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OTAHUHU PRIMARY SCHOOL

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- Inequality of Student Achievement
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EDITOR
Liz Hawes
Executive Officer
PO Box 25380
Wellington 6146
Ph: 04 471 2338
Fax: 04 471 2339
Email: esm@nzpf.ac.nz

MAGAZINE PROOF-READER
Helen Kinsey-Wightman

EDITORIAL BOARD
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CONTENTS

MARCH 2016

OTAHUHU PRIMARY SCHOOL, AUCKLAND

EDITORIAL

Liz Hawes EDITOR

AS I WRITE this column an OECD report has just emerged praising New Zealand teachers for being amongst the most professional in the world. In fact we are rated fourth out of thirty-five participating countries. A significant difference between New Zealand teachers and the rest is that teacher professionalism is just as outstanding in socio-economically disadvantaged schools as in socially advantaged schools.

The Minister acknowledged this fact saying that no matter what school children attend in New Zealand they all have access to great quality teaching. The report did note however that New Zealand teaching professionals could be better served by having more networking and collaborative research opportunities. Principals would add that having more professional leadership support would also make for higher quality school performance and boost student success. Sorting out the mess that is special education in New Zealand would further enhance the prospects of many more students and curbing child poverty would almost immediately turn cohorts of struggling learners into achievers.

That said the OECD report is a substantial endorsement of New Zealand's public schooling system. The message for Government from this research is to get behind our great education system and make it even better. New Zealand is a small country, with a small population. Our Ministry of Education cannot be spreading its attention and resources across multiple schooling options and expect to do a good job for them all. It needs to focus on one major system and work on strengthening that. It is obvious that our public schooling system is the one that deserves its attention.

NZ Principal has published numerous stories about schools in New Zealand. We have talked about the diversity of initiatives that are implemented by schools responding to specific community learning challenges. Such a story outlining the unique approach taken by Otahuhu Primary School appears on p.10 of this issue. I am sure that if Otahuhu School principal Jason Swann was invited to have a say, he would be asking the Prime Minister to address the issues of poverty, inequity, housing and employment for the families of his community so that he and his outstanding team of professionals could concentrate fully on their core work of teaching. How wonderful if all of his children arrived at school ready to learn, rather than so many turning up hungry, thirsty and cold. How wonderful if all of his children remained at the school from year one right through to year six rather than families having to move all over the Auckland region chasing more affordable rents. How wonderful if all of his children lived in a single family house instead of sharing a house with three families. And how wonderful it would be if he could spend all of his time and energy leading his school and its fantastic team of teachers and support staff rather than spending so much time begging his business community to stump up for the next school initiative, whether that is the swimming programme, rock climbing, a school camp or some other learning experience for the children.

The question is, **HOW PREPARED** are we to **EMBRACE MULTI-CULTURALISM** in New Zealand?

Schools like Jason Swann's are grateful that the corporate world gives generously to help feed and clothe their children and support so many other school programmes that benefit his children. Corporate sponsorship is however a two-edged sword. It demands questions of the state's on-going commitment to provide free education for the people of New Zealand. Corporate sponsorship also comes with branding and all the ethical dilemmas associated with marketing directly to children. You can read more about the ethics of corporate sponsorship in a research report by Robert Aitken of Otago University on P.29 of this issue.

Otahuhu School's ethnic mix is a poignant reminder that New Zealand society is multi-cultural. The Pākehā-European proportion of Otahuhu School's roll is three per cent. Samoan and Tongan students each make up 26 per cent and the Indian cohort is now approaching 20 per cent. Māori children make up 16 per cent of the roll and a mix of Asian, African and others make up the rest. Many more Auckland schools from the North Shore to South Auckland record minority percentages of Pākehā-European on their rolls too.

The question is, how prepared are we to embrace multi-culturalism in New Zealand? The NZPF executive felt there was a precursor to this question and asked, 'How prepared are we to embrace bi-culturalism in New Zealand?'

Two years later, NZPF has answered that question by developing an initiative in partnership with Te Akatea Māori Principals' Association and the Ministry of Education called the Māori Achievement Collaborations (MACs). This is a PLD programme for principals, by principals and supports mainstream school principals to nurture a bi-cultural environment in their schools so that Māori students can succeed as Māori. You can read more about this programme on P.6 of this issue.

Principals and teachers have a history of being innovative and solving problems so that children everywhere can have a fair go. It's great that the OECD has recognised this and given the New Zealand teaching profession its well-deserved world class ranking.

PRESIDENT'S PEN

Kia ora koutou katoa

Iain Taylor NATIONAL PRESIDENT, NEW ZEALAND PRINCIPALS' FEDERATION

IT IS A privilege to be elected President of NZPF. You come in as steward for a year, with the power of thirty five years' of predecessors' wisdom and insight weighing in behind you. Many of these former national leaders are revered for their courageous and creative leadership, for their foresight and sharp political intuition and always motivated by wanting more for the kids in their schools. It is humbling to know you follow in the footsteps of such distinguished colleagues. It inspires you to represent your own contemporaries as they did with fairness, transparency, intelligence, acumen and all the enthusiasm and motivation you can muster. As your current president, I may never reach their remarkable heights but will certainly aspire to make you and them proud.

On the subject of predecessors, I acknowledge immediate past-president Denise Torrey. I thank Denise for her energy, persistence and focus in advocating for much needed support for principals in their school leadership roles. Highlights of her presidency will be remembered as securing funding to advance our Māori Achievement Collaborations (MACs) and in advocating for a Principal Leadership Advisory (PLA) nation-wide. Although we have not yet secured a system-wide PLA service, Denise was instrumental in the appointment of the first three positions in Northland, East Coast and Southland. As your new president I look forward to continuing this important work with both the MACs and the PLA service.

The role of principal is complex. We are experiencing challenges and system changes that require us to take on extra responsibilities, often without support, time or necessary resources, to better meet the needs of our children. We rise to these challenges because we are passionate and we strongly believe that every child deserves a quality public education. We care about making a difference for children and about strengthening our profession and we want our schools to continually do better. Included in our schools are some of society's most vulnerable citizens. In a democratic society, I believe we have a moral duty and a right to speak out publicly on their behalf if we believe any Government policies are not serving them well. We must be a voice for change and for social justice. This means that we have a responsibility to speak out not just on education issues but also on issues that affect children's wellbeing. Issues like insufficient family income, unsatisfactory housing arrangements and social inequities are major obstacles that can prevent young people from taking full advantage of the learning opportunities we provide in our schools.

To deliver quality education requires a quality system and a well-supported profession.

The two are intricately linked and the lynch-pin holding them together is us. We are the ones with the first-hand knowledge and experience about what works best for the system. We also know what kind of supports our school leaders require to do their jobs well so that they in turn can become the mentors of future leaders, thus building capacity within our profession.

As your elected national president, I therefore see my role as the interface between our profession, Government and the Ministry. My job is to advocate on your behalf for systems that are workable, relevant

To deliver **QUALITY EDUCATION** requires a **QUALITY SYSTEM** and a **WELL-SUPPORTED PROFESSION.**

and responsive. To do this work well, it is also necessary to understand education in the widest sense. It is important to see and understand the 'big picture'.

In recent years we have lost our grip on the 'big picture' partly because education is not anchored in any agreed statement of purpose. That is why we plan to debate 'the purpose of education' at our Moot in March. With an agreed purpose statement we believe many unwelcome policy decisions could be avoided.

My commitment to you is that I will work on your behalf to advance existing leadership support initiatives, which are led by principals, for principals, to strengthen our profession. I will develop strong relationships with all political parties so that policy decisions can be made with the input of our professional and pedagogical knowledge and experience. That way policy will reflect the real needs of the children we teach every day.

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TE ARA HOU
– MĀORI ACHIEVEMENT COLLABORATIONS (MACs) SET TO FLY

Liz Hawes EDITOR

ONE OF THE great highlights for NZPF in 2015 was the Minister's announcement that Government would fund a Te Pītau Mātauranga or National Co-ordinator position for our Māori Achievement Collaborations (MACs) and continue to fund the very popular MAC programme. Hoana Pearson, formerly principal of Newton School in Auckland, was appointed to the position. What is unique about the MAC programme is that it is culturally transformational, and was designed by principals for principals with a view to supporting Māori children in our schools to succeed as Māori.

Nathan Mikaere Wallis educates his audience at the Hui

Hui participants soak up some cranial wisdom from Nathan Mikaere Wallis

The idea that our education system has never been sufficiently receptive to Māori learners has long haunted politicians, education professionals and Māori communities. Māori education has drawn a number of responses throughout history. Nineteenth century educators subscribed to the notion that Māori were singularly unsuited to academic endeavours and should be guided into labouring and agricultural work because they were most likely to hold a working class position in society for many years to come. Simultaneously, Māori language, teachings and practices were forbidden in the school environment and in the main eradicated from common usage.

Unhappily, these attitudes are the legacy which followed Māori into urban mainstream schools in the twentieth century. This era showed no more signs of enlightenment for Māori students than we saw in the previous era. Deficit theories abounded so that Māori children not succeeding were described as somehow lacking skills or capability for learning. Many were exposed to interventions which unsurprisingly made little if any difference, except to remind Māori children that they were not good enough to succeed. Māori children's schooling experiences did fulfil one social expectation however – to further entrench the position of Māori at the lower end of the social scale.

In the twenty-first century, as a growing body of research developed in our universities and polytechnics through the disciplines of Māori studies, sociology, educational sociology and social anthropology, researchers began to uncover the processes by which so many Māori had come to take their place in New Zealand society as educational and social under-achievers. One key hypothesis promoted through this scholarship was that Māori children in schools where their Māori identity and cultural practices are accepted as normal and valued alongside Pākehā culture will achieve higher levels of success than where a single Pākehā culture exists. In other words where both Māori and Pākehā world views are adopted as legitimate and valid, both races of children will flourish and learn.

A political light was shone on Māori in 2008 when the newly elected Government stated its determination to lift school success for Māori through the introduction of a system of national standards. Most principals were sceptical that national standards would achieve this outcome, but they did applaud the goal.

