intentions of the educators who work tirelessly to support these learners.

Kairaranga continues to contribute to the discussion of educational equity with a range of articles highlighting policies and practices that support the creation of more fair and inclusive education systems. Equity within education has been described as having two components, fairness and inclusion (OECD, 2008). In New Zealand, we have always prided ourselves on the belief that we live in a place where people can ‘get a fair go’ When we see unfairness and inequity, we stick up for the ‘underdog’. Maybe the simple question – ‘is that fair?’ – is a question that we should ask ourselves when we consider the policies and practices of our education systems and of our societies. There is no doubt that there are some children and young people who are still not getting a fair go, despite the best intentions of the educators who work tirelessly to support these learners.

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The fourth article by Mike Stone examines how one school, the RTLB service and its community leaders, including Maori advisors, used a shared understanding of ‘equity literacy’ in an education setting and the appreciative inquiry process to enhance learning opportunities for all students and especially those from low socio-economic backgrounds. In the next article, Lynette Quinn presents the findings of a study which surveyed 110 teachers of Year 1 to Year 4 students, examining the behaviour management training teacher respondents had received both pre-service and inservice, as well as the behaviour management strategies they perceived as useful. Finally in this edition of Kairaranga, Madeleine Armstrong Wilcocks discusses curriculum as a vehicle for agency in gifted learners.

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

Ngā mihi nui

Alison Kearney (for Kairaranga editing team)
The Child and Youth Profile: A Toolkit to Facilitate Cross-Disciplinary Educational Planning

Tara Way McLaughlin, Julia Budd and Sally Clendon

ABSTRACT
Collaboration is an essential component of optimal educational planning. In order to collaborate effectively, it is important that information from all of those involved with the learner is used to develop a multi-dimensional understanding of the child/youth. Yet the identification, sharing and collating of this key information can be a difficult process due to lack of time, a focus on specialist jargon, and lack of tools or expertise. In this article, we introduce a toolkit, called the New Zealand Child and Youth Profile, to assist educational teams to discuss key aspects of children’s functional experiences and abilities to inform educational planning. The toolkit is inspired by the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health for Children and Youth (ICF-CY) but contextualised for New Zealand. The toolkit has recently been piloted and revised based on user feedback and is available for teams interested in using it to facilitate cross-disciplinary educational planning.

Research paper

Keywords:
childhood disability, classification, collaboration, functional ability, ICF-CY

INTRODUCTION
It is well-documented that cross-disciplinary approaches to educational planning significantly improve learner outcomes (Demchack, Alden, Bergin, Ting & Lacey, 1995). In line with this, the New Zealand Ministry of Education developed Collaboration for Success; guidelines which place collaboration between all of those involved with a student’s learning at the heart of the educational planning process (Ministry of Education, 2011). Collaboration, however, is never easy, particularly when team members hold diverse perspectives (Conklin, 2005; Hinrichs, 2008). These multiple perspectives, however, are essential for optimal educational planning (Annan & Mentis, 2013). Tools are needed to help teams to draw on and share their understanding with one another (Budd, 2016). One such tool is the New Zealand Child and Youth Profile; a toolkit which seeks to gather the multiple perspectives from those involved with the child/youth and use them to facilitate collaboration for educational planning. This profile is discussed in this article.

In order to provide a context for the New Zealand Child and Youth Profile, this article begins with an introduction to different information-gathering and classification systems and their alignment with particular approaches to disability. This is followed by an introduction to the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health for Children and Youth (ICF-CY) and an explanation of how it was used to guide the development of the New Zealand Child and Youth Profile. We then describe the toolkit and the pilot study to consider its usefulness and social validity. We end with a discussion on the recommended ways to use the toolkit, noting the opportunities and challenges for teachers, teams, and families interested in using it.

SYSTEMS AND APPROACHES TO DISABILITY
Information-gathering systems for children and youth with disabilities provide a way to organise complex information and promote efficient communication about children’s abilities and limitations. Well-developed systems in education should lead to access to needed services and better-understanding of children and youth within the context of their environments. This, in turn, should inform educational planning that results in positive outcomes for development, learning, and transition to higher education or the workforce. To provide special educational services, systems that classify, categorise, and, often, label children with disabilities are often used to access services or funds for programmes (Simeonsson et al., 2003). Within New Zealand, one of these systems is the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) in which children receive ORS classifications in order to be eligible for services. Despite their necessity, these classification systems provide insufficient information to guide educational planning and may perpetuate assumptions about...
children’s abilities or lowered expectations for education attainment (Burke & Ruedel, 2008). Thus, educational teams need additional information-gathering systems to support educational planning.

In the past 50 years, different systems and models have been in and out of favour amongst professionals and families. For example, past approaches have been based on a medical or deficit model in which children’s characteristics, abilities and limitations are examined or evaluated as symptoms of a condition or deficit in development that results in “diagnosis” or assignment of a disability category, suggesting a biological or psychological etiology of disability (Burke & Ruedel, 2008). The medical or deficit model has been criticised as it places the origin of disability within the child, without reference to the contributions of social or environmental factors, and focuses on the child’s deficits and inabilities rather than the child’s strengths and abilities.

Following dissatisfaction with a medical or deficit model, disability advocates and researchers promoted the need for a social or ecological model of disability that emphasises the social or environmental barriers that result in a child experiencing a disability or limitation (Simeonsson, 2009). These models focus on social attitudes or environmental barriers that inhibit the full participation of children within school and the community. The utility of social or ecological models, however, can be affected by a one-dimensional view such that the contributions of biological or psychological factors associated with disability might not be considered (Terzi, 2008). Increasingly, favouring one model to the exclusion of other models has been viewed as inadequate to account for the complex interactions among factors that affect children’s health, development and functioning within and across contexts (cf. AAID, 2010; WHO, 2007).

In response to concerns with disability classification systems that are driven by previous (one-dimensional) models, the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health for Children and Youth (ICF-CY) framework described by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2007) incorporates useful aspects of the medical, social and ecological models of disability into a biopsychosocial model (Peterson, 2005). This model emphasises the interactions among biological, psychological and social factors within the context of the environment (Cameron, 2008). The ICF-CY is an international unifying framework and classification taxonomy that is used to conceptualise childhood/youth disability from a multi-dimensional perspective, emphasising the functional impact of disability, strengths and abilities, and participation in everyday settings.

THE ICF-CY FRAMEWORK

The focus on function distinguishes the ICF-CY from other frameworks and classification systems of childhood/youth disability. In addition, a lifespan approach acknowledges that as children’s environments and developmental abilities change from birth through childhood, adolescence, and into adulthood, the nature and consequence of the person-social-environment interactions will change over time as well (Simeonsson et al., 2003). The ICF-CY framework can complement existing systems of health conditions and disability to help promote a more holistic view of children’s health, development and functioning.

Within the ICF-CY framework, a medical diagnosis or health condition interfaces with key components related to functioning and disability. These components can be viewed from a positive perspective under the term “functioning” and include the integrity of body functions (i.e. physiological and psychological), body structure (i.e. anatomical parts), activities (i.e. tasks a child completes), and participation (i.e. the integration of activities in life). Alternatively, these same components can be viewed from a negative perspective under the term “disability” and include impairment of body function, impairment of body structure, activity limitation, and participation restriction (Cramm, Aiken & Stewart, 2012; WHO, 2007). The framework highlights the influence of contextual factors, including both environmental factors (e.g. physical, social and attitudinal environment) and personal factors (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity) on an individual’s overall wellbeing and adaptation with regard to human functioning and restrictions on functioning (WHO, 2007).

The ICF-CY provides a structure to conceptualise and examine the functional impact of disability across the body/mind, the person, and society. From this multi-dimensional view, functioning can be affected by any interactional combination of impairment related to the body/mind, limitation related to the person’s activities, or disadvantage related to participation in society (Cramm, Aiken & Stewart, 2012). The ICF-CY outlines core areas of functioning and provides guidance on acknowledging and accommodating them into thinking, practice, and assessment (Rosenbaum & Stewart, 2004). For practical application, the ICF-CY introduces a pre-specified taxonomy and numeric coding system that can be used to document the functional impact of disability across the identified areas of the framework.
The ICF-CY has both conceptual (framework) and practical (classification taxonomy) appeal for describing and documenting childhood disability. The ICF-CY, however, is not an assessment tool, but rather a framework and classification taxonomy to guide thinking and the development or selection of assessment measures and the integration of functional information to enhance cross-disciplinary collaboration and educational planning (Björck-Akesson et al., 2010; Lollar & Simeonsson, 2005; Simeonsson, 2009).

THE NEW ZEALAND CHILD AND YOUTH PROFILE

In response to increased awareness of the ICF-CY and the importance of a functional approach to assessment and educational planning, our team developed a toolkit referred to as the New Zealand Child and Youth Profile. We developed the toolkit for use in a range of New Zealand based settings during 2015. The toolkit was designed to collate information about a child's strengths and limitations; sensory function; participation in home, school and community settings; and interests and preferences. The information gained from the different parts of the toolkit supports a multi-dimensional perspective of children's educational needs and strengths that can facilitate cross-disciplinary collaboration and educational planning for children and youth with disabilities. As part of the development process, we engaged in expert review and feedback. In 2016 we piloted the use of the toolkit with a range of educational teams. The pilot study was designed to gather stakeholder feedback on the usefulness and social validity of the toolkit and inform revisions. In the remaining sections we outline the pilot study, discuss the key findings and next steps, and make recommendations for the future use of the New Zealand Child and Youth Profile.

PILOT STUDY

The Child and Youth Profile was designed as a toolkit to support teachers, families and specialists to reflect on and organise their understanding of a child’s needs, abilities and participation in everyday settings, and consider different factors that might affect a child’s functioning and outcomes. We conducted a pilot study to gather stakeholder feedback. This was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do different stakeholders (teachers, education professionals, and parents) use the Child and Youth Profile?
2. To what extent is the Child and Youth Profile useful in educational planning?
3. To what extent is the Child and Youth Profile socially valid?

Social validity referred to the extent to which the toolkit was useful, appropriate, culturally-relevant, feasible to use, and effective for supporting the team with educational planning.

Participant recruitment

Recruitment was based on professional contacts of the authors targeting teachers and teams that work with children with disabilities in early childhood and school-age settings. Professional contacts were invited to share the toolkit with teams of teachers, other education professionals and families (all referred to as stakeholders) for educational planning. After sharing the toolkit, we then invited teams to participate in our pilot study. Team member participation was voluntary and all participating members provided their informed consent.

Participants

The toolkit was shared with professionals at four educational settings. Three of these settings agreed to participate in the pilot study. Setting A was a special school in an urban area serving children with disabilities aged 5-21 years. In this setting, all teachers and specialists were introduced to the toolkit. From this, one administrator, one teacher and four specialists (two speech-language therapists, two occupational therapists) engaged in using the toolkit with two children. Setting B was an early intervention centre in an urban area serving children with disabilities aged birth through five years. In this setting, one teacher and one specialist (speech-language therapist) engaged in using the toolkit with two children. Setting B was an early intervention centre in an urban area serving children with disabilities aged birth through five years. In this setting, all teachers and specialists were introduced to the toolkit, and one teacher and one specialist (speech-language therapist) used it individually with families. Setting C was an educational resource centre where itinerant teachers provide specialist support to children from birth through 21 years across a range of service types. In this setting, four specialist teachers were introduced to the toolkit and used it with four preschool children.

The Toolkit

The pilot version of the toolkit was comprised of several forms and scales. The toolkit included the following sections.

Background Information. This section was designed to provide information about a child’s cultural identity, educational placement, Ongoing Resource Funding (ORS), the professionals who work with the child and family, family members, and family support services.

Sensory Modality Profile (SMP). The SMP was...
designed to gather information about a child's current level of ability to perceive sensory information and use it to explore their world, discriminate between objects and use it for specific tasks.

Communication Profile (CP). The CP was designed to gather key information about the child/youth's communication and record how the child/youth expresses different important communicative functions.

Participation and Access Profile (PAP). The PAP was designed to ascertain a child's interest, availability, access and accommodation to a range of educational, recreation and sport, family, cultural community and religious activities, and to consider if participation is acceptable to the child, family or others involved in the activity.

Functional Ability Profile (FAP). The FAP was designed to gather information about a child's current level of ability across 11 functional ability areas. Functional abilities are viewed as the integrated skills that children can do to perform the activities of life (McLaughlin, Snyder & Algina, 2015; Simeonsson, Bailey, Smith & Buysse, 1995). The FAP helps to show areas of strength and weakness for the child/youth.

Adaptations and Specialised Equipment Profile (ASEP). The ASEP was designed to identify the types of adaptations, augmentative and alternative communication systems, assistive technology, or adaptive devices the child currently uses and/or which might be desirable for future use.

Interests and Preference Profile (IPP). The IPP was designed to identify a child's areas of interest and preferences for items and activities so that they can be used as starting points to increase engagement and participation, and develop meaningful supports for children. This includes an awareness of family preferences for the child.

Priority Planning Pages (PPP). The PPP were designed to integrate information from the toolkit to inform planning and interventions. Key information about the child can be documented in one page, and a second page can be used to list priority goals and interventions for home, school and community.

Training and procedures
A semi-structured training was provided to introduce the toolkit. This included background information and an overview of the ICF-CY to set the context for the toolkit. We also walked participants through the toolkit noting the purpose and features of each individual section. Finally, we outlined the purpose and process for the pilot study – noting that teams should use the toolkit as they saw fit, and that researchers would return in a few months time to gather information about their experiences. It is important to note that the researchers intentionally did not give information about how teams might or should use the toolkit. Guided by the first research question, we were keen to examine how teams might use the toolkit without providing specific procedures or direct guidance.

Data collection
During the initial semi-structured trainings, the researchers took notes about participants' questions and comments to help inform future trainings and focus group/interview questions. Following the training and after two to three months of use, the participants engaged in focus group interviews at each setting. The focus group interviews were semi-structured and led by at least one researcher. They were designed to elicit stakeholders' perspectives about how they used the toolkit and the extent to which it was useful and socially valid. The focus group interviews lasted between 45 and 75 minutes. The researchers did not have access to the children’s data that was collected using the toolkit.

Data analysis
The focus group interviews were transcribed for analysis. Each researcher took the lead on the analysis for one setting. The transcripts and researcher notes were analysed for specific recommendations for revisions and key themes related to the participants’ feedback and experience. The researchers met to discuss recommendations and key themes from each setting as well as identify shared experiences or differences based on the diverse ways in which the toolkit was used at each setting.

FINDINGS
The findings are organised into four sections – how the toolkit was used, perspectives on social validity, specific recommendations for revisions, and challenges and opportunities. As noted earlier, social validity was intended to be inclusive of the extent to which the toolkit was useful, appropriate, culturally-relevant, feasible to use, and effective for supporting the team with educational planning.

How the Toolkit was Used
The toolkit was used in different ways at each of the settings. Notably, several participants reported using it differently than they had originally envisaged or expected. At Setting A, the team used the toolkit for two children undergoing transition. For this team, one person took responsibility for compiling all of
the notes and the information about the child and transferring the information onto the toolkit forms and profiles. At Setting B, the two staff members used it individually with families. One worked with a mother and father to complete the forms and profiles together, while the other asked the mother to complete the toolkit and then reviewed it with the mother afterwards. At Setting C, the four teachers used the toolkit individually for their own planning purposes. Across sites, the teams and teachers completed or attempted to complete most of the forms and profiles. All of the teams commented on the utility of the summary form, but interestingly, the form for educational planning was not used by any of the teams.

Perspectives on Social Validity.

Two of the settings reported that the toolkit was useful for collating and organising a range of information, including information they had not previously considered or documented. One of these settings also found that it was useful for collating data from a range of assessments from different sources that could then be used to plan programmes. The remaining setting reported that they already had other tools and systems to document most of the information and were concerned that this was an unnecessary double-up. Team members from the two settings that felt it was useful also reported that it would be helpful for interdisciplinary sharing or collaborating with other team members, but none of the sites actually used it in this way.

Related to the specific parts of the toolkit, all teams reported that the key areas focused on across the forms and profiles were appropriate and relevant for children and youth with disabilities and no areas were identified as missing. Within specific forms and profiles, however, the teams noted that not all aspects were age-appropriate or relevant to the age group they focused on. For example, the early childhood participants noted that indicators on the participation and access scale for education settings did not seem relevant for early childhood. Related to cultural relevance, the participants noted that the cultural identity categories given in the background sheet were not sufficiently comprehensive and there was no space to record the child/youth’s home language.

The participants reported that the toolkit forms were generally feasible to use; however, simple revisions such as the placement of directions and definitions at the beginning of the forms would improve the user’s ability to complete them easily. The participants also reported wanting to adapt the forms for setting-specific information. One setting noted that it might be challenging to use the toolkit with the multiple forms and profiles at a team meeting with families as they try to avoid focusing on the “paper work” and allow for more natural conversation.

Specific Recommendations for Revisions

Specific recommendations for revisions on the toolkit ranged from basic typos to restructuring the order of the forms and profiles presented. There was a strong preference for more space for notes and comments related to the different sections, and more opportunities to personalise the form to the individual settings. Given the range of information collated, several participants noted the need for more clarity of terms or definitions. In addition, a key discussion area related to the use of ratings for different aspects of the toolkit. For example, for the Functional Ability Profile, some participants felt that it was not helpful to compare a child’s ability to same-aged peers, while others found that it was hard to rate a child’s ability in this way. Notably, the participants who used the form directly with the families found this rating to be unhelpful. Suggestions included rating the key areas but in terms of specified criteria or strengths and limitations within the child rather than in a comparative way.

Challenges and Opportunities

One of the most notable findings from our discussions with the participants was that they experienced both challenges and opportunities from using the toolkit. Common challenges included confusion about whether the toolkit was an assessment tool, the amount of time needed for completion, compatibility with setting-specific requirements or procedures, and knowing how to use it with families. For the settings that did not involve families in the process, they were unclear how completing the structured forms would work for families – preferring to use the toolkit as a reference point to plan and reflect on their conversations with families. For the setting that did use the form with families, they found that families were overwhelmed by the terms or unclear about the concepts. In addition to the challenges listed above, several participants described challenges with some of the structured ratings related to different areas of functioning. This was sometimes related to the notion of making a general rating and sometimes related to clarity about scale anchors or from whose perspective the rating should be made.

