Effective Teaching

There is agreement internationally that one of the most powerful ways to raise student achievement is to foster quality or excellence in teaching. Teacher knowledge is critical to effective practice – knowledge of the subject, of how to teach and of learners and how they learn as well as how to manage student behaviour.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Teachers can develop their teaching skills through professional learning opportunities. Achieving successful outcomes for students requires teachers and professional leaders to engage in effective ongoing professional development that enhances their professional knowledge, skills and attitudes, and links to positive impacts on valued student outcomes.

The recently released Teacher Professional Learning and Development: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (TPLD BES) examines and identifies what kind of professional learning results in enhanced and sustained outcomes for diverse student learners.

The TPLD BES report identifies research evidence about the kinds of skills, knowledge and opportunities teachers need to systematically improve their practice and bring about ongoing improvements in student achievement. In sustainable interventions, where student outcomes continue to improve after the total or partial withdrawal of the intensive support that the early stages of professional development provides, the evidence suggests that teachers need:

- an understanding of theory to provide the foundation for decisions about practice
- assessment knowledge and skills to enable an understanding of exactly what each student knows and can do as a prerequisite for teaching that is responsive to each student’s needs
- the inquiry skills to judge the impact of teaching on learning, and to identify, diagnose and address student learning problems.

The TPLD BES report identifies these key aspects of provision for successful professional development:

- an integration of theory along with the implications for practice, and support for the translation of theory into practice in cycles of effective professional learning

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an underpinning understanding that what teachers do in their classrooms strongly impacts on student–teacher relationships and student learning
development of skills in the understanding and use of assessment information linked to valued student outcomes for the purpose of improving teaching
introduction of the skills of continuing inquiry into the teaching–learning relationship and identification of the next teaching steps.

Designated educational leaders have a key role in the promotion of professional learning and development opportunities for teachers. School leaders must also support continued momentum as a result of professional learning. They do this by reinforcing the importance of student goals for learning, providing support to enable teachers to gather and analyse evidence of student progress towards goals and providing ongoing expert support when it is needed.

Māori in the Mainstream

Te Kauhua and Te Kōtahitanga are projects with the specific aim of improving Māori student achievement in English-medium schools. They do this by enhancing teacher practice and improving school-wide structures and processes.

Both projects use the in-school facilitator professional development model. The facilitator, sometimes called a lead teacher, is selected from a school’s staff and is released from teaching duties to work with their colleagues. They are chosen for their contextual knowledge of the school and its community, something an external facilitator is unlikely to have.

Victoria University of Wellington College of Education studied the two projects’ in-school facilitation component. It was found to be successful because:

- teachers had immediate access to their facilitator
- the facilitator had a wealth of knowledge about their school
- the facilitator was willing to model effective strategies and ideas
- community communication and involvement improved, which strengthened relationships.

The study showed that, as a result of the projects, teachers were increasingly implementing culturally responsive pedagogy within their programmes, which was increasing student engagement. Teachers were more confident, moving from observers of Māori culture to participants within Māori culture, which enhanced teacher–student/whānau relationships. Participating whānau members in turn became more confident and comfortable about approaching members of the school community when seeking help or discussing concerns.

In-school facilitators recognised that effective strategies for Māori were effective for all students.

The study observed that staff turnover was a challenge to the sustainability of the projects. Two schools used co-facilitation to address this which also helped to share the workload and embed the projects’ philosophies.

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KA HIKITIA — MANAGING FOR SUCCESS

Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success: Māori Education Strategy 2008–2012\(^9\) was launched at Parliament by Hon. Chris Carter, the Minister of Education, and Hon. Parekura Horomia, the Associate Minister of Education, on 15 April 2008, and at a community launch as part of the Ngāti Whakaue education forum in May.

Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success is an overarching strategy that informs the way the Ministry of Education works as a whole and supports specific actions to improve Māori student population outcomes.\(^50\) This strategy sharpens the focus on improving the presence, engagement and achievement of Māori students in education.

In August 2007 a draft of Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success was launched for a three-month public consultation period as a draft document. Consultation also included:

> 13 face-to-face public hui across the country, attended by more than 600 people
> bilateral discussions with the Ministry’s iwi and Māori education partners
> discussions with key government departments and agencies
> articles and features in a number of publications and communication channels
> additional meetings with professional leaders and representatives of schools and other educators in Dunedin, Rotorua, Thames, Hamilton, Ruatoria, Christchurch, Blenheim, Nelson, Hokitika, Westport and Invercargill
> engagement of leading Māori academics.