Meanwhile, very good publications such as Ka Hikitia, the Māori strategy, Tātaiako, the cultural competencies and Tū Rangatira, the Māori guide for leadership were developed by the Ministry of Education and distributed to schools across the country. Every one of these publications expressed elements that could lead to positive cultural change for schools, transforming them into bicultural entities in which Māori children's learning could blossom. Regrettably, instead of being put to work to transform school culture, these publications were shelved to gather dust in principals' book cases because they were not

Hoana Pearson the newly appointed Te Pītau Mātauranga for the MAC programme

accompanied by any form of professional learning support, leaving principals with no guidance as to how to implement them.

What was missing amounted to a mechanism by which schools could incorporate an additional world view, a Māori world view, into their school culture. Urgent action was needed and NZPF seized the challenge. After two years of reflecting and planning, NZPF together with Te Akatea, the Māori Principals' Association, and the Ministry of Education launched the concept of the Māori Achievement Collaborations (MACs).

A set of **VALUES** underpin the **COLLABORATIONS** including **COURAGE, HONESTY, TRUST, RESPECT** and **COMMITMENT.**

MACs are a professional development programme, developed for principals, by principals and delivered to principals by principals. They have been operating now for two years. Te Ara Hou is the term used to define the Māori Achievement Collaborations (MACs) and broadly means 'The new pathway'.

The overall aim of the MACs is to take willing principals on a cultural learning journey which changes their hearts and minds. The guiding principle driving the MACs is whānau and whānaungatanga, which at its simplest level refers to a web of inter-relationships. It is about relationships at many levels, connections, commitments and responsibilities. A set of values underpin the collaborations including courage, honesty, trust, respect and commitment. These are necessary for principals joining collaborations because all participants confront their own cultural beliefs and values and in turn become open to examining and accepting the validity of another world view, a Māori world view. It can be a personally confronting experience and having the trust and support of colleagues who are on the same journey is critical.

Each collaboration or cluster has a facilitator, a principal who 'walks with and beside the participants'. These facilitators visit the schools of participants and help them develop strategic and

Motu ki Owae Marae, Waitara, where the second MAC hui wānanga was held

action plans. They also facilitate full-day cluster workshops at each of the participant's schools, provide professional development for staff and contribute to an annual hui which participants from all clusters attend.

After two years, the whole programme has been reported on and independently evaluated by a group of Auckland University academics. The programme has emerged in the brightest of lights, showing convincing signs it is making a positive difference. This has given the Minister confidence that the MACs have a future in transforming our school cultures and providing an environment within which Māori students can succeed as Māori.

The MACS were established prior to the concept of Communities of Learning (CoLs) and those original MACs will continue unchanged. In future, principals who might already be members of a CoL can join an existing MAC as well. Further, if all the participants of a new CoL decide to have Māori student achievement as one of their achievement challenges, they can access the MAC programme as a whole group, providing that their principal leader is trained as a MAC facilitator. There are no barriers to joining the programme, only a willingness to embark on the journey.

Up until now, we have not had the guaranteed funding to be in a position to expand the programme, despite a deluge of inquiries. Now that we do and have appointed Hoana as Te Pītau Mātauranga, we can expand.

If you or your regional association think the MAC programme is what you have been searching for then find out more. Contact Hoana Pearson: hoana.pearson@nzpf.ac.nz mob: 021 0664 152.

A growing number of New Zealand primary and middle schools are successfully integrating Cambridge programmes into their school curriculum.

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While independent schools in New Zealand typically offer Cambridge Primary and Cambridge Secondary 1 as an alternative to the New Zealand curriculum, an increasing number of state primary, extended primary and middle schools are looking to these Cambridge programmes to support and supplement their NZC-based school curricula.

Cambridge Primary and Cambridge Secondary 1 complement a range of teaching methods and curricula. No part of the Cambridge curriculum is compulsory, giving schools the flexibility to choose the elements that are right for their learners.

One Auckland state school says: "It is crucial to give our students the very best start educationally and the Cambridge Primary curriculum allows us to provide programmes that are vibrant, challenging, specific and can be tailored to the individual needs of our increasingly diverse community. Cambridge Secondary 1 continues

the journey, allowing students to build on their skills in core curricula whilst developing their capacity as learners before they progress to their senior years."

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Image: detail of a honeycomb.

OTAHUHU PRIMARY SCHOOL

Liz Hawes EDITOR

Kia ora, Talofa Lava, Fakaalofa Lahi Atu, Malo e Lelei, Kia Orana, Bula Vinaka, Namaste, Hao Ha, Greetings!

WELCOME TO THE richly diverse, multi-cultural, Otahuhu School community.

Our Minister of Education, Hon Hekia Parata, repeatedly reminds us of her singular goal of raising the achievement of priority groups. She identifies these groups as Māori, Pacific Island, low socio-economic and special needs, including those for whom English is a second language. By this definition, Otahuhu Primary is packed with priority students. The Minister continually reminds us that one in five children in New Zealand is failing and the failing children mostly occupy these four identified groups. Does this mean then that Otahuhu Primary School is brimming with failing children?

Absolutely not! A tour of the pristinely ordered school grounds quickly confirms that Otahuhu Primary is a place of deep pride, where cultural diversity is positively celebrated. You get the feeling that if failure walked in the school gate here it would be hard pressed to find a friend. Multi-cultural artistry shouts loudly and colourfully from every corner. It is obvious that the 530 Otahuhu Primary School children take great pleasure in knowing who they are and where they are from. The art works, some professionally created and others generated by the children themselves, speak simultaneously of dignity and delight. A back-wall mural succinctly captures the essence of the school describing it as 'A Meeting Place for the Children of the World'. Some have affectionately referred to the school as 'a little United Nations'. It's a noble concept engendering feelings of warmth, family cooperation, sharing and celebrating together. I want to know how this very welcoming and inclusive environment translates into children's learning and how you bring these different ethnic groups together whilst respecting the individual differences. I seek out principal, Jason Swann to explain.

Jason Swann is a poised, quietly spoken man, respectful and sincere. He bids you welcome a nanosecond before

The fabulous Mutukaroa, landmark learning partnership Team


ROOKLYN
89

Another little girl ever so proud of her beautiful work

Gardens like these create beauty and pride at Otahuhu

his smile ushers you in. Impeccably dressed, he presents as the consummate professional. You might assume he was expecting the Prime Minister to pop in at any moment. He settles down to tell his story.

'As a new principal [at Otahuhu Primary School] I made the point that as leader I am a servant of the community,' says Jason. 'That means I open the school up to the community. It is their place,' he says.

Forging links with the community is critical to the success of Otahuhu School. There are martial arts classes, band practices, Church services and the Police next door use the school grounds for training.

'There is hardly a night or weekend that there isn't some community group using our school,' says Jason, 'and during the week we have a lot [of people] in and out too. Parents come and go at any times of the day – you don't make appointments for family,' he said, 'We are 'open-door'. I'm on duty every day because people are more important than the paper work!'

The purpose of opening the school doors to community activities, explains Jason, is to make the school a hub or centre of the community. It's about building strong relationships which in the end means the children benefit. If school is a familiar place to parents, they will feel comfortable talking to teachers and other staff of the school. That is important at Otahuhu because for so many immigrant parents struggling with a new country, culture and language, school could become just another foreign entity to struggle with. By bringing the community inside the gates, parents soon learn that the school is an embracing place, filled with resources to help them as well as their children. It's a two-way street. Connecting with the community also means the community supports the school. The parents are very willing helpers on school trips and very generous with their time. There is no expectation of payment for many school activities because 'We just want people to come along and be part of us,' says Jason.

'We are all part of a big team and as principal I have a lot of hats to wear,' he says.

'Making sure staff and children are physically, emotionally and spiritually happy is the most important of all. When people come to work happy they are more willing to 'have a go' especially if they know there is a culture of safety if things fail,' he said.

'When you walk through our gate, you walk into an island of excellence,' says Jason. 'Every day, the children 'come home' to this island of excellence'. If they have had a bad morning they know it will be okay because inside our school there are people who care about us.'

Care for each other is enshrined in the school values which are based on 'having heart'. 'Everyone knows what that is,' says Jason. The school values spell out the word. They are honesty, excellence, attitude, respect and tolerance and are replicated in every classroom of the school. They are the glue connecting staff students and families.

'At the centre of everything is the child,' says Jason, 'and we connect with different children through different experiences. Our job is to find those connections and our teachers do a fantastic job of that,' he says proudly.

Without doubt groups of Otahuhu children present with learning challenges that are different and according to Jason, need to be responded to in a way that fits their particular context.

This back-wall mural says it all

Buddies in the playground

It's not like taking a solution off the shelf and applying it. At Otahuhu there are many different ways that the school addresses learning and cultural challenges.

One of them is providing bilingual units. 'Our two biggest ethnic groups are Samoan and Tongan,' says Jason and in recognition of these cultures, and in celebration of their identity we have a bilingual unit for each and a Māori bilingual unit. These are regular classrooms delivering bilingual programmes alongside our mainstream programme. Our Māori bilingual unit is very popular with almost all of our Māori students taking advantage of the opportunity,' he says. 'We have strong support from our Samoan, Tongan and Māori communities to run these units,' says Jason.

Another response to children's learning challenges is the 'Multiple opportunities to learn programme'.

This programme is built around literacy, numeracy and the New Zealand Curriculum but has different ways of delivering these subjects. For example each term children in this programme will have at least two '*Education Outside The Classroom*' (EOTC) experiences. Being outside the classroom might be as close as the school grounds, somewhere in the local environment or further afield. The idea is to give the children new experiences to talk about, reflect on, be questioned about and eventually write about. Some of the children have few opportunities for new experiences or to have rich conversations about their surroundings so this programme hugely stimulates those children and their natural curiosity. It also provides teachers with an opportunity to build on connections with the children and for the children to make stronger connections with their teachers, a key to successful learning.

Every year four student receives a dictionary sponsored by the Rotary Club of Otahuhu

A second initiative is 'The Horizons Group'. 'We run a Horizons Group to expand the kids' horizons,' says Jason. These are activities that they are experiencing for the first time.