Despite the challenges, the participants also highlighted the opportunities and potential of the toolkit. Most notably, all settings noted that the
toolkit made them think about and reflect on areas of child functioning that they had not previously considered. They described the toolkit as useful for broadening their thinking, becoming aware of other disciplines, or realising an important area that they had not thought about before. The participants who used the toolkit with others reported that they learned something they did not know about the child in a different context. They also reported the importance of documenting aspects of the child’s abilities and needs that they might have known but had not formally documented or shared with others.

DISCUSSION

As researchers, we expected the settings to use the toolkit in diverse ways as well as experience challenges, particularly in the absence of more specific training or guidance about its use. We also recognised that each setting already had existing systems for collaboration and educational planning, and we intentionally did not provide guidance on how the toolkit might support or enhance these. Nonetheless, we wanted to explore how educational professionals might use the toolkit without this guidance, and understand whether the forms and profiles in the paper document were sufficient. We believe the pilot has indicated a resounding ‘no’.

Although participants recognised that the toolkit would be useful to help facilitate cross-disciplinary collaboration, in line with the Ministry of Education’s Collaboration for Success (Ministry of Education, 2011), none of the participants actually used the toolkit in this way. This finding is consistent with research related to collaboration in general as well as to the ICF-CY, which highlights the challenges of cross-disciplinary communication, information sharing, and meaningful involvement of families particularly where multiple perspectives are involved (Conklin, 2005; Hinrichs, 2008). Nonetheless, there is a need to bring together diverse sources of information and perspectives about a child’s functioning in and across contexts to ensure that educational planning encompasses the needs of the whole child/youth and maximises learning potential. As researchers, we are interested in further exploring the reasons why the toolkit was not used in a collaborative way; was it due to the design and structure of the toolkit or because teams lacked time or resources, or needed more specific guidance and training to engage in cross-disciplinary teaming using a tool such as the Child and Youth Profile to draw out multiple perspectives?

Another area of challenge, and possible misunderstanding around the toolkit, was its intended use as a tool for collating information rather than being an assessment tool. Some of the participants, for example, stated that the toolkit did not provide enough space or opportunity for documenting information related to their own specialist area. More training is needed to help the teams to use the profile to collate summary information that might be informative to all team members rather than providing complete assessment information in particular areas. The framework in Figure 1 begins to outline how this might look and will be discussed further in the following section.

![Figure 1. Framework for Child and Youth Profile.](image)

Related to the collation of the information, the toolkit uses ratings across several of the forms and profiles. The purpose(s) of the ratings are to provide summary statements about children’s functioning across areas and serve as a catalyst for conversation when team members have differing perspectives about children’s abilities or limitations that are difficult to capture in a rating alone. Although challenging, ratings can also force conversations about team members’ differing perspectives of children’s abilities in different contexts. This was observed in the setting in which the team member completed the toolkit with a mother and father, and all parties were surprised to find out that mum and dad would have applied very different ratings. The team member reported this resulted in a very productive conversation about the child. As we make revisions to the toolkit, we will continue to consider when ratings might be used and how to structure ratings in ways that are useful and meaningful.
Perhaps the most encouraging feedback on the toolkit was that all of the participants found that by working through the profiles, they found gaps in their knowledge about the child and were encouraged to consider some aspects or undertake further assessments in areas that they had not previously considered. This suggests that the toolkit can be effective for helping team members to gain a more multi-dimensional understanding of a child. Our larger aim, however, will be for multi-dimensional understanding to also lead to cross-disciplinary collaboration and teaming for educational planning.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the pilot study, we believe that the toolkit does have the potential to be used to facilitate cross-disciplinary educational planning if some revisions are made and extra guidelines or training are implemented. We have, therefore, revised the toolkit and developed guidelines for future use.

Revisions include:

• Background Information. Adding space to self-identify cultural identity, home language, funding category, living situation and provider of support services.

• Sensory Modality Profile. Replacing the ratings of the use of different sensory modalities with questions. Adding space to discuss sensory integration issues.

• Communication Profile. Adding additional functions of communication.

• Participation and Access Profile. Including questions as to the levels of participation and more generic categories in the educational setting form. Adding more examples in the home and community profile and eliminating the rating scales in both profiles.

• Functional Ability Profile. Revising the focus of the ratings to identify strengths and limitations across areas within the child; so that teams can build on a child’s functional strengths while supporting the child’s development in areas of need.

• Adaptations and Specialised Equipment Profile. Including a column to indicate any adaptations or equipment that may have been trialled previously. Including some additional items such as visual timetables and devices for environmental control.

• Interests and Preferences Profile. Refining the directions and providing additional explanation of some items.

• Priority Planning Pages. Expanding the summary form and encouraging teams to use the educational planning form as well as their existing structures for individual education plans (IEPs) or other educational planning tools.

To support future use of the Child and Youth Profile, we have created a framework that shows how the profile might be used as a point of collation of information gathered from a range of perspectives and team members. As seen in Figure 1, relevant team members continue in-depth assessments in key areas appropriate for the child. This might include specialist assessments and interviews with parents. Summary information from these assessments and other information from those working with a child are then collated and discussed using the toolkit. The extent to which one person might be responsible for connecting with team members to provide input into the completion of forms or whether each team member completes section(s) relevant for them prior to a team meeting for discussion will depend on the dynamic and structure of the team. Making time to meet together, or with as many team members as possible, is critical for team sharing and discussion to help develop new, shared, and multi-dimensional understandings of the child (Simeonsson, 2009). Although it takes time, these discussions support the development and implementation of robust, integrated educational plans and interventions in line with Collaboration for Success (Ministry of Education, 2011) that are useful and effective for children and families.

In this article we have discussed our work with the Child and Youth Profile to date. This work is ongoing and we fully acknowledge that the toolkit has its limitations and requires trained teams to ensure appropriate use. In fact, all information-gathering and collation systems have limitations and potential for misuse (Florian et al., 2006). It is unrealistic, however, to abandon the use of these systems as practical tools. Awareness of the inherent limitations, clear articulation of the purposes, careful attention to the processes, and effective collaboration are needed to ensure tools like the Child and Youth Profile result in positive integrated educational outcomes (Florian et al., 2006). Cross-disciplinary collaboration can be challenging, but the benefits to children, families and education professionals can also be rewarding. For the benefit of children and youth with disabilities, we offer the New Zealand Child and Youth Profile as one tool that might help facilitate cross-disciplinary approaches to educational planning.
REFERENCES


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The Art of Community ... What Principles and Practices do RTLB need to Develop an Effective Community of Practice?

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ABSTRACT

Communities of Practice (COP) have been used in schools and other educational institutions as a way of growing knowledge and managing change. This article centres on one professional inquiry with a group of Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) and using a strengths-based approach, explores the elements that increased the effectiveness of COP. Through semi-structured interviews, the participants discussed the elements of COP they had previously found to be effective and what had made them so. These conversations with RTLB highlighted that having a shared understanding across all stakeholders regarding the definition, purpose and intent of their COP was important to ensure their usefulness. Autonomy, flexibility, engagement of both the head and the heart, focusing on work, whakawhanaungatanga and ako were also found to be key components in ensuring the smooth running and effectiveness of the COP.

Research paper

Keywords:
change, community of practice, professional inquiry, RTLB, strengths-based approach

INTRODUCTION

Change is a common dimension of the current educational climate. Whether it is teachers changing practice, schools changing structures, or institutions having to deal with wider policy changes, organisations seem to have to adapt to, or incorporate, a barrage of change with fluidity and timeliness.

It is now recognised that change is not a simplistic or linear process, but a dynamic one that occurs in unpredictable and complex ways (Coppieters, 2005). Some authors believe that for schools to readily embrace an ever-changing environment there has to be an emphasis on learning; where growing and assimilating new knowledge are a natural part of the working culture. As the acceptance of new ideas are fostered, change then becomes a natural part of that context (Fullan, 2008; Louis, 1994; Senge, 2012; Steenekamp, Botha & Moloi, 2012). In other words, change and learning are intertwined: as we learn, we change.

One way to foster learning and change is through COP. These communities create a climate by which people socially construct meaning and knowledge through dynamic dialogue and sharing of ideas. Creating effective communities could be viewed as an art form rather than a science. It takes time to forge an environment for people to communicate and collaborate positively. It is not about having an exact recipe or formula, but more like a painting in which an artist has to imagine an overall concept, as well as use an array of techniques on the fine details to make the picture come alive. Just as each artist, or in the arena of communities, several artists, have a unique approach to their work, so do COP which are propelled by context and purpose. This research explores the common principles and practices of COP and focuses on one particular profession within education: Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB). In essence, the research considers the artistry of communities RTLB are involved in.

RTLB are a specialist group of teachers working primarily with schools and teachers (Years 1 – 10) in New Zealand to grow the engagement and achievement of students with diverse educational needs. There are 40 geographically-defined groups (called clusters) across the country employing approximately 915 RTLB (Ministry of Education, 2015). The RTLB role works with school-wide systems and with teachers, focusing on individuals or small groups of students within the classroom setting. RTLB use an ecological, collaborative approach underpinned by a strengths-based perspective. The nature of RTLB work is multi-faceted and requires a breadth and depth of knowledge for a range of issues and contexts.

RTLB often encounter highly-complex situations, which makes them ideal candidates for a Community of Practice approach. The collaborative nature of the RTLB role makes for a logical progression to community-styled learning and professional development. Whether or not they identify them as such, most RTLB are already involved in numerous and varied COP.
This paper will give a definition and overview of the structure of COP and provide a review of recent literature. It then hones in on COP particular to RTLB. Using findings from semi-structured interviews, this inquiry draws out key themes around what principles and practices make COP effective for RTLB.

What are Communities of Practice?

Communities of Practice (CoP) are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002, p. 4). COP treat teachers as active learners who interpret new knowledge and reconstruct teaching practices within their contextual boundaries (Mak & Pun, 2015). By design, COP vary considerably; small or large, within or across organisations, spontaneous or intentional; however they all share the three core elements of domain, community and practice (Wenger, 1999). The domain frames the body of knowledge and set of issues to be considered, focuses the discussion and creates a sense of common identity and meaning. The community creates the social fabric for learning and is premised on mutual trust and respect. It encourages dynamic discourse that asks difficult questions and listens to one another. Community is an important element in COP as “learning is a matter of belonging as well as an intellectual process, involving the heart as well as the head” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 29). Practice is a shared repertoire of tools, experiences, stories, language and documents that enables the community to move forward with relative efficiency. All three domains are deepened and developed over time and require sustained interaction.

The activities that occur within COP are as varied as the participants. Activities can include problem-solving, discussing experimental ideas, mapping knowledge and identifying gaps, and offering support and encouragement for its members (Wenger & Trayner, n.d.). Participants can range from novices to experts, with some centrally involved and others on the periphery. All members are seen as valuable; those not actively contributing in one group may still be gaining and applying insights to their work and within other communities (Wenger et al., 2002).

COP can fulfil a number of different purposes with respect to the creation, accumulation and diffusion of knowledge in an organisation (Mittendorff et al., 2006). As knowledge is situated and socially constructed within an organisational context, COP are an active vehicle for that knowledge. The shared understanding within COP enable organisations to create, recreate and preserve knowledge in a dynamic way, where both tacit and explicit understandings are explored. Through this exploration, members negotiate their identity within the community and develop a sense of belonging (Wenger, 1999). The purposes of COP are in and of themselves dynamic, flowing between personal growth and changes to the wider organisational environment. CoP, therefore, are valued differently depending on where a person is situated within the community and the organisation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Do Communities of Practice Really Change Teacher Behaviour?

Due to the dynamic and self-directed nature of CoP, effectiveness is difficult to measure. An ideal community has its own purpose and trajectory that evolves around the changing needs of the organisation and its participants (Wenger et al., 2002). Communities need to create events, activities and relationships that help values emerge rather than predetermining an outcome; thus a focus on value rather than outcome is key (Wenger et al., 2002). The value of a community, therefore, develops and transforms with the ebb and flow of the people and their practices, and is best determined by the members themselves.

There are, however, some qualitative studies that have attempted to record the COP effectiveness. Cuddapah and Clayton (2011) noted that novice teachers had a high level of participation in a community of practice, and suggested that this participation led these new teachers to see themselves as competent and agentic professionals. Another study identified that teachers co-construct their efficacy beliefs within a community of practice; while it cannot be said that collaboration caused strong efficacy beliefs, the nature of the collegial practices enabled teachers to collectively co-construct and reinforce those beliefs (Takahashi, 2011). As positive self-efficacy motivates and promotes teacher agency, reinforcement of that agency in a collegial setting suggests that COP can be a part of the change process for classroom practice. Looking at social justice issues, Flores (2007) emphasised that COP are a good way to support teachers situated learning in creating transformative practice. In her study of four beginning teachers, Flores identified COP as an essential tool not only for challenging cultural inequities but also for sustaining teachers’ sense of hope when facing other teachers’ negative attitudes towards students. Similarly, a study of second-language teachers in Hong Kong highlighted teachers’ adaptations to their classroom strategies through engagement with a vibrant and supportive community (Mak & Pun, 2015). These studies highlight the variety of ways effectiveness of COP can be measured, from personal change to more external adaptations of practice.

Not all literature endorses COP as a tool to promote change. Examining how three COP stimulated learning, Mittendorff et al. (2006) found that not all groups
function as COP or have the potential characteristics for collective learning. Even when tight relationships were formed, group dynamics, such as ‘open mindedness to change’ hindered the learning process. Horn and Little (2010) found that not all group conversation led to authentic change. Those whose conversations tended to move ‘away’ from teaching were less-likely to transfer knowledge to their own classroom practices. For instance, primarily ‘show and tell’ dialogue did not involve collaborative problem-solving and tended to focus more on administrative demands. Effective group conversation moved between the specifics and generalisation of teaching, enabling participants to emotionally link with and normalise an issue. They were able to “conversationally construct general frameworks for thinking about teaching problems, providing durable tools for their work” (Horn & Little, 2010, p. 202). These findings may indicate that the communities studied, whilst labelled as a COP, were not technically functioning as such, as they were not effectively meeting the three criteria of domain, community and practice.

What Makes a Community Effective?
A theme throughout the literature was that communities with perceived value or effectiveness tended to include certain principles and practices across the domain, community and practice.

Domain: Shared Vision
Shared vision has been highlighted as one of the most important characteristics of successful collaboration and a core component of learning communities as it links individual knowledge bases to a shared purpose (Robertson, 2007; Wilson & Pirrie, 2000). If members don’t feel personally connected to the group’s area of expertise and interest once it has been defined, they won’t fully commit themselves to the work of the community (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). Shared visions need concentrated discussion and time to be developed and refined; by doing this the opportunities within a community remain relevant to its participants (Akerson, Cullen & Hanson, 2009; Edwards, 2012; Richmond & Manokore, 2011; Robertson, 2007; Trotman, 2009). Issues can arise in groups if a shared vision is ill-defined or too restrictive; members need clarity regarding the aims of the group, and a vision not so tightly bound that it doesn’t provide enough flexibility to meet personal goals or access a variety of learning opportunities (Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson, & Unwin, 2005). Some authors caution against developing a shared vision. They note that groups may become too cohesive in their vision, where there is little chance for diversity of thought or the questioning of tacit power structures or poor practices. These approaches may inhibit the possibility of creativity and change (Printy, 2008; Watson, 2014). While having a shared domain and vision are essential to growing a community of practice, it appears there must be some consideration as to how the vision is arrived at by its members.

Community: Voluntary Membership and Different Levels of Participation
Membership within a community is self-selected and a critical factor of a CoP. People tend to know when and if they should join and whether a COP is likely to benefit them in some way (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). Participants are more likely to be fully engaged and committed, and therefore collaborative work can deepen more quickly (Mak & Pun, 2015; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). Voluntary membership also guards against ‘contrived collegiality’, which is derived from hierarchical approaches to learning communities and presses participants to collaborate on issues that are not necessarily related to their needs or context (Rawlins, Ashton, Carusi & Lewis, 2014). Some authors highlighted disadvantages with voluntary membership: Snow-Gerono (2005) suggested that when teachers self-select their own learning communities, they may only choose like-minded participants and leave oppositional voices on the outside. The concern is, there becomes a lack of diversity within the group that stifles dynamic discussion and may leave tacit beliefs unchallenged. This ‘groupthink’ discourages reflection on deficit thinking and may endorse ineffective practices (Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011).

One way of managing this difficulty is to allow for different levels of participation (Wenger, 1999). This does not only pertain to peripheral and active members, but also having a combination of expertise and novices within the group. Cuddapah and Clayton (2011) recognised that an all-novice learning culture can be woefully lacking in knowledge. They suggest that integrating teachers with a variety of expertise can often provide some of the best support for new teacher learning. Fuller et al. (2005) noted that through their engagement with novices, experienced workers can also learn, as all people bring a range of knowledgeable skills that they are capable of sharing. In a New Zealand context, this reflects the concept of ‘ako’ where learning and teaching are not opposing concepts but occur simultaneously. Participants, therefore, embody both the role of learner and teacher while engaging in community experiences and discourses.

Community: Leadership within Communities of Practice
The organic, spontaneous and collaborative nature of COP causes questions to arise about whether a member should take a leadership role. COP reflect the social relations of its members and on the basis of these relations, some individuals may function as informal
leaders who keep the communities purpose at its centre and who help to shape social relationships among members to facilitate learning (Printy, 2008, p.193). It is argued that a distributed style of leadership is more effective within COP where leadership is fluid in nature, and people step into roles of responsibility around their strengths and interests as need arises (Crafton & Kaiser, 2011; Robertson, 2007). This style of leadership creates a sense of interdependence within the community, where people are accountable to and reliant on one another to achieve their shared goals. Wenger et al. (2002) suggested that groups should have a facilitator. This person tends to coordinate activities, has a strong connection to the domain of the COP and is highly motivated to keep the group active. The facilitator may be well-versed in the field, but are not experts: that role acts to create networks, not provide answers.

It should also be noted here that COP do not operate in isolation, and that support from wider organisational structures is important and necessary. Schools and organisations that provide COP with infrastructure, time and resource, as well as valuing knowledge-creation, help to ensure that COP are effective (Mittendorff et al., 2006; Wenger & Snyder, 2000). These organisations can also help to mitigate political and bureaucratic demands on communities. It has been observed that organisations that cultivate learning communities and then give participants autonomy around the direction and processes of the community itself, benefit from innovative ideas and motivated participants (Pink, 2009; Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2008; Wenger & Snyder, 2000).

Community: Group Dynamics

In any collaborative venture, the dynamics of the group plays a role in how the community functions. Much of the literature highlights mutual trust, openness, a safe environment and commitment as essential elements in a community (Akerson et al., 2009; Bianchini & Cavazos, 2007; Mak & Pun, 2015; Mittendorff et al., 2006; Robertson, 2007; Snow-Gerono, 2005). The literature also acknowledges that as communities begin to grow together and formulate their domain, community and practice, they will have times of conflict, uncertainty and power struggles which can reduce the sense of fraternity within the group. These authors note that open dialogue, listening and time is essential to ensure that participants can understand the perspectives of others before they can begin to collaborate with effectiveness (Mak & Pun, 2015; Mittendorff et al., 2006; Robertson, 2007; Snow-Gerono, 2005).

Practice: Dialogue

Dialogue is the crux of any learning community. All activities and experiences are centred around language and the art of discussion. Horn and Little’s (2010) research found that the style of dialogue had a direct impact on authentic change in teacher practice. The two communities they studied, both with similar domains and contexts, had varied conversational routines. The group who relied on shared language and frames of reference that were focused on their specific domain, appeared to have more productive conversations and therefore an increased impact on teacher practice. Akerson et al. (2009) highlighted that ‘good conversations’ should be facilitated within communities as this fosters perspective taking, helps develop personal and professional authority, revives hope, and reaffirms ideals. These conversations can also support the articulation of implicit theories and beliefs which generate a social consciousness and, in turn, fosters the ability to act, thus affecting teacher practice (Jenlink & Jenlink, 2008; Snow-Gerono, 2005; Timperley, 2007).

Practice: Conflict in Conversations

Pane (2010) observed that “learning occurs through the transformative potential of negotiated, often uncomfortable interactions among communities of practice” (p. 93). In any diverse community competing values and ideas will arise, and the ability to embrace and learn from these conflicts is an essential component of a CoP. Snow-Gerono (2005) called this ‘dissensus’, where “teachers may disagree on and critique aspects of teaching and learning in a manner that acknowledges the tensions inherent in education and ideological frameworks and embraces problem-posing as a means for professional development” (p. 251). Teachers are likely to feel dissonance as they expose their practice to others, which can arouse fear and tension. It is suggested that relationships built on trust, honest interactions, self-revelation and sensitivity are an antidote to such tensions (Dooner, Mandzuk & Clifton, 2008; Mak & Pun, 2015).

This literature review indicates that COP have the potential to influence and change teachers’ practice if they embody some of the principles discussed above. What is notable is that most of the literature sourced for this review is generated internationally and focused on classroom teachers or higher learning institutions. This research project has been designed to focus on two areas that are not so prominent in the literature: specialist teachers (RTLB) within a New Zealand context. It aims to answer the question: What principles and practices underpin an effective COP for RTLB?

METHOD

This research took place within one RTLB cluster. It is an ethnically diverse urban setting and contains approximately 35 RTLB who service about 70 schools. These schools vary from: small to large in student numbers, low to high decile, and range across the spectrum of primary, intermediate and secondary
schools as well as Kura Kaupapa (Māori immersion school). Six RTLB took part in the research and were purposively selected so as to get a diverse representation of people from across the cluster. Three of the RTLB were approached directly as they fitted a ‘niche’ section e.g. Māori or management. The rest of the cluster was divided into two groups; experienced (working in the cluster for four years or more) and novice (working in the cluster for less than four years but more than one year). Any RTLB who had been in the role for less than a year was excluded from this study because they may not have enough experience to draw on when discussing their involvement in COP as RTLB. The remaining three people were randomly selected from these two groups. The final group consisted of three experienced RTLB and two novice RTLB, as well as one manager. Of those six, one RTLB was male and of Pacific Island origin and another identified as Māori. Informed consent was collected from each RTLB prior to conducting the research. In terms of ethical considerations, to protect the confidentiality of the participants, no names or other identifying features were used in the research. The participants had the right to withdraw their consent at anytime.

Semi-structured interviews were used as the data collection method, and the questions were designed to focus on one COP experience that RTLB perceived as ‘successful’. This process was used to examine participant comments and gain insight and depth of opinion that other data sources might not afford. All participants were invited to choose the location of the interview; koha (gifts) were provided in the form of food and coffee, and the interviews were conducted informally. For the most part, the participants received the questions prior to the interview to provide time for them to reflect on a community they might like to explore (see Appendix A). The aim was to give the participant a strong voice in the interview situation and centre the conversation on their COP story (Menter, 2011).

A strengths-based or appreciative approach was used to guide the design of this interview, as it allowed me to identify what was good, and what energised and motivated people (Cooperrider, 2012). This approach focused on what gave ‘life’ to a living system, to hone in on what was most effective and then to build on that knowledge to grow and enhance the system (Cooperrider & Whitney, n.d.). I chose to use a strengths-based approach for three reasons. Firstly, this notion is one of the seven principles of practice for RTLB (Ministry of Education, n.d.) and is an important underpinning for RTLB work. Secondly, I wanted to ensure that the interviews upheld the integrity and skills of the RTLB. Focusing on what works well asks RTLB to look at their work in a positive and creative way, and enables them to provide the building blocks for further development. Finally, working collaboratively may not always be a positive experience for people. As my interview questions focus on personal experiences of CoP, it had the potential to highlight times that may have caused some anxiety and stress. By using a strengths-based approach the aim was to reduce the focus on difficulties and to potentially divert unnecessary stress for participants.

Once the interviews were conducted, the information was coded using concepts from the COP literature as well as additional themes that consistently arose across participants. These codes were then organised into overarching categories and became the key motifs for the findings. Throughout the analysis process I discussed the findings with several educational researchers as a way of confirming the validity of my conclusions as well as revisiting concepts with the actual participants to ensure that I captured their ideas correctly (Takahashi, 2011). I also engaged in a research-focused COP and gleaned valuable insights as to this process from my peers.

FINDINGS

The principles and practices that RTLB considered to enhance their COP fell under six general themes: engaging the head and the heart, directly work-related, autonomy and flexibility, whakawhanaungatanga, ako, and practicalities.

Engaging the head and the heart

One of the key findings that came from the conversations with RTLB was their high levels of engagement with the COP process. All interviewees were motivated to attend their communities and prioritised them, despite their sometimes-overloaded schedules. While a variety of reasons contributed to this motivation, it appeared that two key areas had to be established to foster engagement. The group had to have a clear and defined purpose for existing and the RTLB had to have a strong interest in what was happening. This finding could be called ‘engaging the head and the heart’.

Having a purpose corresponds with Wenger’s (1999) concept of the domain, and reflects discussion in the literature on shared vision. The RTLB knew why they were meeting and what to expect from their colleagues.

You know often it’s ... you might get presented with 10, 12 priorities or ‘blah, blah blah’... I guess it’s nailing that down to a top 3 or 4 and ranking them, you know, here’s our 1, 2, 3 or 4 and agreeing on those, so that’s your common starting point (Participant 3, personal communications, July, 2015)

Other groups’ visions were less structured, but these RTLB acknowledged that they needed to be clear about
why they were meeting. While Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2000) suggested that this type of knowledge could be implicitly known, it appeared that for the RTLB having an explicit idea of why they were meeting appeared to hone in and focus their community, which made the time spent in COP valuable. This focus also meant that the discussions in the community were extremely purposeful. Most of the RTLB highlighted that the sessions concentrated on their current work and were specific to their needs, however this was not narrow or tied to a particular goal. Developing a clear vision in communities is recognised in literature but having scope within that purpose is essential so that the group can meet the personalised needs and expectations of the members with flexibility and creativity (Akerson et al., 2009; Fuller et al., 2005).

In terms of engaging the heart, it appeared that for half the participants their COP was centred around an area of interest or ‘passion’, for example: having a cultural or secondary focus.

_There’s nothing like being with people, in a community where everyone is really excited about the same thing_ (Participant 6, personal communication, 4 August, 2015).

Two other RTLB commented that the communities challenged their thinking and enabled them to have lively discourse around current issues or topics. Their ‘interest’, therefore, was not a particular subject, rather the creation of dynamic conversation and exposure to new ideas. Either way, RTLB were motivated by a sense of enthusiasm around their work. In essence, this meant that COP served a more holistic purpose; not only did it feed the mind but also engaged those nebulous values that COP served a more holistic purpose; not only did it feed the mind but also engaged those nebulous values and passions that are part of people’s identity.

**Directly work-related**

All RTLB were able to identify a correlation between their COP and a significant change in their practice. These changes included things such as taking away a tangible assessment, strategy or intervention to use in casework, a deeper conviction of the theory and purpose of their practice, or a transformed understanding of a difficult situation through the exposure to multiple viewpoints from the community. The following comments highlight the reflective and practical work-related nature of the COP.

_Because I was talking to other people about what they were doing, and they were reflecting and that meant we were getting clarification out of that, it made me much more reflective on my own practice. It made me question my practice at times (...) and it increased my skill and my awareness, I had more information to draw from_ (Participant 1, personal communication, July, 2015).

I went away with something tangible that I could work with (Participant 6, personal communication, July 2015).

Five out of the six RTLB identified that these experiences had a direct influence on their work at the ‘chalk face’. That is, the teachers, students and schools they were working with had benefited from their involvement in a CoP. They also recognised that COP went beyond their daily work; it helped to develop and deepen relationships and began to build a networked support system both within the cluster and created links to the wider community e.g. psychologists, MOE, other RTLB clusters.

The RTLB manager was in the process of gathering outcomes information from the current communities running in the cluster and therefore felt she was unable to comment on the potential success of those CoP. She did, however, highlight the need for any community of practice to be able to demonstrate a visible and valuable influence on schools as the following excerpt shows.

_What we do internally in the cluster has to be for the common good of the schools (...) there is a difference between exploring for own personal benefit and a community that provides a more valid and useful service for schools_ (Participant 5, personal communication, 4 August, 2015).

It appears that a key principle required for effective COP is that the focus and content is directly related to RTLB work. This concept, however, was not as straightforward as it initially appeared. There were some differences regarding the definition of ‘directly related to work’ between RTLB and management. It appears that RTLB saw ‘work-related’ as their changes in their personal practice; shifts in underlying beliefs, trying a new resource or strategy, or going to a meeting with a new perspective and empathy for the participants. On the other hand, management needed to see ‘work-related’. They needed evidence to show that the communities added value by observing a direct impact on schools and teachers. This distinction reflects the differences between the communities described by RTLB and management; open-ended versus project-oriented. This divergence highlights a conflict as to the definition of CoP, and has the potential to undermine its effectiveness, as expectations are not met.

**Autonomy and Flexibility**

Autonomy and flexibility were words spoken frequently by RTLB in our conversations. They identified that COP were more effective when groups determined their own agenda. It appeared that autonomy and flexibility were essential so that RTLB could decide on what was important for them, as well as affording them the capability to evolve as the needs arose.
RTLB in four out of the six communities joined voluntarily, which indicates a sense of autonomy, and strongly aligns with the literature regarding COP design (Wenger et al., 2002). RTLB who chose to join their communities considered it a beneficial use of time.

I always self-reflect so I would self-reflect on what I’d learned [in the CoP] and whether it was valuable, and I think if I’d self reflected and I wasn’t actually learning new things or gaining I would have withdrawn (Participant 2, personal communication, 24 July, 2015).

Having autonomy and flexibility had the potential to clash with managerial expectations regarding time and content, as sometimes organisational frameworks were imposed on CoP. These frameworks occurred in such forms as having to conform to particular topics, following a certain system of record-keeping or demonstrating adherence to measurement outcomes. The RTLB manager stressed the importance of having a precise and purposeful focus for COP as a way of ensuring that groups had a clear pathway for development. Also noted was pressure for management to justify RTLB work in light of external expectations, such as Ministry of Education or media. RTLB felt they needed flexibility and autonomy to make decisions around what work they engage with and how they engage with it. One RTLB likened this dilemma to a conflict between time and wā (the Māori concept of time). This meant that western notions of time, which are quite fixed and established, clashed with more nebulous or fluid Māori beliefs. In essence, this was about trying to balance the need for autonomy to make decisions on the space, time and place of COP with the organisational frameworks that RTLB worked under.

These opposing viewpoints perhaps highlight a division in the expectations of what COP should deliver. RTLB appear to want the opportunity to create and grow their knowledge-base according to their needs and agendas, while the management want tangible outcomes, something that can be seen and shared. Both approaches hold value, however, asking a group to produce a final outcome breaches the ‘pure’ definition of what a community of practice is. The group then becomes something of a project team rather than a CoP, where they have to accomplish a task rather than generate, expand and exchange knowledge (Wenger et al., 2002). There is also a danger of rigidity, where groups become impervious to change as the processes are too tightly defined (Wenger et al., 2002). Understanding this mismatch regarding the function of group learning and ensuring that the greater purpose is clearly defined is important as unmet expectations can lead to dissatisfaction and reduced engagement in the work of RTLB. This tension was highlighted by one RTLB when she was reflecting on a community that wasn’t working so well:

We were asked to set a goal, I think that created some stickiness, or whatever the word is, it was too focused and not enough flexibility and I think that stopped our voices somehow (…) and then (stopped) it to sort of flow (Participant 6, personal communication, 4 August, 2015).

Generally speaking, it appears that having autonomy and flexibility to determine the nature, focus and processes of COP increased RTLB’s sense of professionalism, motivation and engagement. This need for autonomy reinforces the call for a clear and unified definition of what a COP is, to balance the expectations between management and RTLB.

**Whakawhanaungatanga**

Whakawhanaungatanga literally means, “to birth the collective” (Pa Tate, 1993 as cited in Pihama et al., 2004). This concept was a common thread throughout all of the interviews and emphasised the significance of building effective relationships. RTLB commented on the importance of valuing one another, respect, safety and trust within their groups and recognised that it was this that enabled them to share the ‘good, bad and the ugly’ of their practice.

There’s gotta be trust and safety (…) cause I need to feel safe if I’m sharing and I need to feel safe … if I’m sharing knowledge but also if I’m saying actually I haven’t a clue about …whatever (Participant 6, personal communication, 4 August, 2015).

There was also mention of the attitude that people brought to their communities, such as open-mindedness, and a willingness to be vulnerable and to listen.

People were very honest and I think that that’s where the respect really came too. I was very happy to admit a shortfall or not knowing something, I was quite happy to say ‘I’ve got this (and) I don’t know what to do, or you know… it was always wonderful to say … what would you do in this situation or what do you see? (Participant 1, personal communication, 23 July, 2015).

These comments suggest that RTLB come to their community with a learning mind-set and are receptive to new ideas. This finding reflects the research of Mittendorf’s et al. (2006) showing that ‘open mindedness to change’ is a vital quality to have to increase the effectiveness of CoP.

From the RTLB conversations it appeared that much of these effective group processes were deliberately fostered. For example, three groups intentionally included an informal ‘catch-up and chat’ within each session over coffee and kai (food). One RTLB noted that due to time pressures their group stayed highly focused in their time allocation; however, they would...
have “informal chats at other times, like going out for coffee” (Participant 3, personal communication, 27 July, 2015). The RTLB realised the value and importance of relationships when learning and working together and intuitively cultivated those relationships to build trust and respect and ensure positive collaboration. This notion of relationship is congruent with COP literature, which acknowledges that safety, trust and openness are essential elements of COP (Akerson et al., 2009; Bianchini & Cavazos, 2007; Mak & Pun, 2015; Mittendorff et al., 2006; Robertson, 2007; Snow-Gerono, 2005). Creating positive relationships in COP also highlights the necessity of open dialogue, listening to one another and empathy as key methods of fostering positive communications (Mak & Pun, 2015; Mittendorff et al., 2006; Robertson, 2007; Snow-Gerono, 2005). It appears that these RTLB possessed the will and the skill to collaborate effectively, and this contributed to a worthwhile COP experience.

Interestingly, in today’s technology-focused world, all communities mentioned in the interviews met face to face (kanohi ki te kanohi), which was used as a way to encourage a deeper form of connection and community. This need for connection was noted in the following excerpt:

*It's about being in the moment ... are we comfortable together, are we sharing, are we listening...* (Participant 6, personal communication, 4 August, 2015).

Complementing this ideal were the number of comments made regarding the environment that people met in. The environments were purposefully selected to meet the needs of the group.

One group met in someone’s home as it was comfortable, held no interruptions and ensured people’s confidentiality and safety. Another group met in a professional space with a large board table and a number of resources at arms reach. The ‘place’ of meeting held significance as it contributed to the comfort, safety and needs of the group, which therefore enhanced the connections and trust within the group.

**Ako**

The concept of ako is grounded in the notion of reciprocity and recognises that the learning and teaching are not separate entities (Ministry of Education, n.d.). Within COP this means that participants are learning and sharing at the same time. The RTLB all reflected this principle within their communities. Ako was deepened through the acknowledgement of different backgrounds and perspectives. The differing perspectives were pertinent in both COP that included only RTLB and communities involving a mixture of professionals e.g. educational psychologists, Ministry of Education or Kuia (elders). The group discussions were regarded as richer by all RTLB due to the variety of experiences and expertise people brought to the group.

*Because there was about 7 of us we all had a lot to contribute and we all had different strengths. So that I guess was the beauty of it, you were coming from your place of skill and expertise and throwing that in the mix and we were all different, yeah, yeah, it was neat* (Participant 6, personal communication, 4 August, 2015).

*The group had the ability to bring in different perspectives and ability to ask probing questions* (Participant 5, personal communication, 3 August, 2008).

A natural outflow of practising ako was the effect that it had on the dialogue within the CoP. RTLB commented that the conversations were extremely work-focused and mainly consisted of professional discussion, questioning, problem-solving and offering solutions. The RTLB also noted that there was little or no interpersonal conflict within the groups. It may be that recognising all participants are of value increased the sense of respect between members. All parties were afforded air time with a sense that no one person had all the answers and no individual had one ‘right’ answer, as the following quote highlights.