'It might, for example, be rock climbing,' he says. 'There are set criteria to be accepted into the Horizons Group and the kids have to apply. They learn how to promote themselves and of course how to follow an application process. One of the criteria is making our place a better place so they are not just thinking about themselves but what they can give back through their new experience.' Finding new learning channels through experience, helps these kids to engage and focus better. It provides context they can relate to which teachers can use across many curriculum subjects.

continued pg.16

Showing off our excellent work book at Otahuhu

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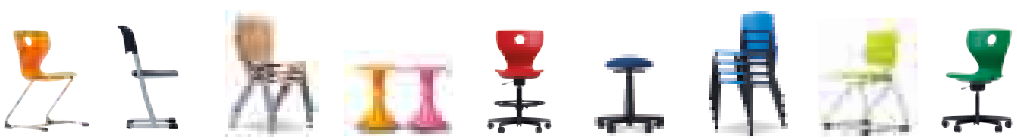


Decades of Class photos adorn the walls of the Administration block

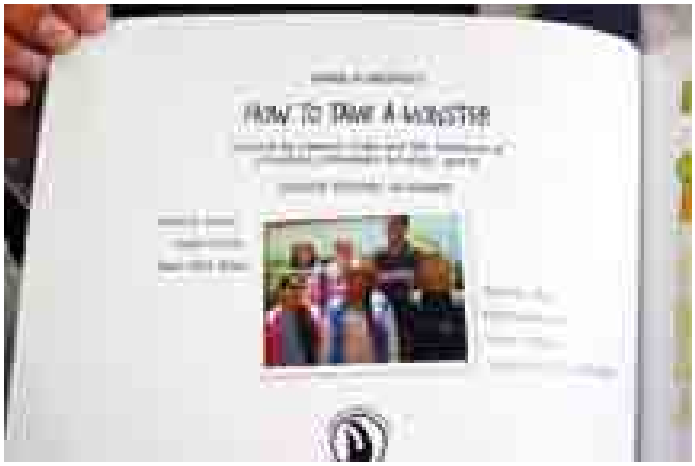
Kids of many different nationalities learn a Māori action song

Other Horizons Group activities have included a cruise on Auckland harbour, under the Auckland harbour bridge, and on to the Ports of Auckland and the Maritime Museum, finishing up with a scavenger hunt. 'We took sixty kids on this trip and fewer than ten had ever been on a ferry,' said Jason. 'If kids don't have experiences, they have no language to fall back on,' he said.

Jason openly acknowledges that the school's assessment data points to the fact that there are children whose learning challenges require more than just the experiences on offer through EOTC and the Horizons Group. 'Some actually need an accelerated learning programme,' he says, 'and we have the parameters in place to make that happen.'

For these children, Jason is referring to a unique community learning partnership programme called 'Mutukaroa'. This is about working with parents and whānau for the first three years of their child's schooling to help them understand how their child is progressing and to learn how to help their child at home. It is hugely demanding on resources with three staff dedicated to making it succeed. The Mutukaroa Coordinator meets with the parents of this cohort of children on a regular basis. The parent chooses where that meeting will occur, when and at what time of day. It may be at school or at home or at a local café or the parent's workplace. If necessary, a translator will accompany the coordinator to the meeting.

It's about using parent-friendly language whilst helping parents understand what assessment data means and extrapolating from that, what the child's next learning steps will be. The coordinator is likely to bring samples of the child's work, running records and any other teacher assessment data to the meeting to illustrate how the child is progressing. An hour-long learning conversation ensues after which the parent sets two targets to work on at home. Notes from this meeting are shared with the classroom teacher who will be made aware of the home targets set. Ten weeks later a further meeting is arranged to review progress. The parent has an evaluation to complete before this meeting which is returned to the school.



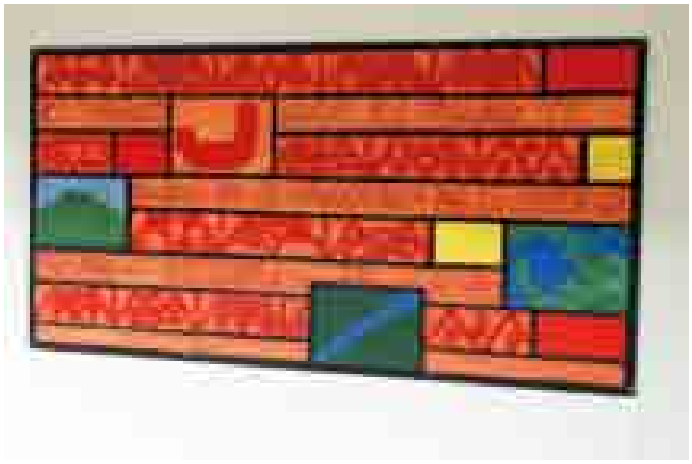
The children who created a book with the help of Vasanti Unka, author in residence

Parents are well supported during the ten-week period while working on learning targets at home. They are not left to their own devices. Noeleen Fox-Matamua, the Mutukaroa Coordinator ensures they remain connected with her team and can contact a school coordinator to talk about their child's learning at any time. The whole programme is designed to support learning-focused relationships with parents. It is to give parents the confidence to talk on an equal basis with teachers about their child's learning.

Many parents do not have the resources in their homes to help their children meet the learning targets set, so Noeleen covers that too. Her energetic team make the resources including letter and word games, flash cards and reading books which are delivered to the families to keep. Leaving these resources in the home has a flow on effect for younger children in the household who are much more likely to arrive at school already prepared for learning.

A well-documented 'reading together' programme is also available for parents. 'There is an art to reading to children,' says Jason, 'and through completing the 'reading together' programme parents learn how to help their children in their reading. They learn how and when it is appropriate to give their children prompts and they learn strategies for reading, but most especially, they learn how to enjoy reading with their children. It is confidence building for parents and great for the children. Parents attend three sessions each week and they choose the times that are convenient to them either in the morning, mid-afternoon or in the evening. On completion of the course there is a graduation ceremony. 'This is a big celebration,' says Jason, 'because for some of my parents it may be the first time they have ever graduated in anything!'

Alongside the 'reading together' programme is the 'reading in schools' programme. 'We have boys from King's College who arrive in taxi vans when they have a free period, to read one on one with our kids,' says Jason. 'It's another wonderful community connection and we have had ex King's College students who



A colourfully displayed mihi

Celebrating Samoan culture at Otahuhu

have gone on to train as teachers, ask to return to our school to complete their practicum work.'

'From time to time, in the evenings, we also run curriculum evenings for parents in reading, writing, and science,' says Jason. 'It is an opportunity for the children to share their learning with their parents. It may be a science experiment, or talking about something they have found out. All parents take home a resource pack from these evenings,' he says.

There are a lot of extra-curricular activities to cover and a lot of extra resources to prepare. Thanks to the outstanding dedication and commitment of his staff Jason is able to maintain these programmes.

'My staff are a fantastic bunch who live our school motto 'Outstanding Performance and Service' in all we do, all we say and all we are,' says Jason. 'They work these long hours and run these extra programmes because they know the children's learning will benefit,' he says.

At Otahuhu, Jason is battling a number of social issues too. Transience is one issue affecting many of his families with housing and employment being the main issues. 'In some cases we have multiple families living in one house and if a family is lucky to be allocated a housing corporation house they may have to move away from the school area. These are factors we can't control,' he says, 'We can only do our best when the children are here.'

Otahuhu the multi-cultural school

'The school provides breakfast and lunch for all children who need it, fruit in school, milk in school and KidsCan are wonderful sponsoring shoes, rain jackets and pants,' he says. 'So that's cold, hungry and thirsty solved.' Jason believes that New Zealand schools are fantastic at solving issues. 'If there is a problem for our community, we will find a solution,' he says.

There is one more problem for Jason's school community and that's oral hygiene. This time it's the Rotary Club of Otahuhu that helps out.

'The Rotary Club supplies every one of our children with a toothbrush and toothpaste every term,' says Jason, 'And like clockwork, the next term, another 530 toothbrushes turn up.' The children keep these toothbrushes at school and brush their teeth every day after lunch.

The Rotary Club's help doesn't stop at toothbrushes. They also supply every year four child with a dictionary to take home. Further, they help sponsor the 'Author in School' programme, where a resident author, chosen from a list provided by the National Library, the New Zealand Book Council and the Otahuhu Library, helps the children to create books from stories that the children have written themselves.

'Vasanti Unka was our resident author,' says Jason, 'and the Rotary Club and New Zealand Book Council funded the sessions.'

The children's stories were based on the school values of honesty, respect and excellence. When it came to printing the books more generous assistance came from the school's Konica Minolta representative, Aletta Manuofetoa, who organised the printing and publishing of the books.

The book launch was held in the Otahuhu Library with the Rotary Club and Otahuhu Principals' Association hosting it.

'The Library was packed with parents,' said Jason, 'and all of the kids involved in the writing of the book were given a free copy to take home. It was a tremendous celebration for all of us,' he said proudly.

There are many more celebrations and learning experiences for the children of Otahuhu Primary School including Language Weeks, cultural festivals, music festivals, singing and dancing.

Jason Swann indeed wears many hats, as principal of the growing Otahuhu Primary School. He acknowledges that he and his staff are constantly on the look out to improve their practice and provide their children with even greater learning opportunities. There is always room for improvement, he says, but kids failing? Not at this school, Minister.

INEQUALITY OF SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR JOHN CLARK
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, MASSEY UNIVERSITY, PALMERSTON NORTH

THE INEQUALITY OF school achievement has been highlighted in recent articles in *The New Zealand Herald*, and rightly so, for it is one of the biggest problems confronting the country today and shows no signs of going away.

The debate about what is to be done and why, is long on solutions but very short on causes, yet it is the causes which have to be understood if interventions are to have any reasonable chance of success in significantly reducing the inequality captured by the expression 'the long tail of school underachievement'.

Many have contributed to the debate – politicians, policy-makers, academics, teachers, principals, commentators and parents – but in the end only one person really counts when it comes to doing anything about it where it really counts: the Minister of Education.

Peter Fraser understood this, and got it right. Hekia Parata understands this too, but from her recent *NZ Herald* article that 'socio-economic factors are often overstated' it would seem she is getting it all wrong.

This is extremely serious, for it is the Minister who, with the authority of the cabinet and the support of the Government, sets the policy and determines the allocation of resources to implement policies. If she gets it wrong then far too many children will suffer the consequences in later life – long after this Minister has departed the scene.

The Minister's thinking is captured by a dualism of within/beyond school factors. The beyond school factors focus on 'the impact low socio-economic factors have on student outcomes' but 'these factors are often overstated'. The within school side contains things such as the quality of teaching and the quality of school leadership. Now, few would deny that teachers and principals make a difference, good ones especially. But whether they make 'the biggest difference to a child's education' is questionable.

It is clear enough that when children start school they bring with them enormous differences in what they can and cannot do. Some can read and others cannot, some are able to count and others not, and so on. They bring their beyond school differences through the school gate into the classroom. When the differences are distributed across children according to their social class, gender, ethnicity or more recently by family income, such that some groups of children do well (Pakeha) and other groups of children do poorly (Māori) then differences become inequalities.

When we hold equality to be fundamental, of equals being held to be equal, then inequality takes on an ethical dimension of righting a wrong. To achieve equality may require treating unequals unequally such that the least advantaged are to be advantaged sufficiently to gain equality (but this does not mean identical houses, cars or holidays – how odd that the Minister should think this).

The Minister's initiatives to address what she has elsewhere called the 'achievement challenge' are all within school remedies which are somehow meant to be solutions to beyond school causes. The causes are nation-wide yet the initiatives are largely local – charter schools, investing in educational success and the like – and even where they are not, as with national standards, they remain firmly locked into the within school side of things. The beyond school factors tend to be largely ignored as being non-educational therefore not the business of education. So resources continue to be poured into educational initiatives, a whole raft of them where over time some come and others go with no appreciable effect on the inequality of school achievement.

But the Minister thinks otherwise, for she quotes NCEA statistics which indicate

improvement. Not a good move in light of PISA results which in 2012 painted a very different and depressing picture – down in the international rankings for reading, mathematics and science and still one of the widest range of scores between our highest and lowest achievers. The government has no control over PISA but manipulation of NCEA results is a different matter. It would do our children a disservice if the goal of 85 per cent passing NCEA level 2 by 2017 was made to happen for political reasons.

If the Minister is determined to tackle the achievement challenge then she must step outside of the dualism and start to see things along a continuum from the most proximal (closest to the action) to the most distal (the furthest away). Most immediate would be quite specific things like parents reading to their children and the things teachers say to children while at the other more general end are the policy decisions and their funding made by the government and implemented by state agencies through regulation and fiat as well as the actions of business directors and executives over job availability and monetary differentials paid to employees and themselves.

Then the inequality of school achievement could no longer be seen as just an educational matter but one which stretches right across the fabric of a very unequal society where this schooling inequality sits alongside the many other social inequalities (income, health, welfare, housing, etc) which, like a web, keep all in place. Only when the inequality of the web as a whole is addressed can the inequality of school achievement be significantly tackled.

Is there a way forward, from within education? Surprisingly there is, but not as the Minister intended. Recently she released a discussion document on updating the Education Act 1989. It contains a number of proposals for raising educational achievement. All are within school solutions and so like all the others they too are bound to fail. It is not in what is proposed that the answer lies, but in what the Minister excludes.

In the last exclusion lies the answer. She wrote: 'Matters that are not part of this consultation include . . . changes that would increase government spending on education.'

This is good news. Spending on education will be on within school solutions which will not put a dent in the achievement challenge. What will are beyond school initiatives which lie along the continuum. Since these are not of an educational nature, then there is no restriction on changes that would increase government spending on non-educational policies such as employment, taxation, family support, health, welfare and so on which are the primary causes of the inequalities which children bring to school and impact the most on school achievement.

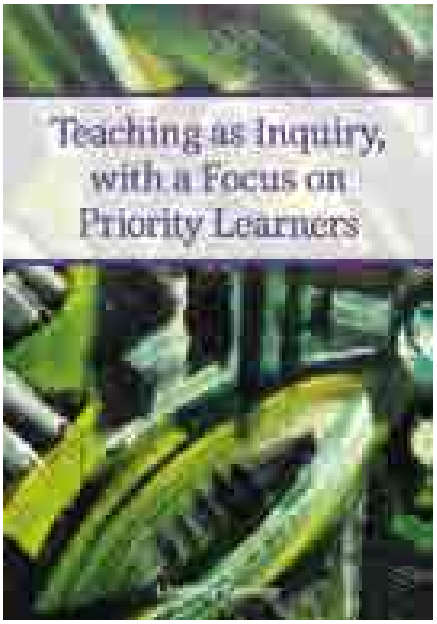
It would be nice to think that before too long she will be knocking on Bill English's door requesting him to revise his policies and reorient his spending priorities to bring about one of the great transformations of education (and society) since that shaped by Peter Fraser's deep commitment to equality of education some 80 years ago.

Somehow I doubt that she will use the opportunity to do so and thus children will continue to tread the same path of school achievement inequality as children in the past and will continue to live unequal lives in an unequal society until such time as a Minister of Education not only has a dream of better things to come but also has the full support of colleagues in the interests of creating a far more equal society for all.

THE CASE FOR TEACHING AS INQUIRY

LINDSEY CONNER UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

TEACHING AS INQUIRY (TAI) as an integral part of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. It is a key part of teaching and self review processes, but many find it difficult to manage, because it feels too big – or they just don't know how to start. It seems that in some schools teachers are just expected to critically reflect on their practice, as if this somehow this equates with TAI. It does not! There has been confusion about what TAI actually is or can be. This confusion has often been perpetuated by how TAI has been introduced in schools. Is it evidence-based teaching? Is it professional learning or is it researching your teaching or what? Most teachers in New Zealand know we need to start the learning process with what the learner knows and what their strengths and needs are, but how do teachers manage this to inform everyday actions as well as to inform professional learning and development? And how will undertaking teaching as inquiry actually help students who have disruptive behavior, complex needs, or impoverished histories? TAI was central to the methodology of a large Ministry funded PLD project. Secondary Student Achievement (Mau ki te ako) PLD has worked in over 47 secondary schools from New Plymouth through to Invercargill since 2012 (Conner, 2015). What we have learnt so far in the Secondary Student Achievement (Mau ki te ako) (SSA) is that TAI is more effective when a moral imperative has been clearly communicated and when challenges are discussed as part of the ongoing development of TAI.



The moral imperative for TAI

In the SSA project, the purpose of TAI is to redress inequity and to enhance the quality of teaching and learning simultaneously. It is positioned as a way of improving the life chances for priority learners because these groups are under represented in the NCEA achievement data, they have lower retention rates in the education system, and they are more likely to leave school with fewer qualifications (Ministry of Education, 2012).

In this PLD intervention, subject-specific facilitators support leaders and/or teachers to create learning programmes and lessons that will inspire students and generate high-level engagement. By responding to the differentiated needs of students, teachers change an aspect of their teaching and observe and evaluate a range of outcomes for four to five priority learners, to keep the scope manageable. Priority learners include; Māori and Pasifika students, students with special education needs, those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and English-language learners (ELLs). Now in its 4th year of implementation, teachers/middle leaders are collaborating in teams within schools and inquiry clusters across schools. Our focus in 2016 is to identify the advantages of such collaboration and how the facilitators enable changes within these clusters as they focus on student needs.

Any professional learning should benefit individuals, groups or schools by enhancing the quality of educational outcomes. We are obliged to make this happen. Therefore undertaking TAI must result in improved educational outcomes. Renewing and extending teacher knowledge, skills and thinking can occur through individual or collaborative efforts as Timperley et al, (2007, p.xiii) indicate between the 'student, teacher and organization'. This means there has to be 'learning both ways'.

Challenges related to TAI?

One of the challenges when introducing TAI is that some teachers confuse it with models of children's inquiry learning. An important word in the trio, teaching as inquiry, is as i.e. teaching as a curious activity. To elaborate further on describing TAI, Halbert and Kaser (2012, p. 4) write:

> Inquiry is not about the pursuit of the perfect question or the next exciting project. It is about being open to new learning and taking informed action. Innovation is not about sprinkling initiatives like pixie dust, hoping they will stick nor is it about what is new and groovy. Innovation is about recognising that old forms are not working for all learners, identifying what the key needs of our learners are, and then creating new forms based on knowledge about what does work.

TAI is an approach to teaching—not an add-on or something extra that teachers are expected to do. When implemented as part of teaching, it supports teachers to be more effective in planning, teaching and reflecting on what they do, because it requires a specific focus or decisions and actions. TAI is more of a focused mindset towards teaching, where students' needs are central and refinements to teaching are continuous (Conner, 2015, p.1). It requires using evidence of learning progress for particular students to design next steps related to these students'

identified needs. Often these needs are context (and content) specific. This is understandable when student needs come first, since student needs (even for the same student) are highly likely to vary in different learning situations.

In the SSA project, both oral and written success stories from teachers, facilitators and leaders provide examples of TAI to share (Conner, 2015). Success stories often relate to using more structured literacy tools embedded within specific content or contextual situations, more structured feedback to students by giving them hints and specific instructions about what to do next, using digital tools, more structured formative assessment, the inclusion of culturally responsive approaches and actively seeking children's opinions about how they learn, to inform actions. But when focusing on specific children, as this model promotes, teachers need to be aware that solutions may need adapting and refining if they intend to transfer them to other situations.

Although improving outcomes for children is the primary motivation for teachers, teacher change through TAI as professional learning, requires deep intellectual and emotional investments from teachers, and it *takes time* (Timperley, 2011). Teachers will have different previous experiences and capabilities related to evidence-informed and evidence-generating practices. This means different teachers may need different levels of support for TAI, which is not necessarily considered in PLD within schools.