*Just because I’m P.I. (from the Pacific Islands) doesn’t make me the expert, and just because colleagues are Māori, doesn’t make them the expert, and I’m willing to bet they don’t see themselves in that way anyway, I think being P.I. and male in my cluster makes me very different, with a different lens to things* (Participant 3, personal communication, 27 July, 2015).

While all RTLB communities practised ako, there was always one person who took the lead in coordinating the group. This person appeared to take responsibility for communications, sharing agendas or minutes (if these were used), liaising with group members, and ensuring all parties were informed of relevant information. This coordinator reflected Wenger, McDermott and Snyder’s (2002) concept of ‘facilitator’ as they had an equal part in the dialogue of the group, were not seen as an expert, and took a motivating role in ensuring the group met and ran smoothly.

**DISCUSSION**

As not all findings can be discussed, the following centres on a few of the key aspects of this inquiry, drawing on one main idea from each theme.

The feedback from this group of RTLB shows that COP can have a positive impact on their practice. The effectiveness of these communities is increased when...
all stakeholders have a clear and united understanding of the definition, function and purpose of CoP. When referring to learning community as a COP it is important to develop an accurate, shared and evolving understanding of what that means to save confusion, unmet expectations and ultimately demotivation or lack of engagement. The findings showed that the different understandings between management and RTLB caused disruption to this process. While other literature has noted the importance of creating organisational structures that validate COP (Vescio et al., 2008; Wenger & Snyder, 2000), reaching a common agreement on the definition of a community across a particular context is less typical and may be something for RTLB to consider when establishing CoP.

Once a shared understanding of COP is developed, opportunities are created to identify other principles and practices that contribute to effective communities. Much of the literature looks at groups developing a shared vision. While the terms ‘vision’ and ‘purpose’ tend to have overlapping messages, the vision intimates where you would like to go and the purpose implies what is happening in the ‘now’ (Kenny, 2014). With this group of RTLB, knowing why they were meeting appeared to be more important than where they were heading. It seems that designing a purpose gave RTLB clear boundaries regarding their COP and meant they could evaluate whether it was worth investing their time into. There are some considerations regarding this. Too narrow a purpose means that there may be less opportunity to meet individual needs due to an attitude of ‘group think’ where like-mindedness becomes the guiding force (Dooner et al., 2008). A group with too broad a purpose can become convoluted and confused, as members are not sure of its intent. Considering this in the construction phase of their COP may give RTLB operational boundaries as well as strategic intent (Wenger et al., 2002).

The differences in understanding of what is considered to be ‘work-related’ also impacts on how COP are valued across the organisational context. The influence of the ‘business model’ on educational practices, with its focus on visible and viable outcomes, appears to create tension for RTLB. The very essence of COP is to create, expand and exchange knowledge, which requires open-ended and exploratory conversations that involve professional judgement as well as elements of risk-taking and potential failure (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). Perhaps to enable communities to fulfill their potential, the nature of their journey has to be legitimised and trusted. Recognising the inherent value in the communities themselves, rather than focusing solely on what they produce could do this. Understanding that COP can contribute to deep reflection and promote a more grounded understanding of practice is essential to this process. Also, recognising that building relationships can lead to positive working environments and wider professional networks is another critical understanding.

As noted, the need for autonomy and flexibility were consistently highlighted by the RTLB. These themes have the potential to cause dissonance as they call for compromise between management and RTLB expectations. Wenger and Snyder (2000) suggest that providing an infrastructure to support COP is key. This framework requires setting up organisational systems for communities to develop while still allowing for an open-ended, flexible approach that is defined by the group in accordance with their needs. Wenger and Snyder (2000) propose the allocation of time and resource, as well as systemic support to grow networks and overcome administrative obstacles. The framework is about facilitation of CoP, rather than leading a group along a particular pathway.

As recognised by the RTLB, ‘birthing a community’ takes deliberate and concentrated effort. Most literature recognises the importance of mutual trust, openness and safety, and that these ideals are supported by open dialogue and the ability to perspective-take and show respect (Akerson et al., 2009; Bianchini & Cavazos, 2007; Mak & Pun, 2015; Mittendorff et al., 2006; Robertson, 2007; Snow-Gerono, 2005). This study confirms these notions and potentially links with Durie’s 2006 (cited in Bateman & Berryman, 2008) themes of ‘time, space and boundaries’ as an active way of growing whakawhanaungatanga. This could be done by providing time flexibility whereby allocating, expanding or taking time is valued more than fitting with a schedule, enabling space for relationships to grow by clarifying the terms under which parties come together, and exploring boundaries and distinctions between people so that respectful engagement may develop (Bateman & Berryman, 2008). Added to this could be ‘place’; the consideration and freedom to define the place where the COP is held. It may also be beneficial to include some discussion around effective strategies for communication to support this birthing of community.

Strong community does not mean that it will be ‘disagreement free’ among the members. In this study RTLB noted that there was robust disagreement regarding professional issues. These conversations are invaluable for promoting change in practice and reflect Pane’s (2010) ideas regarding the transformative power of uncomfortable conversations and Snow-Gerono’s (2005) thoughts on dissensus. Conversations were work-related rather than personal, and reduced the potential for things to denigrate into bickering or interpersonal conflict. Establishing a sense of mutual respect and ako enables RTLB to have open conversations regarding tensions in their work and this, combined with positive whanaungatanga (relationships), provides a safe place for members to ‘hash out’ issues in a supportive and professional manner.
CONCLUSION
This study has highlighted a number of areas to enhance the effectiveness of Communities of Practice. The artistry in community is about creating and evolving a cohesive body where all members generate a shared understanding of the purpose, intent and definition of CoP. It is from there, through the provision of autonomy and flexibility, that the other principles – engaging the head and the heart, keeping it work-focused, growing whakawhanaungatanga and ako – might grow. The intention is that these COP will result in personal change and have an impact at a wider organisational level.

This study took place inside one RTLB cluster with its own set of protocols and practices. It would be interesting to explore the relevance of these findings across clusters. This inquiry has focused on RTLB beliefs regarding their CoP; it may also be worth examining the dialogue and characteristics of the actual communities and whether the application of these principles has any further impact on their function. Ultimately, this work indicates that with the employment of a few key principles, COP have the potential to allow members to collaboratively approach the difficulties and challenges that are embodied in education, and to provide situated support and innovations to meet those difficulties.

This inquiry suggests that COP can contribute to wider learning and change across an organisation.

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AUTHOR PROFILES

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Appendix A: Research Questions Supplied to Participants

What principles and practices contribute to an effective Community of Practice for RTLB?

QUESTIONS FOCUSED ON THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE:

1. Describe a ‘community of practice’ that you have found to be effective.
2. What was it about that COP that made it stick out for you?
3. What made it effective for you (time, people (social), resources)? How did you know it was effective (how did you measure it)?
4. Tell me about the communication in your group.
5. When conflict arose, how did you manage it?
6. Tell me about the evolution or conclusion of the community of practice.

QUESTIONS FOCUSED ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. How did it influence your practice? Did it promote change in your practice?
2. Did your COP influence other facets of your work e.g. social relationships/nature of how you work?
3. How did it influence the wider RTLB community and wider community you work in e.g. schools?

CONCLUDING QUESTION:

1. In a perfect world what would a Community of Practice need to include to be successful for you? How could this ‘dream’ be achieved in your current cluster? (i.e. what would you need for this to happen?).
ABSTRACT
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is the term to describe the range of adverse effects that can occur when a fetus is exposed to alcohol. At present in New Zealand there are no definitive statistics on the extent of FASD as a prevalence study has not been undertaken. However, as reported in the New Zealand Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Working Party Report (2016), at least one in two pregnancies are exposed to alcohol, with 10 per cent of these being exposed to high-risk levels. The life-long difficulties that people with FASD experience are becoming clearer as more is learnt about FASD and its effects. This paper describes the recent experience of two Year 11 teens attending different schools in New Zealand. The aim is to highlight the diversity of experience each had, due to the differing approach their school took towards them and their diagnosis of FASD.

Storied experience

Keywords:
fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD)

INTRODUCTION
The Fetal Alcohol Network of New Zealand describes Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) as “a range of significant adverse effects on development when alcohol is consumed during pregnancy. FASD is a brain-based neurodisability that can include physical abnormalities” (Fetal Alcohol Network NZ, n.d., p. 1). The effects of prenatal alcohol exposure include the disruption of brain development and subsequent behavioural, cognitive and motor functions (Riley, Infante & Warren, 2011). This includes difficulties with attention (Lane et al., 2014), speech/language and spatial memory, planning and organising, and deficits with memory and verbal learning (Green, 2007). Negative life outcomes include a greater likelihood of unemployment, higher hospital admissions for alcohol abuse, and a greater prevalence of psychiatric disorders (compared to those without FASD) (Rangmar et al., 2015).

These difficulties can come to the fore when children with FASD go to school. Here they can struggle with a range of social, academic, behavioural and emotional challenges (Green, 2007). However, while students with FASD cannot be ‘cured’, there is a range of approaches that can decrease the negative effects of FASD while increasing the likelihood that students with FASD can learn and participate at school. Ensuring that teachers have the knowledge and skills to provide appropriate learning environments for students with FASD is critical (Pei et al., 2015). However, as Carpenter (2011) has argued, “The unusual style of learning and extreme challenging behaviour of (students) affected is out of the experience of many educators and teachers (can) find themselves ‘pedagogically bereft’ “(p. 42).

I believe this to be the experience of most teachers in our New Zealand schools at present. As well as this, teachers’ negative beliefs about, and attitudes towards FASD, can impact upon a student’s experience in the classroom (Pei et al., 2015).

In the following accounts of personal experience, the effects of teacher-beliefs impacted greatly on the success and outcomes for two students. These effects are long ranging and continue for both of these students way beyond the school gate and over a number of years to the present day.

This is the story of two precious and beloved sons, Jack and Harry. Both live within a two parent, two-child family. Quite by chance both live in rural communities in New Zealand, but in different locations. My knowledge of these stories has come from a personal connection with both of the families involved.

Both names are pseudonyms and permission from both students has been gained to report on their experiences.

JACK
Jack attended his local rural high school. Jack’s parents were drawn to the school as it was a smaller sized school and, they believed, a more nurturing environment for their ‘active’ son. At the time of enrolling, Jack did have a diagnosis of Attention
Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD). On enrolment, they met with the principal and the Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) to ensure the best, most positive start and outcome for their son. Sadly, within one term, he was on suspension and for the following term he was enrolled in an alternative education programme at another site. It was during this time that Jack was diagnosed with FASD. He returned to his high school for Term 4 after a successful time in the alternative education programme, and once again meetings were set up to ensure a positive transition for Jack’s return to school and to establish a plan for the following Year 11 year at school, taking into account the new knowledge of FASD.

Jack’s parents were very keen to work closely with the school to ensure a positive outcome for their son. Recognising that the teachers may have little understanding of FASD, they proactively provided information and support. They brought in outside specialists to share their knowledge with the teaching team and were eager to see their son happy and experiencing success. Unfortunately, Jack spent his Year 11 attending school for half-days only, a strategy suggested by some of the staff. At one point during the year, it was suggested that Jack might be better off elsewhere. It was often remarked that the fact that Jack had no extra funding ‘attached to him’ meant the staff were unable to accommodate him. Teachers also seemed to believe that Jack was ‘choosing’ not to engage, as opposed to experiencing difficulty accessing the learning programme, and this was evident in his final report where a comment was made that Jack “did not see the benefit of goal setting”. One teacher, who did try to engage with Jack and provide a more successful environment for him, gave him the one and only certificate that he ever received in school.

The outcome for Jack was he left school at the end of Year 11 with no National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) credits, he didn’t sit any of the external exams and during the internal exams his Special Assessment Conditions’ (SAC) were apparently overlooked. He left school disillusioned and believing he was ‘dumb’. Four years later, through a lot of family support, Jack is now employed and is beginning to earn NCEA credits through his employer. His Mum sums up his school experience as one of blame and punitive actions, completely lacking in any positive feedback.

HARRY

Also in Year 11, Harry attended his local area school where he had been since he was six. Harry’s diagnosis of FASD was made when he was in Year 8. During Year 9 and 10, Harry participated in the mainstream class programme with some support from a teacher-aide, funded by the school. At the end of his Year 10, Harry was invited to join a new initiative that was to be introduced. Upon recognising a group of students who were not coping academically, a specialist programme was to be set up that would focus on supporting the seven students selected in a highly-supportive literacy class with the aim of ensuring all the students would gain their NCEA literacy credits. The students were encouraged to participate in their ‘strength’ area mainstream classes, which were the more practical subject options, whilst the academic class load was lessened, enabling the school to provide an intense literacy programme for them. They were mentored, provided with modelling, given extra guided-practice opportunities and real-life experiences, and provided with intense feedback/feed-forward in preparation for producing their final submissions for each unit standard studied. As a result, each of the students succeeded in attaining their literacy credits as well as their numeracy credits, and their teacher was also able to support them in their other subjects, meaning each of the seven students, who in Year 10 were considered not to be succeeding, achieved their NCEA Level 1. Harry excelled in his strength subject areas and received a prize at the end-of-year prizegiving. On completion of Year 11, Harry spent two more years at school attaining NCEA Level 2 and 3 and went onto a tertiary trades programme with a view to gaining an apprenticeship.

DISCUSSION

Pei et al. (2015) consider that the views which teachers hold of their students and the quality of their teaching are “significant factors” (p. 135) in educating young people with disabilities. Clark et al. (2014) looked at a variety of studies that led them to state, “In summary, these studies support the hypothesis that changes to the environments of students with FASD may improve behaviour” (p. 26) leading to an improvement in learning outcomes.

Although not the subject of this paper, there is limited diagnostic capacity of FASD in New Zealand at present, however, “diagnosis (is) only as useful as the accommodations and supports that follow” (Pei et al., 2013, p. 331). The information on accommodations and supports is available to New Zealand teachers through the FASD Guide (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017). This publication was developed by the New Zealand Ministry of Education as an online guide to provide teachers with information and strategies to support students who have, or are suspected of having, FASD. However, like diagnosis, this information is only going to make a difference when we have teachers and schools willing to try.
The intent of this paper is to highlight that a student’s experience of school, and particularly a student with FASD, can be strongly impacted by their teachers’ and the school’s approach to supporting them. Whilst it is recognised that students with FASD can present with “unusual learning styles … and extremely challenging behaviours” (Carpenter, 2011, p. 42), this story supports the view that success can be achieved when teachers and schools are willing to change the environment to meet the needs of their students. In the words of John Hattie, “You can’t just teach one way. If kids aren’t learning, you’re the only one paid to try something different” (Twittercom, 2017).

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AUTHOR PROFILE

Tracey Jongens

Tracey Jongens is a Resource Teacher of Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) in Te Paeroa Cluster 34 in South and East Christchurch. Prior to this she was a primary school teacher. Tracey has both a professional and personal interest in raising awareness of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) within New Zealand and has recently worked closely with the Ministry of Education and CORE Education in supporting the development of the FASD Guide on the Inclusive TKI website (http://www.inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/fasd/). Tracey is a founding member of FASD–CAN Inc NZ (http://www.fasd-can.org.nz/)

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, New Zealand schools have been challenged to cater for increasing numbers of students in material hardship without comprehensive support. New Zealand once led the world in putting equity at the centre of education policy and practice, this is no longer the case. Recent Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) findings reveal that modern, high-performing education systems balance excellence with equity. Programmes in North America and Australasia such as Bridges Out of Poverty and others are growing in popularity although featuring an underlying deficit ideology. “Te Manuaute o Te Huia”, supported by local kaumatua, is applied here in one school to support learning conversations to achieve inclusion, particularly for economically-vulnerable students.

This article examines how one school, the RTLB service and its community leaders, including Māori advisors, used a shared understanding of ‘equity literacy’ in an education setting and the appreciative inquiry process to enhance learning opportunities for all students and especially those from low socio-economic backgrounds. It also outlines how a New Zealand version of an equity literate framework and a strengths-based process, used with key community input, can generate additional support to create and sustain ongoing success, especially for those students vulnerable due to their socio-economic circumstances.

Storied experience

Keywords:
appreciative inquiry, change, deficit ideology, equity, equity literacy, inclusion for all

MY JOURNEY: THE EXPERIENCES OF AN RTLB AND EDUCATIONAL INEQUITY

Financial hardship is having an increasing impact on learning engagement and success of children in Aotearoa New Zealand schools. As an RTLB I have faced first-hand how financial hardship has been experienced, and been privy to a variety of narratives from RTLB colleagues, principals, students and their whanau. For instance, I once stood on a chair to take a school photo while a professional photo was being taken of the school so that affordable copies could be provided for whanau. Principals I have spoken with, shared that some of their children are unable to complete homework because they don’t have access to a computer or the internet at home. Further examples of whanau financial hardship include a lack of personal resources such as the requirement for a bike to participate in class trips, a Year 10 student being unable to attend a preferred outdoor education option as by doing so would compromise resources to a sister, and the embarrassment incurred by having no food for lunch.

Recently, the New Zealand media has featured the growing socio-economic pressures upon families when preparing their children for school. For example, the cost required for some mandatory items such as uniforms, stationery and the controversial scheme of school ‘donations’ (sometimes referred to as the annual or activity fee) is exacerbated by ‘Bring Your Own Device’ (BYOD) systems, additional sport/extra-curricular activity fees and school camps. Some schools have adopted innovative solutions for payment of school donation fees (even though these are non-compulsory) given that a quarter of whanau cannot afford them.

My notions of equity were heavily influenced by articles by Paul Gorski, one called The Myth of the “Culture of Poverty” (Gorski, 2008) and another called Unlearning Deficit Ideology and the Scornful Gaze (Gorski, 2010). Such was the impact of his writing I made personal contact with him and suggested my idea of pulling the best bits from Bridges Out of Poverty (Payne, DeVol & Smith, 2006). Gorski commented that this would be like “… saying I am only going to use the non-offensive aspects of white supremacy to teach about race” (Gorski 2015, personal communication). Nonetheless, Gorski challenges many common myths about the poor that are often echoed in the
media. For instance, he challenges the theory that poor people are unmotivated and have a weak work ethic; are linguistically deficient, and tend to abuse drugs and alcohol. Additionally, he debunks the notion that poor parents are uninvolved in their children’s learning largely because they do not value education. In recent years, the National Treasury office, in collaboration with the McGuiness Institute, also identified common myths prevalent in Aotearoa New Zealand. These deficit assumptions have included comments such as: “poverty doesn’t exist in New Zealand”; “people on a benefit have it easy”; “benefits cause people to become dependent on the system”, and “if only poor people would just get a job”: a resounding ‘victim blaming’ rhetoric that suggests that the issue resides with those facing the harsh realities of financial hardship.