One of the challenges was to describe the contextual similarities and differences amongst the schools. We know from multiple international studies (e.g. Schleichner, 2013) that context is important for realizing the potential of pedagogies and their transfer to other contexts. Therefore there is a need to understand the context characteristics of the learning environment including the learners so that both successes and challenges can be identified.

The same can be said about content. Seeking conclusions about effective pedagogies usually doesn't take account of how appropriate the pedagogy is for learning specific content. Teachers and learners teach and learn something and there are specific approaches for particular content. This need is addressed in the SSA model by making use of subject specialists. Often teachers told us 'they don't know what they don't know' and 'you can always learn new ways of doing things'.

Ongoing support is considered an important enabler so that teachers are motivated to be persistent with continuous professional learning. After all, not all teachers are self-starting nor do they necessarily have the knowledge or skills they need. In terms of curriculum redesign, they may not know what possibilities they can choose from and they may not have access to research on how to use evidence to inform practice.

School leaders may be able to provide this knowledge, but again leaders may need to seek external help and facilitation to provide such information. On-going facilitation and support is likely to be necessary but the need may fade as teachers become more confident. The challenge for schools is finding staff who are willing and have the skills to coach and mentor others.

While success stories are useful, as examples of changes in teaching and students' outcomes, the generation of them was most useful for the teachers, leaders and facilitators who created them. It is perhaps the process and the elements of the success stories, i.e. the situations, actions and outcomes in combination that make them powerful.

Meeting the needs of priority learners

The New Zealand achievement challenge is well documented. Our Honorable Minister Parata has indicated that investing in the profession and leadership provides the best opportunity to address this achievement challenge. This is supported internationally by OECD commentary such as Schleicher (2013, p. 10–11) indicates that:

> Designing and developing innovative learning environments to meet such ambitions requires highly demanding teaching repertoires and for everyone to keep learning, unlearning and relearning. Continuous learning of all players and partners is a condition of successful implementation and sustainability . . . Deep shifts in mindset and practice and the capacity to keep the long-term vision in view are needed when the aim is transformation, even if the starting point may be incremental.

Inspirational teaching seeks to assess a child's needs individually and works with what each child knows already and what they are interested in. Ideally caregivers and members of the wider community also contribute to a wider understanding about children's needs. The latter point is often not emphasized or valued enough. Good teaching affirms children's successes and enables them to identify what they need help with. We found that when teachers take time and care for individuals' progress, that some of the challenges in managing disruptive behaviour, identifying complex needs or supporting children from impoverished backgrounds, dissipate.

The subject facilitators also develop and refine teachers' and leaders' understanding of cultural competence. For example, facilitators supported teachers to make sense of what the five cultural competencies (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2010) mean for specific actions in their learning areas and to develop curriculum materials to support some of these actions. This is an ongoing area of development.

The senior leaders commented on the difference between teachers who had only just begun and those that had a couple of years' experience with TAI. Therefore not only was time needed for initially conducting TAI but there was a developmental aspect that needs to be taken into account for implementing more effective TAI. Teachers within any school will be at different stages of development and ease with risk taking and using evidence for reflective practice. In very few cases, changes in teaching have immediate and obvious effects on student outcomes. However, when teachers sought evidence of how outcomes had changed, they became more convinced that their efforts were worthwhile.

All the teachers interviewed in the case study schools commented on the importance of having a supportive school culture to make it safe for them as professionals to take risks in changing their teaching. When this developed, discussing the good alongside the not so good, became less risky. Developing a 'learning together' culture enabled teachers to gain confidence and competence with TAI. It is fair to say that the teachers' capabilities and capacities to mentor others, to reflect and refine practice within and across the schools are still emerging.

In *Teaching as Inquiry with a focus on priority learners* (Conner, 2015), the case studies illustrate how TAI was implemented at a school level and how leaders used specific levers to enable this. In general, teachers gained agency in their ability to make changes that were focused and manageable with four or five

students. Teachers got on board much quicker with TAI when the subject facilitators supported them. Other enablers included school-wide processes such as providing time within the school day for discussions and linking TAI to school appraisal processes. This was viewed in some schools initially as a 'stick'. Therefore how TAI is valued alongside the moral imperative to improve learners' outcomes is extremely important. Role modelling by leaders was also received well when senior leaders participated in TAI themselves. It also alerted leaders to some process and organizational issues that could be modified.

Summary

In the first three years of this initiative the teachers, leaders, and facilitators identified many challenges in relation to their roles in implementing TAI (Conner, 2015). From a leadership perspective, the most effective leaders were able to navigate the following challenges more effectively. These were:

1. Clearly indicating to staff the moral imperative to drive accelerated progress and achievement for priority learners;
2. Insisting on evidence based decisions for planning and changes to teaching. This was often coupled to the schools' appraisal processes.;
3. Shifting the focus from professional learning of the teacher to focus on what students need;
4. Evaluating teacher learning as it emerges and the next steps for promoting learning;
5. Providing time and support for teachers to identify gaps in their knowledge and understanding to help priority learners specifically. This also involved considering previous research and sharing understandings about culturally responsive approaches to teaching;
6. Acknowledging the 'differentiated' needs of both students and teachers as critical as a 'one size' fits all model fails to engage the adults in their personalised learning experience;
7. Finding ways to understand students needs and strengths prior to deciding on a PLD topic for a PLG or cluster;
8. Tracking and reporting of individual students' progress enabled greater opportunities to acknowledge and to respond authentically to student 'identity, language and culture', for teachers to work manage the process and acknowledge both student and their successes.

The key findings of the project so far are considered in terms of the longer-term sustainability of TAI for enabling on-going improvement. Some of the teachers in the case schools have embraced TAI very well and now mentor and lead others. Teachers needed to try it out with support, refine their ideas and consider multiple forms of evidence as indicators of progress. It took time and persistence, coaching, sharing and some risk taking. As a result, teachers said they have become more curious about students more generally. There is scope to develop more processes for sharing TAI especially as what seems to be helpful for *priority learners* also seems to support other students to learn as well.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Professor Lindsey Conner is the Director of the Science and Technology Education Research Lab at the University of Canterbury. Previously, Lindsey has been a teacher educator at the Christchurch College of Education and University of Canterbury, and a secondary school biology teacher and Head of Department. She has also been a national examiner, a developer and examiner of national standards assessments, and an international consultant on developing science curricula and assessment practices and development projects on teacher education.

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KNOCKING DOWN WALLS AND BU FURNITURE?

What are Innovative Learning Environments in NZ schools really about?

DIANNE SMARDON AND JENNIFER CHARTERIS UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND, ARMIDALE, NSW, AUSTRALIA

ARE WE FACING a learning revolution through Innovative Learning Environments (ILEs) or are we merely recycling the 'open barns' of the 1970s? Migrating from the notion of 'Modern Learning Environments', the New Zealand Ministry of Education (online) term ILEs as 'the complete physical, social and pedagogical context in which learning is intended to occur'. It is an environment that is 'capable of evolving and adapting as educational practices evolve and change – thus remaining future focused.' The Ministry of Education has clearly signalled strategic intentions for 21st century learning practices through the provision of infrastructure targeted in their 'Four year plan 2015–2019'.

Is it old wine in new bottles?

At risk of sounding long in the tooth, we both remember teaching in the 'open plan' classrooms of 1970's construction. Back then the success of open plan classrooms depended on the willingness and capabilities of teachers to work flexibly with like-minded others. In working with teachers in ILEs and in clusters of schools in schooling improvement contexts, we consider that ILEs offer great potential for reconceptualising what we understand about content, resources, learners and teachers.

Nevertheless, it is important to be mindful of the politics behind any educational innovations associated with 21st century schooling rhetoric. Since the 1970s there have been a range of moves: the de-privatisation of classrooms, outcomes based curriculum; learners themselves individualised (measured, monitored and taught to self manage); the scrutiny of student achievement (data-driven practice); appraisal systems as intensified performance management; ubiquitous technologies; and Education itself framed as an 'ecosystem' rather than an isolated event. The current epoch is definitely *not* old wine in new bottles. School leaders seem to be paddling permanent 'white water'.

With the signalling of so much change, we surveyed over 200 Primary and Secondary teachers and principals to learn more about their perceptions of ILEs. We are also appreciative of the thirty-one principals who additionally agreed to in-depth interviews[1]. A range of perspectives were voiced. Although the financial and managerial concerns of remodelling the physical environment is a considerable issue for many principals, there is a very clear emphasis on pedagogical concerns. Principals are thinking about what the changes mean for learners in their schools.

> I think it's about doing things different ways and having the flexibility to really put the focus back on the learner. So many people are at the moment around me turning it into a commercial commodity where the starting point is focusing only on the physical environment and the furnishing you've got, and the acoustics in your room, the access with devices and technology and internet . . . Innovative learning environments have to start with the pedagogy and what you are doing with your children. (Natalie)

It is also pertinent to highlight that ILEs are not just about localised learning, the notion of de-privatisation is scaling up beyond the classroom to schools as networks or ecosystems.

Learning ecosystems

Most of us are familiar with the common-place biological term 'ecosystem' as an interaction between a local community of organisms and its environment. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) incorporate the concept of 'ecosystem' into the vernacular of schooling by adding the term 'learning'. They define '*learning ecosystems*' as 'interdependent combinations of different species of providers and organisations playing different roles with learners in differing relationships to them over time and in varying mixes' (OECD, 2015, p.13). The notion of an ecosystem where learning is personalised across a range of institutions and spaces (physical and cyber), is articulated by Lynette.

. . . **EDUCATION** can take place **ANYWHERE, ANYHOW** and arguably be **DELIVERED BY ANYONE**.

> I think what I got from it was a move away from the mindset of school as a 'be-all' and 'end-all' – that education only happens in one school, in one classroom between the hours of 9 and 3. Students should be entitled to many ways of learning and many different inputs into that learning. So it could be that they're enrolled in this particular school, but they also have this online thing going on. Or they're enrolled in different courses at different schools and the learning is tailored to the child, rather than the child to that school – and the school is there to provide everything . . . It is all at system level, you know. (Lynette).