Many of these myths have been vehemently challenged in a book I read titled “An African Centred Response to Ruby Payne’s Poverty Theory” by Dr Jawanza Kunjufu. He identified issues of deficit thinking, common myths, ingrained stereotypes and a ‘blame the victim’ ideology as factors that can sabotage efforts to address student achievement – notions that are also supported by a massive body of work that highlighted deficit theorising regarding Māori achievement in Aotearoa New Zealand. As Dr Kunjufu writes, “if teachers believe low-income is the major cause for the achievement gap, it would be futile to provide a workshop on raising expectation” (Kunjufu, 2007, p. viii). He goes onto write, “some people would rather talk, study, and have workshops on poverty than solve the problem.” In wanting to solve the problem as suggested by Dr Kunjufu, I am reminded of the opportunity I had to travel to high-performing clusters of schools in Ontario, Canada in 2011, where I met teachers who had attended workshops called “Bridges out of Poverty” (Stone, 2011). It has been described as the most popular professional development to address the education needs of students in poverty for teachers in North America and the USA. I explored this programme and spoke to principals in Northland, NZ, who had been addressed by an Australasian “Bridges out of Poverty” facilitator at a principal’s conference in Taupo. Some Māori principals from Northland were excited and refreshed by the notion of addressing the ‘tail-end of under-achievement’ through the lens of poverty rather than the bicultural perspective and were keen to explore this approach.

Referring back to Gorski (2013), he provides an Equity Literate Framework that has been developed without a deficit ideology and challenges many myths regarding those who live in poverty. He advocates an approach which examines beliefs about the poor, avoiding all forms of (even popular) deficit thinking as it is applied in a school setting to the circumstances of some students. He comments that in the school setting, the most influential factor in how a student in vulnerable financial circumstances performs or engages, is linked directly to the belief the student’s teacher holds about why the student is in these circumstances. Those teachers, who may exhibit a range of practical strategies but cling to a view where the attribution lies entirely within the individual, are holding views that are an antithesis of equity. Gorski would state that a teacher cannot hold a deficit ideology and set high expectations, which is a key factor in student achievement.

The notion of stereotype threat is relevant here. According to Spencer and Castano (2007), stereotype threat occurs when people, who share a particular identity such as socio-economic status or ethnicity, perform below their potential on a test or assigned task due to the fear or anxiety that their performance will confirm negative stereotypes people already have about them. Its subtle yet powerful and negative hold it can have on learners is worth highlighting. It is well-described in Gorski’s (2013) book “Reaching and Teaching Students in Poverty - Strategies for Erasing the Opportunity Gap.” The negative impact can be significant for learners of many identities such as gender, ethnicity, age as well as socio-economic status. A negative comment about a certain group or identity prior to an assessment can be shown to negatively affect the performance of that group for the duration of the test. For example, Gorski (2013) comments:

> when informed that their socioeconomic status is relevant to a task they are being asked to complete, such as by being told before a test that students in poverty do not do as well on it as wealthier students, low-income students perform worse than they do when nobody names the disparity (p. 69).

Given my observations, experiences and, in particular, the inspiration of Gorski’s work, it is clear a framework is needed which places at its core a focus on principles of equity that avoids deficit ideology, and challenges myths within the context of financial hardship. As such, I am keen to keep equity at the centre of my discussion presented in this paper rather than an aspect of bi-cultural education, which in Aotearoa New Zealand, as previously noted, is very strengths-based and inclusive. My hope is that the framework I present will impact positively on the provision of equitable opportunity in a school setting for those students vulnerable due to their financial circumstances and ultimately on their future life chances.
POVERTY IN THE AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND CONTEXT

The New Zealand Salvation Army released their tenth State of the Nation Annual Report earlier in the year and reported that “entrenched child poverty has become the new normal” (New Zealand Salvation Army, 2017, p. 4) with numbers of children facing material hardship increasing by an estimated 5000 in 2016 (ibid). The 2016 Child Poverty Monitor Technical Report developed in partnership with the Office for the Commission for Children, the J.R. McKenzie Trust and the NZ Child and Youth Epidemiology Service at Otago University identified a strong link between material deprivation and school achievement: “For students attending schools in areas with the highest deprivation scores, 65% achieved NCEA in Level 2 in 2015 compared with 92% of students attending schools in areas with the lowest deprivation scores” (Simpson, Duncanson, Oben, Wicken & Gallagher, 2016, p. 5).

In November 2016, a parliamentary inquiry investigated why students with learning difficulties such as dyslexia, autism and dyspraxia received more help if they came from wealthier schools. More than half of decile one schools have no students receiving assistance at New Zealand Certificate Educational Attainment (NCEA) exam time according to New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA) figures (Report of the Education and Science Committee, 2016). Students from high decile (wealthier) schools are receiving three times as much support than students in low decile secondary schools. This assistance came in the form of reader/writer, computer, rest breaks, braille or enlarged papers. Although the situation has recently improved, the initial concern was that only wealthy schools could afford the psychologist fees needed to assess special assessment conditions (SAC) criteria or that “parents of children at these schools can afford to pay for diagnostic services” (Report of the Education and Science Committee, 2016, p. 28) or that parents from low decile schools “cannot afford to pay for the technology their children need” (ibid, p. 45).

Some recommendations from the inquiry included that the government task the Ministry of Education (MOE) to:

- publicly fund services for Māori and Pasifika
- continue to work to provide more equitable access to special assessment conditions – in particular for low-decile schools
- ensure that Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCO) and professional development focus on creating school culture of inclusion and providing advice about access to additional services.

In light of these recommendations it was noted that, “Equity of access to learning support services is an area of concern for the Ministry (of Education) … we (the Education and Science Committee) consider that equity of access issues warrant further investigation” (Report of the Education and Science Committee, 2016, p. 23).

Additionally, the OECD has produced a range of reports that feature equity, especially in relation to students from differing socio-economic backgrounds. The Equity and Quality in Education Report (OECD, 2012) states the highest performing education systems across OECD countries are those that combine high quality and equity. In such education systems, the vast majority of students can attain high level skills and knowledge that depend on their ability and drive, more than on their socio-economic background … the benefits of investing in equity in education outweigh the costs for both individuals and societies (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2012, p. 14). Similarly, an historic report from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) indicated that poverty, if unaddressed, can explain up to 46 per cent of the difference in PISA scores in OECD countries (OECD PISA, 2012).

EQUITY IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

It is considered difficult to succinctly define concepts of quality and equity. Levin (2003 cited in Field, Kuczera & Pont, 2007) noted that “while we may not be able to define [quality], we know it when we see it. For equity, it may be that while we cannot define what it is, we know when we are far from it” (p. 31). Field, Kuczera and Pont (2007) continue to argue that equity in education is a key objective of education systems and that it needs to be addressed on three fronts: the design of education systems, educational practices, and resourcing. They describe equity in education as including two dimensions - fairness and inclusion. Fairness implies that personal and social circumstances such as gender, socio-economic status or ethnic origin should not be an obstacle to educational success, inclusion implies a minimum standard of education for all.

In September 2016, a United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) Report – Our Voices, Our Rights - written and produced by Aotearoa New Zealand young people, identified hopes, concerns and ideas for New Zealand (UNICEF, 2016). Over 1100 young people ranging in age from 7 to 18 years of age and from all over New Zealand responded to a range of questions. Youth were asked if they felt some children/tamariki in Aotearoa New
Zealand are treated differently by others and if so, for what reasons. Four reasons predominated, with ethnicity identified as the reason by 43 per cent of respondents, socio-economic status identified by 23 per cent of respondents, bullying identified by 11 per cent of respondents, and religion identified by 9 per cent of respondents. Young people recommended “providing more training and tools for teachers to enable them to create classroom environments that will support diversity and overcome unconscious bias” (UNICEF, 2016, p. 31). Unconscious bias was described as “where people unconsciously form social stereotypes about certain groups of people. Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups as the human brain prefers to categorise everything it can to make its job easier” (ibid, p. 31).

When asked what areas should be given more attention by the government to help children/tamariki in Aotearoa New Zealand, the feedback showed that education and educational achievement was the area children/tamariki were most concerned about. In relation to this, 47 per cent of children/tamariki interviewed felt the government should do more for education and education achievement and ideas included “… making education cheaper or free and providing breakfast or lunch in schools (UNICEF, 2016, p. 34). Other issues were healthcare 35 per cent, safety on the streets and at home 18 per cent and improved housing 19 per cent.

OECD findings echo concerns regarding the impact of material hardship and child poverty in the New Zealand community and its subsequent negative impact on learning. The New Zealand Treasury has commented on OECD findings reporting that:

…”the socio-economic background of NZ students exerts a much larger influence on their achievement than in most other OECD countries … in other words, NZ education system does not appear to be very good at enabling students to succeed, regardless of their background (Treasury’s Advice on Lifting Student Achievement in New Zealand Evidence Brief, 2012, p. 2)

The New Zealand Treasury went on to comment, “… the link between parents’ socio-economic status and a child’s educational outcome is very high in New Zealand compared internationally, suggesting that New Zealand’s education system does not lean against socio-economic background as much as education systems of other countries” (Treasury, 2013, p. 2), and that “Since education is the main way for enhancing intergenerational mobility, we are concerned about the equity implications of the fact that New Zealand has the greatest percentage of the variance in school performance explained by a family’s economic status in the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests at age 15” (Treasury, 2013, p. 10).

It is interesting to remember that, as reported by Renwick (1998), New Zealand … can claim to be the first country to reconstruct public education with the objective of providing equality of educational opportunity” (p. 337). The often-quoted statement by the New Zealand Director of Education from 1940 to 1960, Clarence Beeby is worth remembering: “The Government’s objective broadly expressed is that every person, whatever his level of academic ability, whether he/she be rich or poor, whether he/she live in the town or country has a right as a citizen to a free education of a kind for which he/she is best fitted and to the fullest extent of his/her powers.” This statement became the mission statement for the Department of Education for decades. Beeby was regarded as the architect of New Zealand’s world class education system and went on to work in the Pacific Nations, UNESCO and Harvard University. From a variety of sources the value of an equity focus for students from vulnerable financial circumstances and others is vital for an overall gain in excellence over the whole education system.

**TE MANUAUTE O TE HUIA: INTRODUCING A UNIQUE FRAMEWORK OF EQUITY IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND:**

The Manuaute O Te Hui is the Aotearoa New Zealand version of the Equity Literate Educator Framework and is represented by a kite. This manuaute (or kite) is made up of fourteen sticks signifying the ten principles and are combined with the existing four skills of the Equity Literate Educators (ELE) Framework provided by Gorski (2013). The metaphor of a kite in Māori is traditionally shaped like a triangle or bird (manu) and ascends to high places for all to view. This journey to high places (a quality, service or school) includes all in view. Aotearoa New Zealand, the last large landmass in the world to become inhabited was unique in that birds occupied every ecological niche. The Huia was most abundant in the region within which this Aotearoa version has been developed (i.e. Tamaki Nui A Rua) and is the most royal of all the ‘Children of Tane’. These birds, with the male and female having different beaks, were seen to work together to survive. The male with the short beak broke away the bark and wood for the female to extend its longer beak to extract the grub. Such reciprocity of action is necessary for any effort or programme to succeed to support inclusion for all.

1 Tane is the Māori God of the forest and birds
The *Manuaute O Te Huia Framework* has been developed as a strengths-based alternative to those perspectives that have, in the past, promoted a deficit view of poverty, and locate the problem with disadvantaged groups rather than focus on external factors pressing upon the vulnerable group or individual.

Table 1
*Te Manuaute o Te Huia* (or Aotearoa version of Equity Literate Educator Framework)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whakatauki or Māori Proverb</th>
<th>Principle or Mātāpono</th>
<th>Commitment of Equity Literate Educators (ELE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He aha te mea nui o te Ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata. <em>What’s the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people</em> (Riley, 2013, p. 130).</td>
<td>1. The right to equitable education opportunity is universal.</td>
<td>ELE believe that every student has a right to equitable educational opportunity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruia te taitea, kohia te rangiura. <em>Strip away the sapwood and gather up the red heartwood</em> (Mead &amp; Grove, 2004, p. 351)</td>
<td>2. Poverty and class are interrelated.</td>
<td>ELE understand that class is related to a variety of identities. To understand how class inequities operate in our classrooms, we must learn to understand how inequities relate to income, education, ethnicity, gender, language, immigrant status, disability and other identities, and respond with strengths-based inclusive teaching practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahakoa iti, He iti mapihī pounamu. <em>There is singular beauty and immense value of even the tiniest piece of fine greenstone</em> (New Zealand Gazette, 2008, No. 32, p. 740).</td>
<td>3. Lower socio-economic status does not reflect a homogeneous group and embraces people with diverse values.</td>
<td>ELE recognise diversity within low income families and students. To study a singular culture of poverty would not develop our understanding but may instead strengthen our stereotypes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E mohiotia ana o waho kei roto he aha. <em>One cannot tell what a vessel contains unless one can see inside</em> (Riley, 2013, p. 79).</td>
<td>4. Our beliefs, biases and prejudices about people in poverty inform how we teach and relate to them.</td>
<td>ELE know that our teaching philosophies and practices are in part driven by belief systems. We become ELE when we are willing to change fundamental stereotypical beliefs about low income students and their families, and aspire to maximise potential in all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mā whero, mā pango, Ka oti te mahi. <em>By red (education) and black (poverty) the work is finished</em> (Mead &amp; Grove, 2004, p. 292).</td>
<td>5. In order to understand the relationship between poverty and education, we must understand the biases and inequities faced by low-income families both in and out of school and how these biases and inequities affect their performance and engagement in school.</td>
<td>ELE, in addition to changing what we believe about low-income students, are committed to developing deeper understanding of the biases and inequities faced by low-income families both in and out of school and how these biases and inequities affect their performance and engagement in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ka mate kainga tahi, Ka ora kainga rua. <em>One dwelling place is overcome but the second is secure</em> (Mead &amp; Grove, 2004, p. 169).</td>
<td>6. Test scores (National Standards) are inadequate measures of equity.</td>
<td>ELE are aware that equity (or its absence) cannot be captured by standardised testing. The scores measure levels of prior access to educational opportunity. It cannot capture student experience or diversity. Raising test scores is not the same as creating an equitable learning environment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Skill Examples of Associated Skills and Dispositions of Equity Literate Educators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Examples of Associated Skills and Dispositions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Ability to **recognise** biases and inequities, including those that are subtle. | • Notice even subtle bias in classroom materials, classroom interactions, school policies and practices (examples may also come from classroom practises and out-of-school activities, such as sports and outdoor education opportunities)  
   • Reject deficit views that locate the sources of outcome inequalities (such as achievement disparities) as existing just within, rather than pressing upon, low-income families  
   • Can articulate “Five Poverty Myths Debunked, (TacklingPovertyNZ - McGuiness Institute, 2015)” and “Common Stereotypes, (Gorski, 2013)” |
| 2. Ability to **respond** to biases and inequities in the immediate term. | • Have the facilitation skills and content knowledge necessary to intervene effectively when biases and inequities arise in the classroom or school  
   • Cultivate in students the ability to analyse bias in classroom materials, classroom interactions, school policies and practices  
   • Foster conversations with colleagues about bias and equity concerns at their schools |
| 3. Ability to **redress** biases and inequities in the long term. | • Advocate against inequitable school practices and advocate for equitable school practices that are identified during an appreciative inquiry process or problem-solving process using the principles of Equity Literacy  
   • Teach in relevant and age-appropriate ways about issues of disadvantage |
4. Ability to create and sustain a bias-free and equitable learning environment.

- Express high expectations for all students through higher order pedagogy and curriculum e.g. PB4L (Positive Behaviour for Learning -- www.pb4l.tki.org.nz) and Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling (BES) by Adrienne Alton-Lee (2003)
- Consider how they assign homework and communicate with families, understanding that students have different levels of access to resources like computers and the internet
- Be alert to and avoid stereotype threat
- Cultivate a classroom/school environment in which students/parents feel free to express themselves openly and honestly and see themselves, their culture and other identities reflected positively
- Form productive partnerships with iwi, community groups, community and government organisations, which understand “It takes a whole village, to raise a child”
- To form/sustain above partnerships with a process, which models the principles, featured such as; appreciative inquiry and the “Most Significant Change” (Evaluation) Technique (Dart & Davies, 2005)

Support for the development of this framework is acknowledged from Tamaki Nui a Rua elders, Mrs Noa Nicholson (QSM) and Mr Manahi Paewai (QSM), who have assisted me in a range of community projects for over twenty years. Thanks also to Tamai Nicholson and Paul Gorski for working with me to form this NZ version of the framework.

TE MANUATE O TE HUIA FRAMEWORK AND ITS APPLICATION IN AN EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Context

In the last few years, a Decile 3 rural school has received a number of new enrolments some of whom came from a community nearby, which is vibrant, has a steady population and, according to census data, has a deprivation index of 9. This means that a significant number of people in the wider community have no access to a vehicle, telephone, their own home, have below threshold incomes and limited access to other well-being indicators. In my regular liaison meetings as an RTLB, I heard comments about a lack of resources that form barriers to engagement and heard of school efforts to address family hardship issues. The school had funded resources for households in extreme hardship, for example, food parcels. Also, class teachers had themselves paid for: food, some (school) clothing, and as well (provided some) with coats for school trips. The Board of Trustees (BOT) had paid some bus and all sports fees one year to enable engagement in out-of-school sports competitions.

The Ministry of Education Senior Advisor/BOT and support services (e.g. Social Workers in Schools [SWIS]) had identified non-education barriers to learning and these had been discussed with the principal and RTLB. The principal identified a wish to understand complex issues to ensure all learners had equal opportunity to strengthen well-being and achieve excellence. The principal was acutely aware of the subtle impact of missed learning opportunities for those in vulnerable financial circumstances.