Thus, as a learning ecosystem, Education can take place anywhere, anyhow and arguably be delivered by anyone. For many years now, school leaders have been challenged to think about learning at three levels – at, across and beyond their school. This is intensified with the perceived need to network with other organisations and individuals beyond the school and in the

[1] Participants have been given a pseudonym.

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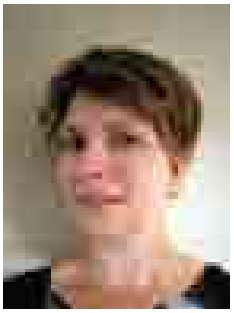

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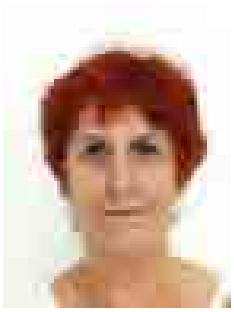

Dianne Smardon

globally connected context. The OECD identify that networks, communities, chains and initiatives that extend beyond the school are critical in the building and sustaining of innovative learning. Examples in the NZ context include 'Investing in Educational Success', 'Networked Learning Communities' and now, 'Communities of Learners'. These initiatives are central policy levers for ILE development.

Principals we spoke with incorporated their conceptual understandings of learning ecosystems with the education system that currently exists in many schools. Mel describes how each aspect of the system influences and impacts upon others with a 'flow-on' effect where resources, content, leaners and teachers (the pedagogical core) interact in a systematic way.

> The learning ecosystem is where each thing has a flow-on effect that affects the different aspects of what's happening in the classroom. So, for example, if you have a class with no laptops, introducing computers or laptops into that classroom would have a flow-on effect as to how the students can learn and how the teacher has to teach and what opportunities the kids have, you know, what further things are going to open up for them. (Mel)

It can be unhelpful to construct a binary 'either/or' argument between physical changes to classrooms and pedagogy. Pedagogy and design are interrelated and co-produce learning. Raleigh, as a learning leader, sees the underlying philosophy for learning as of paramount importance.

I think ILEs are really about the pedagogy as well as the physical space. We have just finished spending 2 million dollars on changes to our property, to bring it more in line with the Ministry's guidelines. One of the things that I talked about with the staff, and we talked it about an awful lot, was 'how does space influence learning?' The critical part is the learning. It's not the space. Space does influence what you can do, but the pedagogy you adopt can be utilised in any space. (Raleigh)

Challenges for principals

By making the physical changes to school environments, as maintenance and scheduled changes are timed, it is hoped that these moves will positively impact on teaching and learning. Rather than merely changing the shape of classrooms, ILEs signal a profound shift to the nature of schooling in Aotearoa/New Zealand. With the pending Educations Reform Act, Investing in Education Success policy and moves to reshape schools into ILEs we now are facing some of the most pervasive shifts in the education system since 'Tomorrow's Schools' in 1989.

ILEs pose a pivotal challenge for 'white water' leadership where principals, as learning leaders, critically navigate the topography of proposed change. As a significant shift in schools and schooling, teacher preparation and professional development are of profound importance. Grant highlights the importance of brokering the relational dynamic and philosophy for 21st century learning.

Right, I get the challenge – that it's all very well to put in furniture and create an ILE but it's the practice that goes on there . . . Our plans have just been finished now before it goes out to tender. I want two teachers working in there who have the right philosophy and mind, who like working together and they like learning together. And so, you know, I think the philosophy is the most important thing, not the type of furniture we dump in there. (Grant)

Structural support

The structural support provided for this initiative is far more significant than changing the size of the learning space. It includes prioritising targeted support for principals who, as learning leaders, empower teachers to also lead and innovate. Pedagogically, what may need to alter is the philosophy and beliefs held by teachers about learners, learning and how learning happens. How might teacher professional learning and development be broadened to broker this space?

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ms Dianne Smardon led professional development projects for teachers and school leaders in New Zealand, between 1998 and 2013. She worked with school leaders and teachers as a consultant in Hong Kong. In researching teacher education in New Zealand and the Pacific, she has contributed to a range of research teams. She has published research articles on school leadership and systemic improvement through collaborative peer coaching practices. Based in Hamilton, Dianne undertakes contract work for the University of New England as a teacher educator in Nauru.

Dr Jennifer Charteris is a teacher educator with teaching experience in New Zealand, Australia and the UK. She has worked with students, teachers, principals, school communities and school in-service advisors across the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. She has participated in consultancies for the Ministry of Education in New Zealand. As an in-service teacher educator with the University of Waikato, NZ, Jennifer provided professional learning for principals and teachers that aimed to raise student achievement through targeted assessment for learning and culturally responsive pedagogies. She is currently Senior Lecturer of School Pedagogy at the University of New England in Armidale Australia.

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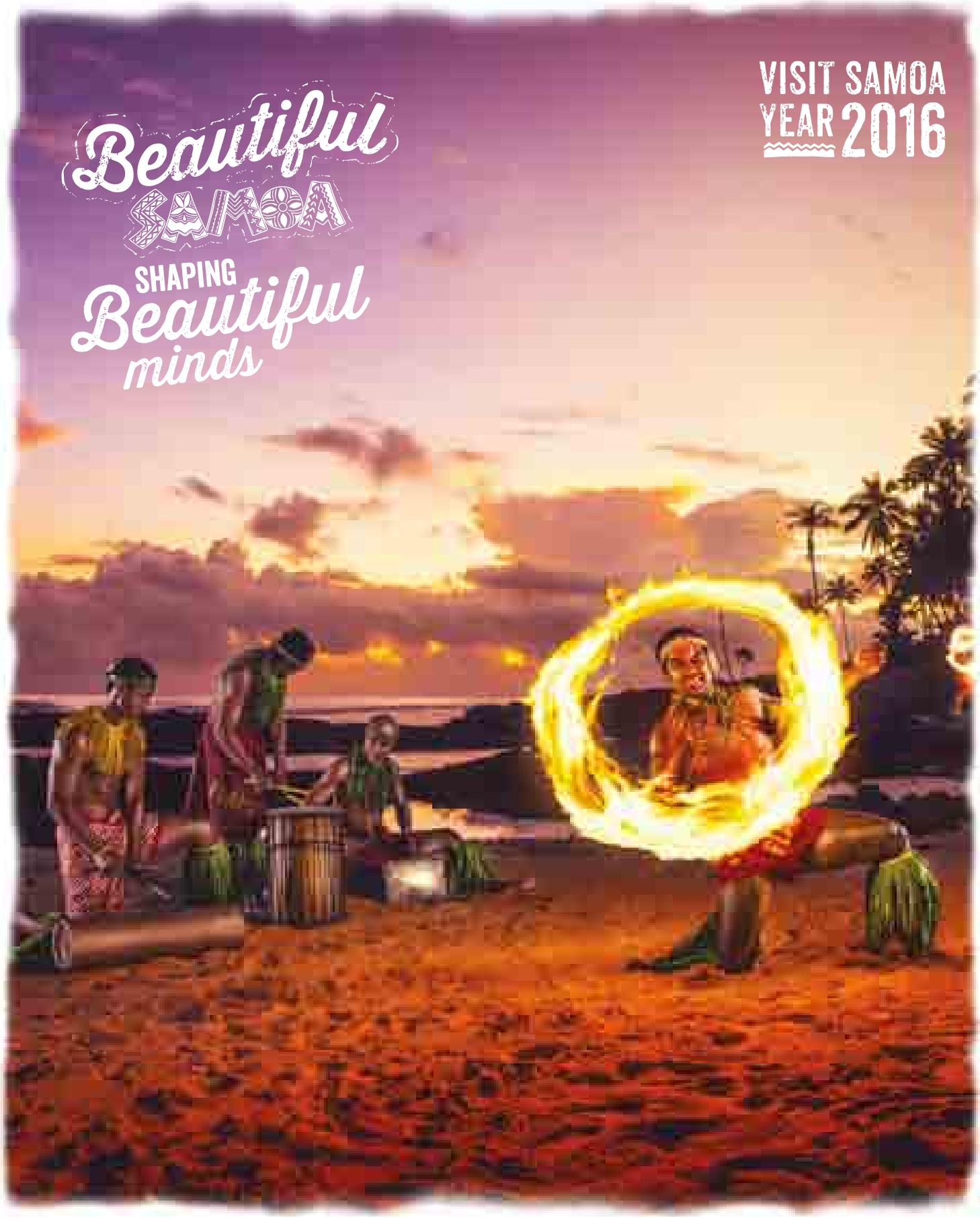

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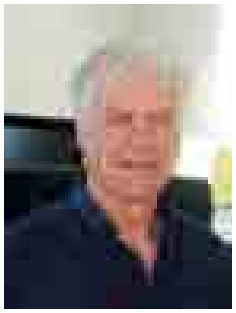
THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A FREE BREAKFAST:

The Cost of Marketing in Schools



Robert Aitken

Leah Watkins

ROBERT AITKEN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AND HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING, THE UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO
LEAH WATKINS DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING, THE UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

SANITARIUM'S RECENT DECISION to sell Up&Go in vending machines in schools has drawn public criticism about the growing commercialisation of our schools and the increasing consumerisation of our children.

In an environment where education is increasingly expected to seek alternative sources of funding, schools are beginning to rely more heavily on corporate support and financial assistance. The increasing concern raised by this blurring of the lines between education and business is recognised in a recent United Nations report (2014) which addresses the concerns that marketing practices have a detrimental effect on the well-being of children, and impinge on their educational and cultural rights. The Report states unequivocally that, 'the prohibition of advertising should be applied in both public and private schools' (UN Report 2014 p.16). Further, a recent US Report on the commercialisation of the 'schoolhouse' found that advertising to children in schools presents serious threats to children's education and to their psychological and physical well-being. They further recommend that, 'policymakers should prohibit advertising in schools unless the school provides compelling evidence that their intended advertising programme causes no harm to children.' (Molnar, Boninger, Harris, Libby and Fogarty 2011).