These discussions were at a time when the RTLB service contract with host schools featured students from low socio-economic backgrounds as a priority cohort. The new and current MOE contract between host schools and the RTLB service provider does not give students from low socio-economic backgrounds the same priority as groups such as Māori, Pasifika, and those with special needs. Hence the casework as outlined fitted with RTLB casework as a school referral.
Data Gathering and Analysis
I worked collaboratively with the principal to gather student, parent and staff voice to introduce the equity literate framework and through the appreciative inquiry process. An overall description of the framework assisted to get everyone on board this effort and the appreciative inquiry supported the next step process. It was important to have the ‘right people in the right bus going in the right direction’.

This appreciate inquiry approach is emerging after 25 years of development in business and more recently in education. The appreciative inquiry (AI) process "offers a means of engaging colleagues and students in educational development without the baggage of these deficit-driven, performance management approaches ... The focus throughout then is not on problems, failings and deficits but on strengths, successes, opportunities and innovations, .... an inclusive approach to inclusion" (Kadi-Hanifi, et al., 2014, p. 585).

The Discovery phase seeks to establish the positives in the current situation (see whakataukī in ELE principle 8). It is the key research phase, and involves the collection and collation of positive comments from key stakeholders. The school community including staff, student voice, parents and community groups such as service clubs or charities could be involved in identifying the strengths. This is a focus of what’s strong, not what’s wrong, and is based on the following questions:

- What conditions exist within our school and community that foster inclusion for all/equitable learning opportunities for all?
- What is going on?
- Who is involved?
- What makes it work?

This process seeks to engage key stakeholders in the conversations at the outset. It can include student voice and it can be used to include the wider community. In particular, key members of local groups such charities, local government leadership, service clubs, social services and other groups, which already support members of the local community, can be involved.

According to Kadi-Hanifi, et al. (2014), "The Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process works through a four-stage model, the 4D cycle, of discovery, dream, design and destiny. The focus is important in AI as the approaches underlying theory is that "organisations move in the direction of what they study" (Ludema, Cooperrider & Barrett, 2001, p. 192, as cited in Kadi-Hanifi et al., 2014, p. 586).

Students responded to a questionnaire which was a focus on what was currently working well (see whakatuaki ELE principle 3). Parents responded with an invitation to describe the school in four
separate words. A one page wordle summarised and highlighted the most common words used. Staff were brought together to examine the elements and skills of Te Manuaute o te Huia and identified those practices that currently worked well.

After identifying the best of what is, the next stage (Stage Two) is to dream what could be (see whakatauki in ELE 10). According to Kadi-Hanifi et al. (2014) "The whole group is encouraged to work together to build on the best of what is and envision a future where these statements are not just true in certain cases, but as a matter of course" (p. 586).

Questions are asked such as:

- How can all students maintain or enhance their literacy levels over the summer?
- How could we "create and sustain a bias-free and equitable learning environment?" (Gorski, 2013, p. 21)
- How can we be sure that all educational opportunities we provide give all students the chance to succeed?
- How can we strive to have high expectations for and positive relationships with those students and their families?

The third stage moves on from the vision to a co- construction design (see whakatauki ELE principle 2). It responds to the question, "What should the school community look like and what would be its guiding values, principles and practices?" At this point, stakeholders are invited to be involved in applying the principles outlined in the Te Manuaute o te Huia framework. Action plans are formed with timelines and those with responsibility for implementation are made transparent. Ideas may emerge from questions such as:

- How can we understand the biases and inequities experienced by people in vulnerable financial circumstances in our community?
- What local resources are available but as yet unused in our efforts to provide equity, such as Charitable Trusts (especially those that feature on the NZ philanthropic trust database) and funding unique to this geographic area?
- What other groups could support our efforts in this area of concern?
- What services are contracted to support vulnerable families in this area that we may be unaware of or not yet used?
- Are our educational resources expressing positive outlooks for all learners?
- How have we been aware of our own stereotypical beliefs about some identities learners have and how has this changed our practice?
- How have we determined that what we do when planning/implementing learning programmes is based on evidence of what works?

Finally, the Destiny phase invites participants to live their ideas, to innovate and act to move the school community towards the vision. It is more than an action plan but about "establishing a sense of purpose and a will to move forward" (Kadi-Hanifi et al., 2014, p. 587). It is a commitment to form the first steps towards a shared future. It answers the question: What can we (and I) do now to help us move forward inclusively?

**Intervention**

I worked collaboratively with the school principal and we held two engagement meetings including one call-back day for staff in the mid-year break. In the morning, participants explored feedback and voiced shared understandings of Te Manuaute o te Huia. In the afternoon, we attended a meeting with key iwi services, the local Strengthening Family Service Coordinator, the town mayor, a Lions Club member, the BOT and local service provider groups. The group agreed to:

- Register with Kidscan2 to support clothing, shoe and healthy snack needs and other items
- Review the planning and implementation of the NZ Curriculum programmes in reference to Te Manuaute o te Huia
- Apply to Charitable Foundation and invite local service clubs to host the application for fresh fruit
- Involve the NZ Women’s Institute in teaching home craft skills to a small group
- Involve Iwi3 Services and Community Trust services in whanau4 support
- Apply to a special Mayoral Fund (unique to this geographic area) for individual student support

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2 A NZ charitable trust providing food, clothing and basic healthcare in schools to disadvantaged children

3 Māori word for an extended kinship group or tribe

4 Māori word for family group
Outcomes

An emerging method of evaluating complex change in schools is a method called “Most Significant Change” technique (MSC). This involves participatory monitoring and evaluation through gathering a range of participant’s impact statements (in this case; student, staff and principal). These stories are then selected by a small group to reflect the most representative outcomes of the effort. It is in variance with the more external and judgemental evaluation practices. It is designed to enable local ownership and provide project sustainability and align with the overall approach that Gandhi (1924) stated: “As the means, so the ends. There is no wall of separation between the means and the end,” I see it as an application of the whakatauki - Hurihia to araro ki te rā, tūkuna to atarangi kia taka ki muri i a koe (ELE principle 8).

Within six months of the original community engagement meeting, all the agreed efforts were taken form. There was a delay in seeking seed funding for one project, however much had been accomplished. The principal commented, “I have been absolutely astounded with the amount of support been offered and been given. The support has come in many forms. Students have been placed in the very centre of decisions.” One staff member commented: “All schools would benefit allowing opportunities (to get support) for families and students without feeling like they are the only one.”

The Kidscan application had been successful and resulted in jackets for all students and shoes where necessary. A comment from a staff member was “(Jackets) … were a huge benefit at recent sports events where many children are usually cold, they were protected, warm and dry – but most of all proud to be wearing them. They were also able to gain energy by eating supplied scroggin and bars – many children don’t eat at events (or even at school).” Healthy snack food was also readily available. A student commented, “The rain jacket was warm and comfortable also the shoes were properly made and I stayed dry and was able to attend the events without getting wet.” Another commented about the food that partly came through Kidscan, “It was helping my mum with food and clothing because money is hard to get.”

It was decided primarily from the student feedback during the appreciative inquiry process to form a “Putting the Play into Playground” Project. This was an opportunity to make over a tired playground and involved inviting a regional sports advisor into the school to work with students in the design phase. We were able to identify a potential seed funder and a promising top-up funder. A community leader at the community afternoon meeting encouraged an application to come from the school to a funding organisation he was to be appointed onto.

A school and community garden has now been set up and developed. Some students commented, “I always learn something in the school garden like how much you water them a day. How you plant them in the ground. It been so awesome doing garden”, and another, “I like the feeling when a plant pops out of the ground it feels like I achieve something.”

The community garden coordinator and parent commented that “all the children asked to take radish seeds home last week” and “they now know that they can grow a radish in 3 weeks or a lettuce in 4 weeks.” She also commented that a “troublesome boy’s behaviour has greatly improved … he’s got an interest and some (positive) attention.” She said that, “All children were given … seeds … (last term) … and tomorrow at the school assembly there will be prizes for the tallest plant, biggest flower, etc.” She also commented that “a couple of parents have come along (to learn about gardening) because their kids are excited about it” (the community garden).

Over the next school holiday period there will be a working bee and next term each student in the school will have a fertile area to grow a variety of seeds in. There is now a special library shelf just for gardening books. The local gardening group was reported to be looking to support this effort more in the future.

Connecting with local and regional groups has been enhanced. A comment from the principal was;

“I have been in this job for four years and I never knew these people existed.” There was also a link made to a very strong charitable agency in a nearby town. This agency provided a Christmas hamper within 24 hours to a family where both parents, one more recently, had been diagnosed with life-threatening illness and were under pressure from the bank with loan repayments. On hearing of the circumstances of the family the agency also offered...
a cash gift for Christmas expenses. Another agency attending the second community meeting was very responsive to a school request for support and towards the end of the year the principal commented, “watching families/students receive support was truly overwhelming. As school professionals, we now know who to turn to for support in different areas. We have experienced people dealing with serious needs.”

CONCLUSION

Te Manuaute o Te Huia has defined the principles and skills that support equitable education opportunities for all in a New Zealand context and especially those vulnerable due to their economic circumstances in a local school community. The framework resonated with staff and attracted diverse and supportive community participation. Applying the principles using the appreciative inquiry process has involved gathering student, parent, and staff voice, and after a twenty-week intervention, their stories highlight the positive impact of this ongoing collective effort. Putting equity conversations at the centre of a school review through the ELE lens and applying the ELE skills has enabled other local groups and community leadership to support these efforts with resources and a more coordinated approach. A Marian Edelman quote seems appropriate here: “The future which we hold in trust for our own children will be shaped by our fairness to other people’s children.”

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**AUTHOR PROFILE**

Mike Stone

Mike Stone has taught for over 40 years. Over this time he has been a classroom teacher for five years, a Special Class Teacher for eight years, a Resource Teacher: Special Needs for nine years and a Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour for eighteen years. He currently works in the Te Whirikoko RTLB Cluster. He has interests in family, forestry and feijoas.

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ABSTRACT

The issue of behaviour management is one that is consistently reported as a concern facing teachers in today’s classrooms. This study, which surveyed 110 teachers of Year 1 to Year 4 students, examined the behaviour management training teacher respondents had received both pre-service and in-service, as well as the behaviour management strategies they perceived as useful.

The results of this survey indicate a requirement for a comprehensive classroom behaviour management programme to be utilised (particularly for teacher trainees). This type of training can assist in ensuring that positive reinforcing skills and strategies are enabled to provide the best-possible learning environment for students and teachers alike.

Practice paper

Keywords:
behaviour management, behaviour strategies

INTRODUCTION

Classroom behaviour management (CBM) issues are a recurrent theme of concern for beginning teachers and more experienced teachers alike (Reupert & Woodcock, 2011; Oral, 2012). Teachers are more likely to request professional development (PD) in this area than any other (Townsend, 2011). Likewise, research conducted by Webster-Stratton, Reinke, Herman and Newcomer (2011) revealed training and support in managing difficult behaviour as teachers’ number one requirement. Correspondingly, Webster-Stratton (2000) estimates that as many as a quarter of all classroom children demonstrate behavioural problems.

Research shows that teachers are more likely to negatively perceive children who demonstrate behavioural problems (Webster-Stratton, Reid & Stoolmiller, 2008). This negativity makes it difficult for teachers to appreciate or recognise achievements made by these students. Consequently, these individuals are likely to receive less academic and social instruction, support and behaviour-specific praise (Webster-Stratton, Reid & Stoolmiller, 2008). Without this input, behaviour problems can escalate to more serious behaviour disorders (McLean & Dixon, 2010).

The success rate of behavioural interventions deteriorates as the age of the child increases. It is reported that, prior to school entry, behavioural problems as severe as Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) can be eradicated in 75 to 80 percent of occurrences (Church, 2003), whereas the most effective interventions introduced between the ages of 8–12 years have a significantly decreased success rate of 45–50 percent. Furthermore, abundant evidence indicates persistent and early-emerging antisocial behaviours during early primary school as predictive of young adult criminal behaviours (Duncan & Mumane, 2011; McLean & Dixon, 2010; Sturrock & Gray, 2013; Walker, Ramsey & Gresham, 2004).

Additionally, a lower level of academic achievement is linked with behaviour problems (Johansen, Little & Akin-Little, 2011). Children experiencing behavioural difficulties have more problems sitting still, focusing on the task, and answering or asking questions as necessary in the learning process. Subsequently, those experiencing these difficulties are less likely to complete high school or attend university (Duncan & Mumane, 2011).

According to Webster-Stratton et al., (2008), teachers lacking effectual classroom behaviour management (CBM) techniques experience higher levels of social, emotional and behavioural problems amongst the students in their classes. Conversely, they claim that teachers, who are trained in using a proactive teaching style, can play an important role in the prevention of behavioural difficulties, and can nurture the development of social and emotional skills by developing supportive and encouraging relationships with the students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Myers, Simonson & Sugai, 2011; Walker et al., 2004). These teachers maintain clearly-defined classroom rules, give explicit instruction in social skills and conflict management, give explicit instruction in social skills and conflict management, offer high levels of praise, demonstrate a move away from punitive responses, and are supportive to each student. “Having
a supportive relationship with at least one teacher has been shown to be one of the most important protective factors influencing high-risk children’s later school success” (Webster-Stratton et al., 2008, p. 472). This relationship-building is reported to enhance job satisfaction for the teacher (Dinham & Scott, 2000). Teachers who enjoy high quality relationships with their students reported 31 percent less behavioural problems over a school year than their colleagues (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Teachers who feel overwhelmed by the behavioural difficulties in their classroom can become emotionally exhausted (Pisacreta, Tincani, Connell & Axelrod, 2011; Stoughton, 2007). These teachers may find it difficult to be positive with students and may be overtly punitive in an attempt to cope with the challenges they face (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). A lack of suitable skills can lead to self-doubt, feelings of helplessness and, subsequently, a desire to leave the profession. Teachers who experience emotional exhaustion risk emotional impairment to themselves and their students (Dinham & Scott, 2000; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Johansen et al., 2011; Westling, 2010).

Internationally, a trend for high attrition rate amongst teachers is evident, with almost 40 percent of teachers leaving the profession within their first five years (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011; Webster-Stratton et al., 2011). Oral (2012) attributes the high attrition rate for beginning teachers to difficulties in CBM. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) report a correlation between teacher emotional exhaustion, a decrease in job satisfaction and an increase of teachers leaving the profession.

To prevent emotional exhaustion and a high attrition rate, importance should be placed on providing suitable CBM training for teacher trainees. While the aetiology of various forms of persistent behavioural problems are becoming better understood, any insights from the developmental sciences are not integrated well into teacher preparations (Pianta, Hitz & West, 2010). New Zealand research conducted by Johansen et al., (2011) revealed that only 16.2 per cent of respondents believed they had satisfactory training in managing behavioural issues. Teacher trainees reported their training to be too theoretical, with concepts being too far removed from the classroom (Atici, 2007; Reupert & Woodcock, 2010). Jennings and Greenberg (2009) reiterate this belief, stating that teachers are insufficiently prepared to provide the social and emotional development to successfully maintain effective CBM. Furthermore, Dinham and Scott’s (2000) survey undertaken in Australia, England and New Zealand revealed that, overall, teachers felt their training insufficiently prepared them for the workplace. Teachers understand the importance of possessing effective CBM skills; however, without training and support, most feel poorly prepared for the classroom (Atici, 2007).

This study examined teachers’ perceptions of: teacher training preparation in management of classroom behavioural problems, their utilised behavioural management strategies, and the usefulness of these techniques.

**METHOD**

**Procedure**

This research was undertaken utilising an online digital survey created using Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com). A list of school contacts was obtained from the Education Counts website (New Zealand Government, 2013). Seeking a sample size of 100 teachers, a total of 1,347 emails were sent to principals throughout New Zealand. Principals were invited, if they consented, to forward the survey link to teachers of Year 1 to 4 students within their school. The sample was not a direct representation of New Zealand teachers, as participants were selected in an on-response sample rather than stratified sampling. A descriptive statistics approach was used in the analysis.

**The Survey**

Questions for the survey were mostly selected and adapted from two existing surveys: the Teacher Classroom Management Strategies Questionnaire (The Incredible Years, 2012) and a questionnaire used by Johansen et al., (2011). The Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management (IYTCM) Strategies Questionnaire is administered to all participants of the IYTCM training at the commencement and the completion of the programme. The second questionnaire was provided by Dr Steven Little in response to a request for further information regarding the survey used for an article in the Kairaranga journal (Johansen et al., 2011).

Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and it was made clear that no identifying data would be collected. Participants then chose either to consent or to exit the survey. The survey consisted of 24 questions in total, 12 of which were optional comment boxes. The remaining were check boxes and Likert scales.

When constructing the survey, a conscious decision was made to not include questions asking teachers for perceptions of the racial or ethnic characteristics of children; these were deemed outside the scope of this study. This decision was made despite research indicating higher rates of conduct problems occurring with Māori children. It is teacher- perception of their personal confidence in managing these behaviours,
rather than the source of the behaviour, that is relevant to this study. Additionally, evidence suggests effective CBM strategies provide similar outcomes regardless of ethnicity (Sturrock & Gray, 2013).

Participants

Participants were 110 teachers of Year 1 to Year 4 students. The ‘average’ profile of responding teachers: teaches Year 1, has a Bachelor degree, and has been teaching for more than 15 years in a decile 6 school.

The majority (35.5%; n=39) of responding teachers have been teaching for more than 15 years, with 13.6% (n=15) having taught for 3 years or less. Correspondingly, 60% (n=66) of the respondents are aged 40 or above, of whom 7.3% (n=8) are aged 60 or older. The mode age band of the teachers is 40-49 years. The number of years teaching range is 40 years and the mean is 13 years teaching. All teachers in this survey teach students of Year 1 to Year 4. The majority teach Year 1 (30.9%, n=34) and the least Year 3 (16.4%, n=18).

RESULTS

Professional Development

Teachers were asked to identify professional development (PD) they had undertaken and to categorise areas of PD they would like to undertake in the future. The majority of respondents have received PD in curriculum-based writing (91.8%, n=101) and numeracy (86.4%, n=95). Interestingly, 64.6% (n=71) of respondents indicated having trained in a CBM programme: IYTCM (26.4%, n=29) or other CBM programmes (38.2%, n=42). Of the 26.4 per cent of participants who attended IYTCM programme, 34.48% (n=10) reported also attending another CBM programme. That considered, a total of 55.45% (n=61) of respondents have attended either one or more CBM programmes.