In the academic literature, marketing to children in schools has been heavily criticised as unethical and unfair. It is considered unethical because it targets vulnerable consumers who are highly impressionable and unable to recognise the persuasive intent of commercial messages, and unfair, because children in-school are a captive audience in an authoritative environment characterised by both implicit and explicit institutional endorsement.

Children as Vulnerable Consumers

Concerns about children's vulnerability to marketing messages are based on their limited cognitive ability to understand these messages and thus the fairness of targeting them. It is assumed that when adults experience marketing, their understanding of its persuasive intent prevents them from being unfairly exploited (Gunter, Oates and Blades 2004). For adults, the recognition that a given piece of marketing content is an advertisement triggers a cognitive filter that takes into account the following factors a) the source of the message has other perspectives and other interests than those of the receiver, b) the intention is to persuade, c) persuasive messages are biased, and, d) biased messages demand different interpretive strategies than unbiased messages (Roberts 1982). When these considerations are understood and applied in the cognitive processing of commercial messages, then the receiver can be described as a competent consumer. However, cognitive research consistently demonstrates that children cannot effectively recognize the persuasive intent of advertising or apply the critical evaluation required to counter it (Graff, Kunkel and Mermen 2012; Marshall 2010; UN Report Article 59 p.14).

If children have a diminished capacity to recognise persuasive intent as a result of their cognitive abilities then they can be regarded as more vulnerable to the effects of marketing than adults (Gunter et al 2004). To achieve mature understanding of marketing messages, children must acquire two key information processing skills. First, they must be able to discriminate at a perceptual level commercial from non-commercial content, and second, they must be able to attribute persuasive intent to it, and to apply that knowledge as a cognitive filter to moderate commercial influence. Each of these capabilities develops over time, largely as a function of cognitive and social development. Estimates of the age at which children can differentiate advertisements from programmes vary from as young as three to up to six years of age (Oates, Blades and Gunter 2002). Conclusions about the age at which children understand persuasive intent also vary. Early studies suggested that persuasive knowledge emerges by the time most children are seven to eight years old (Robertson and Rossiter 1974; Roedder-John 1999), however, more recent studies have suggested that children do not fully understand the persuasive intent of advertising even by the age of 10–12 years (Oates et al. 2002; Chan and McNeal 2002). Studies have found that early adolescents are still in the process of developing knowledge about marketing tactics such as message bias (Boush, Friestad and Rose 1994) and that children do not become sceptical or cynical of self-interested claims made by the source of any message until around the ages of 11–12 (Mills and Keil 2005). Children who lack this understanding and a healthy scepticism towards persuasive messages are more likely to accept the information conveyed in them as truthful and accurate, and are more susceptible to being influenced by advertising than older viewers (Kunkel, Wilcox, Cantor, Palmer, Linn and Dowrick 2004).

In-School Marketing

Marketing in schools has also been criticised for blurring the line between educational aims such as critical thinking and informed independent choice, and the commercial motives of persuasion

and influence. Molnar et al. (2011), suggest that the values and goals of education are incompatible with the imperatives of business and that the need to foster critical thinking, independent (and freedom of) choice and self-determination do not sit easily with the preferential promotion of particular products:

> 'Schools are qualitatively different than other environments in which children find themselves. Children in school are a captive, pre-segmented audience, present in that location ostensibly for the purposes of being guided toward learning and growth by adults who have special training and qualifications to provide them with educative experiences. These unique qualities of the school environment are, frankly, what make it so attractive to marketers.' (Molnar et al. 2011: 3).

The authors conclude that 'the potential threat to children posed by marketing in schools is great enough that we believe the default assumption for schools, districts and state and federal policy-makers must be that marketing in schools is harmful unless explicitly proven otherwise' (Molnar et al. 2011, Executive Summary). Similarly, the UN has recently issued a strong recommendation to ban the practice of in-school marketing. Their rationale for the recommendation is stated as:

> 'International human rights standards and national laws on education place a legal obligation on children to attend school. Schools therefore constitute a distinct cultural space, deserving special protection from commercial influence . . . School children offer a captive and credulous audience . . . Marketing and advertising programs are normalised and given legitimacy when embedded in the school context; the strategies deployed lead children to interact and engage with particular brands during school time. Furthermore, the sponsoring of school material and educational content reduces the freedom education institutions have for developing the most appropriate and highest quality curriculum for their students' (U.N Report 2014: Article 65)

One of the more subtle elements of allowing a commercial presence in schools is the extent to which it normalises the relationship between business and education. For many, schools are seen as public entitlements where children are socialised as citizens rather than as consumers and where ideas should be challenged, and competing and alternative points of view encouraged. In a commercially orientated educational environment, this becomes increasingly difficult. Additionally, it is argued that marketing is a more powerful and pervasive force in the lives of children growing up today than ever before and in-school marketing adds to the commercial pressures that they are already under. Regardless of the particular products being promoted, the wider pro-consumption message has implications for children's socialisation and their well-being.

Despite this, in New Zealand and other countries, there is increasing reliance on commercial funding in schools. This takes many forms from the provision of 'free' breakfasts to the sponsorship of sporting activities.

Our Research

To examine the perceived vulnerabilities of children to in-school marketing activities we explored the perceptions of the NZ public, parents and educators regarding the Fonterra Milk in Schools initiative in two research studies. The first study used data from a national online survey of a representative sample of the NZ population. The second study comprised in-depth interviews conducted with primary school principals to investigate their opinions of the scheme.

Public

Results from the online survey show that the public largely perceived the product itself to be beneficial to children's health, well-being and, potentially, to their learning. This was particularly so for disadvantaged and lower socio-economic groups. While a minority were concerned about the quality of the product (long-life carton milk), overall, the general view was that the scheme was a 'good thing.' However, where respondents referred to the motives underpinning the scheme, opinions were divided between those who perceived it as benevolent verses those regarding it as self-serving. The key reasons given for Fonterra's actions being perceived as self-serving were to groom future consumers and as a public relations exercise designed to enhance their (damaged) reputation. In terms of children as the target audience many perceived their vulnerability to the marketing of the Fonterra brand as a negative consequence of the scheme. In addition to children's general vulnerability, specific concerns were raised for 'uniquely' vulnerable children such as those with health issues, allergies and weight problems. These issues were in turn linked to socio-economic class as a vulnerability factor. Concerns about the time taken out of the curriculum, social exclusion from a communal activity, the respective responsibilities of parents and schools, and a tension between the imperatives of education and business and state vs private funding of education were also raised. The interaction between each of the key concerns was clearly evident. For example, the perceived harm or good of the product was moderated according to the unique vulnerability and socio-economic status of the child.

In summary, public perception suggests that while the provision of free milk is of nutritional 'good' to some children, the potential harm caused by the commercial intrusion in education extends to all children. Further, it could be argued that the strategic benefits to the firm are not balanced by the welfare gains to the children and this creates a tension between the public's positive perceptions of the scheme and its concern with the negative aspects of its effects on such a vulnerable audience.

Principals

Six key questions guided the interviews with principals; four of the questions were specific to the Fonterra scheme and were derived from issues raised in the online survey. These questions related to: issues with the implementation of the scheme; concerns about marketing to children in school; scepticism about Fonterra and its motives, and, reflections on the relative roles and responsibilities of public vs private interest. In addition, two general questions asked principals whether in-school marketing was increasing and/or was likely to do so in the future, and, to explain on what basis, and through what processes, their school made their decisions to participate in what are commonly recognised as corporate social responsibility (CSR) related activities.

Overall, school principals were positive about the advantages of the scheme for children and felt that their concerns were outweighed by its benefits. The majority of principals agreed

that a certain level of commercial endorsement was inevitable but were concerned that schools were becoming the site for an increasing number of commercial activities the motivations for which were unclear. A general level of scepticism suggested that while they were personally savvy to CSR's strategic motives, they were both ill equipped and relatively uninformed about the wider issues of the ethics of CSR activities targeting children in school. Interestingly, and perhaps most importantly, none of the schools in the study had a formal policy regulating such CSR initiatives. Decision making about in-school marketing and decision-making approaches ranged widely from individual principal choice to formal school board consideration.

Principals suggested that commercial interest in in-school marketing is increasing and that their support of, or resignation to it, is largely determined by socio-economic factors and resource constraints. Those schools at the lower end of the decile scale that were most in need of financial support were most open to in-school marketing activities and, perhaps pragmatically, least concerned with its consequences. While this may not be surprising, it is concerning, given contributing to a culture of dependency, which is often a characteristic of underprivileged communities, may have longer-term social affects.

Given the concerns raised by school principals and the different priorities that they experience, perhaps the most important implication for schools is the need for the introduction of formal guidelines regulating commercial activities that target children. In countries such as Scotland (Consumer Focus, Scotland 2009), these are provided centrally, and may provide a useful model for more widespread adoption. It may be that school boards in New Zealand can use their discretionary responsibilities to develop more localised and community centred approaches. In relation to the wider and more serious issue of marketing to vulnerable audiences, the role of marketing standards authorities also needs to be addressed. In de-regulated and market-driven political economies an over-reliance on voluntary codes of practice is increasingly challenged by the pervasiveness of corporate influence and the ubiquity of marketing access.

Conclusions

That Fonterra's Milk in Schools scheme has recently been followed by Sanitarium products in schools suggests that the relationship between education and business in NZ is becoming increasingly aligned economically and at the same time responsibility for children's welfare increasingly detached. While such partnerships may bring economic advantage, the implications of their normalisation need to be discussed. For example, in tax-funded educational environments the responsibilities of governments are clear. Where funding is provided from commercial sources there is the potential for priorities to be aligned as closely to corporate interests as they are to educational ones. Our research, and the recent mandate from the United Nations, suggest it is necessary to establish local policy principles and guidelines, such as those in Scotland, upon which future corporate relationships with schools should be developed.