Even though 55.45 per cent of respondents indicated receiving PD in CBM, this PD focus was the most sought after by respondents (32.7%, n=36). Of the 32.7 per cent who indicated an interest in attending PD in CBM, 61.1% (n=22) have not attended PD in this field previously. Almost 20 per cent (19.7%, n=14) of those who have received training in CBM indicated an interest in additional training in this area (4.2 per cent of whom attended IYTCM training, 14.1 per cent other CBM programmes and 1.4 per cent who have attended both IYTCM and another CBM programme). In all, 75.4% (n=83) of respondents have either attended or expressed an interest in attending PD in CBM.

The teachers responding to this survey indicated high teacher confidence ratings in managing difficult classroom behaviour. Notably, this confidence increased by 14.7 per cent upon completing a CBM programme other than IYTCM, and by 17.25 per cent in those who completed an IYTCM programme. The data indicate no significant difference in teacher experience or decile rating in relation to these confidence ratings.

Classroom Behaviour Management

Teachers were asked how confident they felt managing general behaviour and difficult behaviour in their classroom. Additionally, they were asked how confident they felt in promoting students emotional, social and problem-solving skills. The responses to these questions are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Confidence in Managing Behaviour in the Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>General Behaviour</th>
<th>Difficult Behaviour</th>
<th>Promote Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Per cent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Unconfident</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconfident</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Unconfident</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Confident</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Confident</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority, 92.8% (n=102) of the teachers, indicated a confident or very confident rating in managing general behaviour and 70.9% (n=78) in managing difficult classroom behaviour. In differentiating general and difficult behaviour the very confident range drops from 44.5 per cent for general behaviour to 18.2 per cent for difficult behaviour.

However, 33.6% (n=37) indicated a lower-than ‘confident’ rating in the three questions relating to confidence in managing classroom behaviour. Of those 33.6 per cent, 16.2% (n=6) have attended an IYTCM programme and 29.7% (n=11) attended an alternative CBM programme. The median decile rating of this group of respondents is 6 and the mode is 4. Twenty one (56.8%) respondents indicated they would select PD in CBM.

The 37 respondents in the less-than confident category have a mean of 9.6 years of teaching experience, median=6, range=26, and a mode of first year teachers (13.5%, n=5). The total respondents (n=110) consisted of 15.8% (n=6) first year teachers, and 83.3% (n=5) of these first year teachers indicated a less-than confident rating in one of the three ‘confidence in managing behaviour’ areas.

Of those in the less-than confident group, 13.5% (n=5) felt confident in managing difficult behaviour, but did not feel confident in promoting emotional, social and problem-solving skills with their students. A total of 16.4% (n=18) of all respondents did not feel confident in this area, and 48.6 per cent of those who indicated another area of less-than confident also indicated a less-than confident in this area. Just 7.3% (n=8) responded to feeling less-than confident in managing general classroom behaviour.

When considering the confidence ratings for general and problem classroom behaviour, 71% (n=78) of teachers felt confident or very confident in managing behaviour (mean of 15 years teaching, median=12, and range= 40). However, 9% (n=7) of this group and 100 per cent of first year teachers reported feeling less-than confident or only somewhat confident in promoting emotional, social and problem-solving skills. Of the 71 per cent who felt confident or very confident in managing problem behaviour, 30.8% (n=24) have attended an IYTCM programme and 42.3% (n=33) attended another CBM programme. Interestingly, 23.1% (n=18) of these respondents indicated that they would like to receive PD in CBM. Half of the teachers who would like further instruction in CBM have previously had PD in this area.

Teacher Training Preparation

A significant percentage (60%, n=66) of respondents believed their training was less- than satisfactory in preparing them for managing behavioural challenges in the classroom (see Figure 1). Conversely, 5.4% (n=4 and 2 respectively) believed they received ‘efficient’ or ‘extremely efficient’ preparation for CBM. Thirty eight (34.5%) respondents gave additional comments for this question. Reference was made to: learning from personal experience in the classroom; erudition from personal failures and successes, and very little training in CBM. It should be noted, however, that these findings need to be interpreted with some caution as the average profile of responding teachers had more than 15 years experience.

![Teacher Training Preparation in CBM](chart)

**Figure 1.** Teacher Perception of Teacher Training Preparation for CBM

**Classroom Behaviour Management Strategies**

The purpose of this section was to gain an understanding of what CBM strategies teachers use, how often they use them, and how useful they perceive them to be. Each participant was able to select one of seven levels of use for each strategy, from ‘never’, through to ‘two or more times a day’.

Thirty-nine (35.5%) of the participants added additional comments in this section. Comments made here remark on the need to adapt your strategies to meet the individual needs of the child with the behavioural problem and not all strategies work with all children.

**Three most used strategies**

The respondents selected ‘encourage positive social behaviours’ (e.g., helping, sharing, waiting) as the most frequently used strategy; 76.4% (n=84) indicated that they used this strategy two or more times a day and 22.7% (n=25) used this strategy daily. This was also selected as the most useful strategy, with 83.6% (n=92) choosing the highest category of ‘very useful’ and 11.8% (n=13) selecting ‘quite useful’.

‘Give clear positive directions’ was selected as being
used more than twice a day by 75.5% (n=83) of respondents and daily by 22.7% (n=25); this was the second highest response rate. It is also rated second highest (equal with ‘praise positive behaviour’) in the usefulness category with 79.1% (n=87) rating this strategy as ‘very useful’ and 12.7% (n=14) rating it as ‘quite useful’. The third most frequently used strategy was ‘praise positive behaviour’ (including naming the positive behaviour receiving praise). This was selected as being used two or more times a day by 74.5% (n=82) of the respondents, with 23.6% (n=26) using this strategy daily.

DISCUSSION

Pre-service Teacher Training

As could be expected, first year teachers were more likely than other teachers to report a level of less-than-confident in CBM. Five of the six first year teachers reported feeling less-than-confident when dealing with problem behaviour in their classrooms. While this sample size of first year teachers is small, it reflects the findings of research undertaken by Dinham and Scott (2000) and Johansen et al., (2011).

Respondents commented that the absence of sufficient, effective training means there is a requirement for new teachers to learn CBM from personal experience, erudition from personal failures and successes, and from other teachers or mentors within the school. While is it well-accepted that a teacher’s preparation does not end when they complete their initial teacher education programme (i.e. learning to be a teacher is a life-long practice), unfortunately, if a new teacher does not find the support necessary to build the required skills and strategies, they may experience difficulties and develop ineffective coping strategies. This could result in an ineffective learning environment for the students and unhealthy stress levels for the teacher (Oral, 2012; Reupert & Woodcock, 2010; Stoughton, 2007; Webster-Stratton et al., 2008). To ensure effective strategies are utilised, training in CBM is required. Training can assist in creating positive reinforcing skills and strategies to provide the best possible learning environment for the students and teacher alike (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Walker et al., 2004).

Professional Development

This study indicates that teachers receive PD in writing and numeracy more than in any other academic area. Conversely, Townsend (2011) stated that teachers sought PD in CBM more than in any other field. This statement is reinforced by the current study results, with the largest percentage of respondents indicating a choice to obtain PD in CBM. This is irrespective of the fact that more than half of the responding teachers have previously received PD in CBM. Interestingly, almost 20 per cent of those who have previously completed a CBM programme indicated preference to complete another course.

Confidence in Managing Classroom Behaviour

Respondents’ confidence in CBM strategies is high. Interestingly, this percentage is higher again for those teachers who have completed one or more CBM programmes. The highest confidence rating came from those teachers who had completed an IYTCM programme. Data indicate no significant difference in teacher experience. Additionally, data collected show decile rating is not a mitigating factor associated with these confidence ratings either. Considering these factors, the researcher concludes that the CBM programmes are likely to contribute to teachers’ confidence in addressing challenging behaviours in the classroom.

Strategies: Frequency and Usefulness

Teacher management of personal stress is important in avoiding the futility and frustration of implementing insufficient, ineffective CBM skills and strategies (Webster-Stratton, 1999). Complications can occur when teachers become emotionally overwhelmed and do not possess the correct skills, strategies and attitude to positively face challenging situations. As the majority of the respondents indicated feeling confident in managing general and difficult behaviour in their classrooms, it is likely that many of these teachers have developed effective CBM strategies through their experience in teaching and PD attended.

The Most Utilised CBM Strategies

Three strategies were considered both very useful and are utilised more frequently than any other. They are: 1) Encourage positive social behaviours; 2) Give clear positive directions, and 3) Praise positive behaviour. These three strategies are affirmative and the consistent, frequent use of them is likely to be a strong contributor to the high level of perceived confidence in managing CBM (Webster-Stratton, 2012). Each of these strategies guides, teaches and encourages students to demonstrate and maintain positive behaviour in the classroom. There are another seven strategies (making ten in total) that were recorded as being frequently utilised by highly-confident responding teachers: 4) Use a transition routine; 5) Verbally redirect a child who is distracted; 6) Use non-verbal signals to redirect a non-engaged child; 7) Reward a certain individual for positive behaviours with incentives; 8) Use class-wide individual incentive programmes; 9) Use persistence or emotion-coaching, and 10) Have clear classroom rules and refer to them.
**Misrepresented Strategies**

Interestingly, the strategies ‘send notes home about positive behaviour’ and ‘call parent to report good behaviour’ are used infrequently. However, comments made signal that the results may be deceptive. Many teachers, especially teachers of Year 1 students, reported face-to-face contact with parents on an almost daily basis, which negates the need for written notes or phone calls home. The respondents rated the usefulness of these two strategies identically, with both receiving 84 per cent in the ‘useful’ to ‘very useful’ category. Respondents therefore may consider using this strategy if face-to-face contact was minimal.

Additionally, the strategy ‘teach students anger management strategies (e.g. turtle technique, calm down thermometer), while predominantly being classed as useful to very useful, is also seldom used. Comments suggest some strategies are not applicable for all students. Techniques that are utilised need to reflect the current social needs of the students in the class. If anger issues are not a behavioural challenge experienced in that particular classroom, then it is not appropriate for the teacher to consistently use this strategy. In the same tenet, ‘use time out’ and ‘teaching rest of class to ignore student in time out/calm down’ are seen as useful strategies, but are not regularly implemented. The data indicate that the majority of respondents use these strategies, when required, congruently – as anticipated by Webster-Stratton (1999).

**Limitations of the Study**

As with any study of this kind, there are limitations which need to be considered when interpreting the findings. These include the composition of sample (predominantly respondents with 15+ years teaching experience) and the relatively small sample size. This sample is not a direct representation of New Zealand teachers, as participants were selected in an on-demand basis for establishing regulating strategies and supporting relationships.

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this study has highlighted the need for additional training for trainee and beginning teachers in CBM. This type of training is important for establishing safe, effective and successful learning environments for students and their teachers. Teachers and students alike require strategies for dealing with behaviours encountered on a regular basis in the school environment. While teachers require strategies for effectual CBM, students require the security and boundaries those strategies establish. Additionally, both teachers and students require the strategies in regulating their own behaviour and their reactions to others within their environment.

Likewise, relationships between teacher and student benefit from co-operation and consistency in establishing regulating strategies and supporting relationships.

**REFERENCES**


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Curriculum as a Vehicle for Agency in Gifted Learners
Madelaine Armstrong Willcocks

ABSTRACT
Student agency is a hot topic in education in New Zealand at the moment. Future-focused learning and innovative learning environments seem to focus on student agency, but what does ‘agency’ actually mean? What does it look like for gifted students? And how do teachers develop it in their students?

In response to these questions, this position paper reviews the concept of student agency from an empirical base, asserts that curricula can be used to develop and support student agency, then looks at one example of a specialist curriculum for gifted learners that intentionally supports student agency.

Position paper

Keywords:
curriculum, gifted learners, student agency

INTRODUCTION
Student agency is inherent in the vision of the New Zealand Curriculum: “Young people who will be confident, connected, actively involved, and lifelong learners.” (Ministry of Education, 2007). It has been identified as a top trend in New Zealand education (Core Education, 2014; 2015), and is often noted as a goal for innovative learning environments (OECD, 2013). In numerous education-focused blogs and websites, student agency has been variously linked to ideas of ‘voice and choice’, having the power to act, self-management relating to e-learning, visible learning, and personal empowerment. But looking beyond the blogs and the buzz words, where does the concept of student agency come from and what does it really entail? This position paper will outline concepts around student agency as relating to gifted learners. More importantly, this position paper asserts that curriculum is the primary vehicle for developing agency in gifted learners and it will outline curriculum principles that support this.

WHAT IS STUDENT AGENCY?
Agency is defined in varied ways across a range of disciplines and is often most simply described as “… the socioculturally mediated capacity to act.” (Ahearn, 2001, p.110). Student agency refers to what a student thinks and does in a particular context at a particular time, and is, therefore, fluid, dynamic and subjectively experienced, rather than a fixed state of mind or an innate orientation to learning (Charteris, 2014; Dutva & Aro, 2015; Priestley, Biesta, Phillippou & Robinson, 2016).

Although the idea of student agency seems bound up with future-focused learning and innovative learning environments, it is not new. Dewey (1916) for instance, describes learners ideally as agents involved in determining their own outcomes. Agency is particularly relevant within gifted education, with concepts of self-direction and autonomy inherent in frequently espoused goals and curricula of gifted education (for example, Treffinger, 1975; Betts & Kercher, 1999). Agency can be considered as a concept closely related to that of motivation, which has long been associated with gifted students and is identified as a key factor in a range of conceptions of giftedness. Renzulli’s (1998) three-ring conception identifies task commitment, or motivation, as essential for the demonstration of ‘gifted behaviour’. Gagne’s Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (2012) holds that gifts (natural abilities) can be transformed into talents (exceptional achievements) through a process that is moderated by personal and environmental influences, including motivation.

When viewed as a conceptual whole, there is only limited empirical evidence to suggest that agency influences student achievement. However, Gibbs and Poskitt’s (2011) review found compelling evidence that conceptual components of agency, specifically self-efficacy, self-regulation and relatedness, impacted on achievement. Particularly in relation to gifted students, a sense of agency appears to be essential for high achievement. Mudrak and Zabrodska’s (2015) multiple case-study of nine gifted young adults in the Czech Republic concludes that:

“The [gifted] participants who showed the highest level of achievement and motivation in early adulthood perceived themselves as ‘agents of their learning’ and made sense of their extraordinary outcomes as resulting from effortful, proper, and self-directed practice.
Our findings indicate that a sense of agency is critical to maintaining gifted-level achievement through adolescence” (p.55, emphasis added).

Four inter-related concepts underpin the idea of student agency: self-efficacy, self-regulation, autonomy, and relatedness. These four concepts have been drawn from Bandura’s social cognitive model (2008), Ryan and Deci’s (2000) self-determination theory and Siegle and McCoach’s (2005) Achievement Orientation Model. Each of these elements will now be briefly reviewed in turn with a focus on intellectually gifted learners, selecting literature from empirical research from an educational perspective with gifted learners, along with theoretical research with relevance to gifted learners and broader conceptual work where relevance to gifted students could be implied.

**Self-efficacy**

Academic self-efficacy is “… beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of actions required to manage prospective situations” (Bandura, 1997, p. 2). Self-efficacy beliefs are the most central element of student agency as they influence, and have an influence on, cognition, motivation and emotion (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy beliefs are specific to task at hand within a specific context, not more broadly globalised.

Self-efficacy beliefs influence a range of behaviours including attempting a task, putting effort into a task, persistence with a task, time spent on learning, willingness to continue in the face of difficulty, and range of actions taken (Rubenstein, Reis, McCook & Burton, 2012). These behaviours are linked to intellectual engagement more so than compliance with teacher directives (Hempel-Jorgensen, 2015).

Self-efficacy beliefs develop from four sources. In order of strength of influence from strongest to weakest, these are: perceptions of direct experiences; vicarious experiences (i.e. noticing the actions and accomplishments of others); persuasion, and physiological or emotional arousal (Bandura, 2008). Direct experience of success is more a powerful source of self-efficacy beliefs than persuasion, which appears to be the most commonly-used educational strategy. In terms of classroom application therefore, positive self-efficacy beliefs emerge in response to opportunities to take on challenging tasks, with appropriate supports that enable success (Burney, 2008).

Research supports the idea that gifted students inherently have more adaptive self-efficacy beliefs than non-gifted students. For example, in an early study, Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1990) investigated the self-efficacy beliefs relating to maths and verbal abilities of 90 gifted students and 90 non-gifted students in the US. They found that gifted students’ self-efficacy beliefs in these areas were significantly higher than non-gifted students’, concluding that, “These self-efficacy findings provide empirical support for anecdotal evidence that gifted students display extraordinary academic motivation and self-confidence” (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990, p. 57).

Conversely, it could be assumed that gifted students who also have learning, emotional, psychological or behavioural difficulties, that is, ‘twice exceptional’ students, show lower academic self-efficacy than non-twice-exceptional gifted students. However, Wang and Neihart’s (2015) multiple case study of six twice-exceptional adolescents in Hong Kong found otherwise. These students expressed positive self-efficacy beliefs, which they largely attributed to their prior academic achievement, a strengths-focused programme, their high interest in their chosen area, and the strong external support from teachers, parents and peers. These findings clearly demonstrate the critical role of direct experience, coupled with appropriate educational and social supports, for building adaptive self-efficacy beliefs.

**Self-regulation**

Self-regulation is “… the degree to which students are metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally proactive regulators of their own learning process” (Zimmerman, Bandura & Martinez-Pons, 2009, p. 664). The ability to self-regulate directly draws upon a learner’s self-efficacy beliefs in order to set personal goals, to commit to taking action to achieve those goals, and to manage motivational states, the environment and social interactions as those goals are worked towards. Self-regulation, like self-efficacy, is highly contextually-specific and thus variable depending on the context.

As with self-efficacy, self-regulation develops through experience. Specifically, with regard to gifted students, Burney (2008) notes that the ‘easy success’ often experienced by gifted students is not conducive to them developing self-regulatory skills. Therefore, a related difficulty facing gifted students in developing self-regulation could be the lack of appropriately challenging material (Ruban & Reis, 2006).