While there is merit in developing reciprocal relationships with corporate partners, the extent to which schools become complicit in marketing to kids in return for benefits from the company is an important ethical and social issue. One expectation of corporate responsibility is that it should contribute to the public good, including all of those stakeholders affected by corporate actions. Differential school reliance on corporate funding is, potentially, a serious threat to the autonomy and integrity of both individual children, schools and the educational system as a whole. Normalising marketing activities in schools is problematic, and an understanding of its implications for children's development and learning is necessary to inform continuing educational debate.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Robert Aitken is Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Marketing at the University of Otago. His academic and research interests include marketing ethics, particularly marketing to children and the commercialisation of childhood, advertising, branding, consumer behaviour, service-dominant logic, corporate social responsibility, communications and the media. He is a constructivist who is interested in how people make sense of the world and an idealist in believing he can help to make it a better one. Address: Department of Marketing, Otago Business School, University of Otago, PO Box 56, Dunedin, New Zealand. [Email: rob.aitken@otago.ac.nz]

Leah Watkins is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Marketing at the University of Otago. Her area of academic interest lies in Marketing and Society, including research on culture, values, lifestyles, ethical business/consumption, and children's consumer socialisation. Address: Department of Marketing, Otago Business School, University of Otago, PO Box 56, Dunedin, New Zealand. [Email: leah.watkins@otago.ac.nz]

continued pg.32

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SCHOOL LINES

What an Act

Lester Flockton
FEEDBACK, FEEDFORWARD, FEEDUP, FEEDDOWN lester.flockton@otago.ac.nz

LATE LAST YEAR Education Minister Parata, along with her Ministry of Education, announced intentions to 'update' parts of the Education Act 1989. A pretend consultation exercise was part of their game plan with an eye towards an Education Amendment Bill that will most likely go before Parliament this year. The timeframe for the consultation was a meager few weeks, with submissions closing at one of the busiest times during the concluding days of the school year. In effect, opportunity for widespread and well-considered public discussion was largely denied, despite the Ministry of Education saying we all had an important role to play in this consultation. Yet again, there is justification for thinking that Ms Parata's mind is already made up on the changes she intends to make – regardless of what others might think or say.

The *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms introduced in the late 1980s were enshrined in a new Education Act. In spinning up her justification for the latest changes to that Principal Act (others changes to the Act have already been made by this Minister), Ms Parata said 'A lot has changed since then (1989), but the Act which sets the legislative framework for schools remains the same'. This statement is blatantly untrue, and can only be interpreted as manipulation of a naïve and oft ill-informed public mind. In fact, the present Government along with its predecessors has made a considerable number of changes to the 1989 Act (NZPF found 79 amendments in total) as well as significant changes to the regulations governing schools (the National Education Guidelines). National Standards, mandatory reporting systems for school boards, charter schools, and a new Minister-appointed Teachers' Council are recent examples. A lot has changed in the Act since 1989, so why did Ms Parata say there had been none? After all, she would know!

Let's be clear that not everything is up for review in the Act. Matters the Minister has specifically excluded, are the tertiary sector, early childhood and school curriculum (good), changes that would increase government spending on education, her government's National Standards, Partnership (Charter) Schools, the Education Council and, of course, its highly problematic scheme coined 'Investing in Educational Success'.

The topics permitted for discussion include the goals for education, setting national priorities for learners aged 0 to 18 so that schools will know what is expected of them, making clear what is required of school boards (including how they plan and report), more flexible arrangements for the governance and management of schools (such as one principal managing several schools), and allowing schools to admit new entrant groups of students at set times in the year rather than on their 5th birthday.

Political justifications for proposed changes to the Act should be carefully scrutinized, and not simply taken at surface level. It is not enough for the Minister to repeat ad nauseam that it's all about putting kids first, raising their achievement, or improving the quality of teaching. The public is entitled to see the evidence that irrefutably proves the proposed law changes will confidently achieve such ends. Precedent, however, gives reason for serious doubt. National Standards, for example, were sold to the public on the promise of addressing poor achievement by one in five children who struggle to reach competency in reading, writing and maths. Yet Ministry of Education data make clear that there has been negligible true improvement over the five years of their implementation, despite the huge concentration of time, energy, resources and reporting rules required of schools. The problem of

underachievement is simply not a matter that schools alone can resolve; yet repeatedly the impression is given that they are the most responsible and accountable. There seems to be an official denial of true causations behind chronic underachievement, probably because they are politically inconvenient.

In updating the Act, the Minister is wont to set down in law the purpose and goals of education, probably as she sees it. Her well-worn catch cry of 'raising student achievement' is predictable, despite serious issues of narrow interpretation by regulators and others that are becoming all too evident.

On the surface, enshrining the State's purposes and goals for education in law might seem laudable, but New Zealand already has these in its mandatory National Education Guidelines, and they would be very hard to argue. The first such goal, for example, is

> The highest standards of achievement, through programmes which enable all students to realise their full potential as individuals, and to develop the values needed to become full members of New Zealand's society.

Another of the 10 national education goals states

> Development of the knowledge, understanding and skills needed by New Zealanders to compete successfully in the modern, ever-changing world.

Right up the Government's alley, I would have thought. So what, then, is the justification for changing such goals, or for putting them in the Education Act when already they are well conceived and have the force of law? There is none.

And is it something of an impertinence to say that the Act needs to be changed so that schools will know what is expected of them, and make clear what is required of school boards? These matters are already sufficiently spelled out in the National Administration Guidelines – a set of regulations that were instituted for that very purpose. Then again, if the intention is to reign in some of the excesses of those wayward Board members who descend upon some schools from time to time, that could be a good thing. Perhaps an EDUCANZ equivalent to oversee school boards that is independent of NZSTA?

The Government's eagerness to open the way for different forms of school control and leadership, resourcing and organization, is perhaps the key intention behind the changes to the Act, with items of the kind mentioned above being mere deflections. These are likely to stem from its Investing in Educational Success (IES) scheme, which is essentially about grouping schools into clusters being called 'Communities of Learners' with a 'lead principal' and 'expert teachers' who are given significant financial enticements to oversee the performance of others. So far, there has been little appetite for this, and many have serious doubts that this will actually lead to improved student achievement in its richest sense – despite all of the spin.

The question remains, therefore: will changes in the law really prove to advance the best interests of schools, their students, teachers and communities? The Government will undoubtedly go ahead with them regardless, because that's the way it does its business.

WHY BICULTURALISM?

Helen Kinsey-Wightman

CHRISTMAS IS A time of giving – this year it has also been a time of loss, both on a personal level and a global one.

As a young teacher I tried to find innovative ways to grab my students attention and music was a big part of hooking intermediate students into topics. I remember using a Venn diagram to find differences and similarities between David Bowie's Space Oddity and Elton John's Rocket Man as an intro to a science unit on Space. I used the lesson several times and there was something about David Bowie's music and his persona that fascinated and captured the attention of some of the more complicated students in my class. His death, 2 weeks after Christmas, filled column inches the world over.

2 weeks before Christmas my father-in-law died. He was recovering from a stroke and so his death was a surprise to us all. His funeral filled the local Catholic Church and friends travelled long distances to farewell him – his few surviving Navy mates from Operation Grapple, the British nuclear testing on Christmas Island, proud to see him wearing his Navy medals.

My own protestant upbringing in England confronted death staunchly with a stiff upper lip and an appropriately solemn hymn. Children were not encouraged to attend funerals – when my grandmother died I was 11 and not allowed to accompany the family to church.

Since then I have discovered that there are many different ways to celebrate a life well lived and mourn a loss. In the Philippines, I attended my first Catholic funeral and was initially more than a little uncomfortable with the idea of an open coffin in my friends' homes. But it was the way that children just ran around and were totally at ease in the situation that helped me to feel more comfortable.

The way we mourned Johnson as a family and particularly the inclusion of children and young people in that process was a profound experience. It is not uncommon in a workplace to hear people make disparaging comments about Māori culture around tangi and the need to spend several days attending a funeral. The way in which friends and family wrapped around us in the days that Johnson was at home before his funeral, the way that food appeared and people cleaned and sang and told stories made a huge impression on me – I don't think that sharing grief and sadness decreases grief but it seems to polish the sharp edges.

When my youngest son's friends arrived from his kura and kohanga he led them in and showed them his Pāpa and talked about his medals. There was no sense in which he was too young to understand or participate. The teenagers carried Johnson out of church and travelled with us when we took our proudly

Nga Puhi Pāpa to his marae at Karetu, near Kawakawa. He had attended a small country school and his last 5 living schoolmates who came were some of the oldest mourners. The youngest were Manu and his cousins – that evening they sat with Pāpa and – unprompted by adults – talked about their memories of him.

Attitudes and approaches to death and life are key to our own culture and in seeking to understand each other.

Whilst I was at the tangi our Board and Senior leadership team met to review community feedback and set goals for our 2016 Charter. It has been hard to return to school not having been a full participant in that process. However, I do believe that the time I spent at the marae has helped me to appreciate the challenge and the possibilities in the most challenging goal they set; To recognise and value Māori as tangata whenua.

ATTITUDES AND APPROACHES to **DEATH AND LIFE** are key to our own culture and in **SEEKING TO UNDERSTAND** each other.

In thinking about how we can go about achieving this I know that we will be challenged about a goal that identifies Māori in particular rather than working towards a goal about the recognition and value of a multicultural perspective. For those of you facing similar challenges I think the most powerful argument is one I first heard in a great workshop led by Hine Waitara on realising Māori potential.

'We do have people from all cultures living here but New Zealand is the only 'home base' for Māori. If you have Samoan ancestry you can go to Samoa, the cradle of Samoan culture and language, and tap into your culture there. If you're of Japanese or Scottish or Chinese or Thai descent, the same applies – you have a home country to return to or visit.

If the language and culture aren't given special status here in Aotearoa New Zealand, the simple fact is that in today's Western-oriented, English-language dominated world, they will struggle to survive.' (http://www.kiamaia.org.nz/news/2015/3/26/aotearoa-multicultural-or-bicultural)

As our school staff, students and community begins to imagine, explore and no doubt debate how it will look and sound and feel when we do truly recognise and value Māori as tangata whenua (literally 'people of the land') I know it will help to remind ourselves that there is no other school on earth that students can go to experience what that is like, so it must be here, in our school, today.

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