**Autonomy**

Autonomy is a fundamental psychological need, and is “… the need to be self-determined and to have a choice in the initiation, maintenance, and regulation of an activity.” (Miserando, 1996, p. 2003). It is also often a stated goal of gifted education (for example Betts & Kercher, 1999; Treffinger, 1975). Siegle, Rubenstein and Mitchell (2014) are among others who note that many school environments fail to allow autonomy in many respects. However, teachers can very simply enhance autonomy in their
programe to: offer meaningful choices and appealing to student interests (Schraw, Flowerday & Lehman, 2001). These are not by any means the only ways, as Phillips and Lindsay’s (2006) multiple case study of highly-able students in the UK noted; highly-able students experienced greater autonomy by being allowed to work at their own pace, to conduct independent research, to find and use creative options, and to present their learning in varied ways. Gifted students’ perceptions and experiences of autonomy are understandably varied (Miserando, 1996), and these perceptions and experiences influence self-efficacy beliefs (Lüftenegger et al., 2015).

Relatedness

Relatedness is the only explicitly social element of agency. The need for relatedness is “... the need to feel securely connected to others and the need to experience oneself as capable and worthy of love and respect” (Miserando, 1996, p. 203). Peer relatedness seems essential for gifted students, as Zimmerman and Martínez-Pons (1986) found that high-achieving students used peer support in learning twice as often as low-achieving students. For teacher-student relatedness, an autonomy-supportive relational style has been noted as important; this style including teacher empathy for students, acknowledgement of feelings and providing choice (Reeve, 2006; Baeten, Dochy & Struyven, 2013).

TAKING ACTION TO DEVELOP STUDENT AGENCY

Bearing in mind that student agency is about what a student thinks and does in the particular context, it is important that classroom contexts are specifically oriented toward teaching for enabling agency. Words like ownership, responsibility, engagement, goal setting, and mindset are often used in relation to the question of how to develop student agency. It is simply not enough, however, to encourage students to be agentic, to give them permission to be agentic, or even to nag them into being agentic. Whilst a positive step towards enhancing agency is through specific instructional actions (Vaughn, 2014), a critical underpinning in these instructional actions is direction from curriculum. It is the fundamental position of this paper that curriculum is a primary vehicle for supporting student agency. Each of the four elements of agency discussed here can be directly influenced by the actions that teachers take through their enactment of curriculum.

The New Zealand Curriculum directs schools to design and review their own localised curriculum based on the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007; Education Review Office, 2011). Further, carefully planned and implemented provisions for meeting the needs of gifted students are recommended both nationally and internationally (Education Review Office, 2008; Riley et al., 2004; Ministry of Education, 2012). VanTassel-Baska (2003) is among others who describe the logical rationale for a curriculum specifically for gifted students:

- All learners should be afforded opportunities to achieve to their fullest potential (Ministry of Education, 2007)
- Gifted learners have different cognitive, social, cultural and emotional needs to typical students, and therefore require a curriculum that is specifically differentiated to meet these (Ministry of Education, 2012)
- These needs are best served by a differentiated curriculum that involves challenge, acceleration, enrichment, sophistication, novelty, relevance, advanced content and higher order thinking (Clark, 2013; Hertberg-Davis & Callahan, 2013; Van-Tassel-Baska & Brown, 2001; 2007).

One example of a localised curriculum for gifted learners that specifically aims to develop and enhance student agency is the New Zealand Centre for Gifted Education Curriculum for gifted learners (New Zealand Centre for Gifted Education, 2015). Like the New Zealand Curriculum, the New Zealand Centre for Gifted Education Curriculum is guided by a set of principles that link the broad vision of the curriculum to how it is formally enacted in a school. The principles of the New Zealand Curriculum “… put students at the centre of teaching and learning, asserting that they should experience a curriculum that engages and challenges them, is forward-looking and inclusive, and affirms New Zealand’s unique identity” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 9). Similarly, the principles of the NZCGE curriculum are learner-centred and provide the foundation for specialised curriculum decision-making.

Four key principles of the NZCGE curriculum clearly support student agency and demonstrate how curricula can inform teacher actions to promote student agency.

- The principle of personalisation: To support student agency through personalization, teachers can personalise learning opportunities by providing choices in content, product and process, teach students how to make appropriately challenging and stimulating choices, uncover students’ interests and use these to frame learning opportunities. Mudrak and Zabrodka’s (2013) multiple-case study research found that high-achieving students who reported exercising agency said that they were able to follow their own interests and that their interests were an important part of their emerging identities.
- The principle of challenge: To support student agency through challenge, teachers can provide
optimally challenging and stimulating learning experiences with advanced, complex content, teach with clear scaffolding to support to achieve success within these, and directly teach methods of self-regulation (behavioural, motivational and metacognitive). Stoeger and Ziegler (2010) maintain that self-regulatory strategies are easily directly teachable. Along with direct teaching, classrooms need to operate in a ‘high-trust’ model (Moore, 2017) using effective pedagogies (Ministry of Education, 2007), so that students can exercise their self-regulation.

- **The principle of collaboration:** To support student agency through collaboration, teachers can explicitly teach skills needed for relatedness, (student-student, student-teacher, student-teacher-family), provide multiple and diverse opportunities for collaborative skills to be used in context, and directly highlight and discuss like-mindedness.

- **The principle of strengths focus:** To support student agency through a strengths focus, teachers can use the strengths, interests, talents and passions of students to direct teaching and learning. This supports engagement and, in turn, progress and achievement. A strengths focus links clearly to developing self-efficacy beliefs, self-regulation and autonomy.

A student’s sense of agency, and their exercise of agency, is not a fixed attribute; rather, it is sensitive to time, place and context (Charteris, 2014). Within the NZCGE curriculum then, progress over time can be in part demonstrated by students through their increasing self-directedness in the pursuit and application of learning. This translates into practice as moving from reliant on teacher for direction and organisation to fully autonomous, based on Treffinger’s (1975) model of self-direction. Through these understandings of what progress might look like, teachers are able to continue, in the longer term, to take action to develop and support growth in student agency.

**CONCLUSION**

This position paper reminds educators that student agency, or “… the socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn, 2001, p.110) is fluid, dynamic, contextually-specific, and subjective. It is not a new idea, despite its current links with future-focused learning and innovative learning environments. When viewed as a concept related to motivation, student agency has a clear relationship with concepts of giftedness and therefore gifted education. Student agency has even been suggested as a critical element in the achievement of gifted students (Mudrak & Zabrodka, 2015). In examining the four key concepts underlying agency, self-efficacy, self-regulation, autonomy and relatedness, we see relevance for gifted students. In supporting students to develop and experience agency in classroom contexts, it is not enough to remind, prompt, encourage or nag students. Teachers should primarily use the most powerful vehicle for change available to them - curriculum. Given the broad scope of the New Zealand Curriculum, coupled with its call to develop localized curriculum to meet the specific needs of groups of learners, the New Zealand Centre for Gifted Education has developed a curriculum for gifted students in New Zealand. This curriculum is underpinned by a set of principles that specifically support the self-direction and autonomy of gifted students, whereby using curriculum to develop agentic gifted learners. Curriculum can and should be used to develop agency in our learners.

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AUTHOR PROFILE

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DIVERSITY IN COMMUNITY: INDIGENOUS SCHOLARS WRITING

EDITED BY DR MERE KĒPA AND DR CHERYL STEPHENS

Reviewed by: Diana L. Amundsen

If you are looking for a quick and easy read to find out how a community of Māori and indigenous scholars has developed since the early 2000’s, then this book does the trick. In nine succinct chapters, 11 prominent indigenous scholars tell their personal and professional story of how they came to belong in a thriving and transformative community. Diversity in Community: Indigenous scholars writing is a colourful collection of pieces that illustrate the power of working together across boundaries, institutions and disciplines with a common purpose.

The community shares a commitment to making a transformative difference for Māori and indigenous academics by addressing the disparities in Māori participation and success in tertiary education. Despite the diverse range of experiences – which are a taonga (gift) for readers – a cohesive voice continually chimes of how loneliness and marginalization are gradually replaced by comradery, laughter and academic re-charge in this community. Informative insights are provided into the origins and development of the national Māori and Indigenous Graduate Enhancement programme (MAI) which perhaps has not been thus far understood by the wider academic community. The national MAI programme was established for “the enhancement of Māori and indigenous post-graduate students throughout Aotearoa New Zealand” (Te Kupenga o MAI, 2017, p.1). We are also taken behind the doors to some of the 17 International Indigenous Writing retreats (IWR) organised by Nga Pae o Te Māramatanga, Aotearoa, New Zealand’s Māori Centre of Research Excellence.

The editors create a concise and compelling picture of courage and commitment. When it became clear that the Taupō 2015 writing retreat was to be the last of its kind, this community of scholars decided to pass on their stories in a Māori and indigenous way in a book. Māori concepts were chosen and given to each author (other than Linda and Graham Smith) as their chapter theme. As a result, this book honours experiences and outcomes from past writing retreats and leaves a legacy for future generations.

The list of contributors is impressive, beginning with Linda Tuhiwai Smith who writes the foreword. In the first chapter, Waiora Port asks the question, “He aka te tika, what is ethics?” concluding that Māori being bilingual, bicultural and educated means they can decide which chair to sit on and be at ease. Next, Graham Hinengaro Smith comprehensively overviews the evolution of the MAI and SAGE programmes and the vision of 500 Māori PhD graduates within five years. His chapter is followed by Josie Keelan’s, who explains the place of whotūmanako or manawa ora (hope) in academic endeavour.

In Chapter 4, Pauline Harris reflects on her own transformative journey from student to researcher as the first Māori candidate to graduate with a PhD in astrophysics, highlighting the importance of ako, teaching and learning. Co-editor Cheryl Stephens contributes Chapter 5 and demonstrates the power of the tua-kana/teina, senior/junior in creating a Māori writing space, not just for her personally but for other Māori graduate students. Co-editor Mere Kēpa artistically links the spirit of pono (truth) to academic writing endeavours in her chapter. It is refreshing to read Linita Manu’atu’s heart-felt Chapter 7 which provides a Tongan migrant’s perspective of the international indigenous writing retreats. She documents her ideas about tonanga (movement of a group of people with a common purpose) and makes the point that theories about Pasifika migrants’ education abound, but theorising by Pasifika migrants has been dominated by colonisers.

Next, Beth Leonard connects her theme of whakahihiko (inspirational recharging) to her Alaskan native Shageluk tribal word, dinayetr (breath; belief system). She explains the influence and inspiration of the networking at the international writing retreat,
citing her introduction to well-known Māori scholars such as Wally Penetito as key. Leonard is inspired by Māori as “one of the most successful examples in the global content” (p. 70) of indigenous people to effectively negotiate Western systems of education and governance. Lastly, in Chapter 9, the theme of katakata (humour) is crafted by Fiona Te Momo and Huia Jahnke. These authors describe the notion of katakata as a source of well-being and release for Māori and indigenous scholars who often deal with “harsh realities of ignorance and racism … that are reinforced through oppressive institutional structures and systems” (p. 90).

Not only do we gain a sense of history and origins of how and why this diverse community came together, but we also glimpse future issues under discussion. Pauline Harris poses an interesting question: “… in a society where we see a projected population of 50 percent Māori and Pacific Islanders in 50 years’ time, how will these children be catered for in the academic environment of the future?” (p. 39).

Considering that this book is strongly concerned with enhancing Māori and indigenous graduates’ writing, it may have added a valuable perspective to include current student voice. In addition to contributions from the array of proven academics, doctorate holders, deans, professors or those well-recognised in their own fields, readers may have benefitted from the perspectives of developing or upcoming doctoral students. Perhaps this presents a tuakana/teina opportunity in which each of the current contributing authors collaborate with or mentor an upcoming scholar from their community to produce a second edition.

However, the stories in this edition make for a captivating read and show how each scholar became a better writer, researcher and wise sage by being part of this diverse community of indigenous scholars. This book adds to the conversation around the continual struggles by Māori, indigenous and some open-minded Pākeha academics for cultural, social, political and educational equality. Not only is the book inspiring for indigenous scholars, but importantly, it adds to the body of knowledge of the situation being faced by Māori, minority groups and non-traditional scholars in the tertiary education system.

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Ko Mauao tōku maunga
Ko Wairoa tōku awa
Ko Tauranga tōku moana
Ko Ngāti Pākeha me Ngāti Aotearoa ōku īwi
Ko Mason tōku hapū
Ko Diana Amundsen tōku ingoa

Diana Amundsen is currently conducting a doctoral project entitled “Ngā Huarahi e Taea: Pathways to the Possible”, which researches Māori student voice about transition experiences to tertiary education. Her research is supported by the Bay of Plenty Tertiary Education Regional Partnership as well as the Tauranga Moana īwi and their associated hapū. Diana is a current Te Whai Toi Tangata (Institute of Professional Learning) doctoral scholarship holder as well as the winner of the 2016 TEU Crozier Scholar award.

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DECOLONISATION IN AOTEAROA: EDUCATION RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

JESSICA HUTCHINGS & JENNY LEE-MORGAN

Reviewed by: Bevan Erueti

Jessica Hutchings and Jenny Lee-Morgan begin their compilation with an acknowledgements section stating that their book “has been inspired by the many kaupapa Māori thinkers, writers, teachers, activists and theorists who have forged a strong pathway for kaupapa Māori in education, research and in our communities of practice” (p. vii). Although the statement is descriptive, my succinct interpretation is that it lives up to every word – it is ‘inspirational’, the outstanding list of ‘contributors’ are revered in each of their respective fields of ‘education’, ‘research’ and their ‘communities of practice’, and most pertinently, it sits comfortably with previous literary works to assist in ‘forg[ing] a pathway for kaupapa Māori’.

The foreword ‘Keeping a decolonising agenda to the forefront’ (p. xi) compiled by Linda Tuhiwai Smith suggests that a decolonising approach gives focus to “the history, colonial processes, ideologies and institutional practices that structure the relations of power between indigenous people and settler society” (p. xi). The result is that each chapter addresses the tensions between policy discourses, knowledge paradigms and practices, and challenges the myth of New Zealand as a respectable place for indigenous development, by identifying the unequal relations of power that structure Māori educational experiences.

For me, the unique factor of this book is that each of the contributors were invited by the editors to present their notions, beliefs and experiences of decolonisation via the genre of pūrākau. The result is a “critical, fresh and inspiring” (p. vii) way for Māori (and non-Māori) to think about what is relevant and important for decolonisation and Māori education in Aotearoa, as perceived by the personal narratives and reflexivity of each author. This makes the editorial very engaging, remarkably easy to digest, but most importantly reveals the personal lived experiences of how specific aspects of education, research and practice have created discomfort and strategies for change. The essays provide ‘footprints’ for those interested in the critique and establishment of an ongoing rationale for resistance to protect Māori values, language and matauranga Māori in Aotearoa.

Appropriate acknowledgement in their initiatory segment is given to Ranginui Walker (Whakatohea) whom passed away February of 2016. The Māori community at large would unanimously agree with Hutchings’s and Lee-Morgan’s definition of this rangatira as “one of the most significant Māori academics of our time” (p. vii). His contribution to their anthology is perhaps one of his last academic publications and fittingly features as the opening chapter of the book. Titled ‘Reclaiming Māori Education’, his pūrākau gives an overview of some of the key historical moments in the colonisation of Māori education in Aotearoa. E moe e te rangatira … we miss you.

The book is sensibly organised into the three key themes as indicated in the title of book vital to both kaupapa Māori and decolonisation - education, research and practice. The first section examines education as a site of colonisation and decolonisation, and features a familiar discourse involving assimilation; a critique of the ‘gaps’ rhetoric; constitutional change and neo-liberalism. Yet it also provides a refreshing examination of unfamiliar topics, including a critique of the normalisation of Christianity implicit in tikanga Māori; a personal pūrākau regarding the reclamation of tribal knowledge for Waikato-Tainui; a recent research project of three marae-a-kura in Auckland secondary schools; a reflexivity of ‘becoming’ by Takawai Murphy (Ngāti Manawa, Ngāti Ruapani ki Waikaremoana, Tūhoe, Ngāti Kahungunu) who developed and delivered his programme ‘He Pumaoma: A Nation-building Workshop’ and presented more than 1,000 seminars over the course of 20 years; and is concluded by Veronica Tawhai (Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Uepohatu), describing the

The second segment explores kaupapa Māori in action, with a focus on research which features three essays. The first, provided by Leonie Pihama, argues that research is culturally, socially, economically and politically bound, reminding us of the false neutrality and objectivity often claimed by Western research methods and approaches. Secondly, Mera Lee-Penehira (Ngāti Raukawa, Rangitāne, Ngātaerangi) gives focus to the relationship between colonisation and research, and how we set about designing research in a way that maintains independent indigenous research frameworks in the Aotearoa context. Lastly, Ānetā Hinemihi Rāwiri (Ngāti Rangi, Ngāti Hine, Ngā Puhu) shares her pūrākau about her experience of decolonising research with Whanganui iwi.

The final part in the book centres on kaupapa Māori in action, with a focus on practice. This part contains a diverse collection of pūrākau from the contributors that range from decolonisation and Māori maternities, Māori Television, food knowledges, and a Māori perspective of menstruation.

Overall, the editors have provided a breadth, depth and diverse array of topics from a range of Māori educators, researchers, intellectuals and activists, yet conscious that they “have only touched the tip of the iceberg” (p. 14). The use of pūrākau instils a sense of courage to remember that powerful storytelling mechanisms provide a repository of narratives – taonga if you will, that assist in generating, supporting and disseminating knowledge about Māori heroes and heroines and well-known people from various whānau, hapū and iwi and te ao hurihuri. The writing of pūrākau is no easy feat. On the contrary, Hutchings and Lee-Morgan describe it best when they state that:

Pūrākau are well-crafted, thoughtful narratives to effect engagement. Additionally they are highly contextual and depend on the storyteller, topic, purpose and audience. In this regard, some authors in this book have not only chosen to position themselves as writers, but to reposition the writing in their worlds. Others have foregrounded their voice, and some have remained within the confines of a conventional format to ‘write back’. Each has formulated their narrative in their own style to engage the reader in critical thinking and deep reflection, with the aim of inspiring action. (p. 6)

As the reader processes each pūrākau, one cannot help but absorb and engage in a critique that inspires the action needed to improve, challenge and stimulate transformation to retain Māori knowledge, belief systems and values within the fields of education, research and practice in Aotearoa.

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