During the consultation, more than 7,300 copies of the strategy document (19 percent in Māori) and 4,600 copies of the summary document (24 percent in Māori) were distributed and more than 100 submissions were received.

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DELIVERING THE CURRICULUM

The New Zealand Curriculum was released in 2007.51 The Ministry of Education collated, analysed and took into consideration the more than 10,000 submissions it received following the release of the draft curriculum.52

The New Zealand Curriculum is a clear statement of what we deem important in education. Its starting point is a vision of our young people as lifelong learners who are confident and creative, connected and actively involved. It includes a clear set of principles on which to base curriculum decision-making. It sets out values to be encouraged, modelled and explored. It also defines five key competencies that are critical to sustained learning and effective participation in society. These principles underline the emphasis on lifelong learning.

Literacy

The LPDP aims to improve student achievement through an evidence-based inquiry model. This model develops or enhances strong professional learning communities focused on quality teaching.

From 2004 to 2007 the LPDP has provided whole-of-staff, on-site literacy professional development running over two years to almost 300 schools with new entrants to Year 8 students. It also assesses its own effectiveness and makes changes to improve the quality and focus of its work as a result.

A third cohort of 127 schools entered the project from February 2006 to November 2007. Sixty-five focused on reading comprehension and 62 on writing.

As with previous cohorts, the project had a positive effect on the literacy outcomes of the February 2006 cohort.53 After taking into account expected growth and maturation, students at LPDP schools improved twice as much in reading and writing as students at other schools.

Rates of progress for different groups of students were as follows:

- those in the lowest 20 percent at Time 1 improved twice as much as the cohort as a whole (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2)
- with the exception of Year 6 and 7 Māori students, all ethnic groups in reading-focused schools improved more than expected
- there was an accelerated rate of progress for Pasifika students in writing-focused schools
- there was an accelerated rate of progress for Māori students in writing-focused schools
- there was an accelerated rate of progress for boys in all year groups, both for schools with a reading focus and schools with a writing focus.

Figure 3.1: For Reading-Focused Schools, the Overall Mean Score Tracking Progress from Time 1 to Time 3 for Students Initially in the Lowest 20 Percent in Years 4–7 Compared to asTTle Norms

Figure 3.2: For Writing-Focused Schools, the Overall Mean Score Tracking Progress from Time 1 to Time 3 for Students Initially in the Lowest 20 Percent in Years 4–7 Compared to asTTle Norms

asTTle (Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning) is an educational resource for assessing reading, writing, and mathematics. It provides information about a student’s level of achievement relative to the desired curriculum achievement outcomes.
The *Evaluation of the Literacy Professional Development Project*[^55] looked at evidence of student achievement and practitioner learning, and the links between student achievement and practitioners’ skills, knowledge and practices.

The evaluation found associations between the reports of effective practitioners at the end of their professional development and high positive shifts in student achievement at reading-focused schools. In these cases the reports came from:

- teachers who rated their ability to use tools such as asTTle and STAR as ‘strong’
- teachers and literacy leaders who rated their ability to interpret student data in relation to national norms as ‘strong’
- teachers who reported understanding ‘very well’ the theoretical principles underpinning effective literacy teaching and learning.

**Numeracy and Mathematics**

The NDP was first implemented in New Zealand schools in 2001. Since then, approximately 800,000 students and 29,000 teachers have taken part. The initial professional development programmes for teachers require the participation of the school over a minimum of two years. By 2009, virtually every primary and intermediate school in New Zealand will have had the opportunity to participate in this professional development.[^56]

The primary focus of the NDP is to raise the mathematics achievement of students by improving the quality of teaching and learning of mathematics in English- and Māori-medium settings. Research reports that evaluate student achievement consistently show that students with teachers in the professional development phase of the NDP make gains in their ability to understand and operate with numbers and that these gains are larger than those expected in a non-NDP environment.[^57]

The 2006 NDP findings show that schools that continued to focus on numeracy achievement after the initial professional development phase showed an impressive improvement. For example, there was a significant increase in the percentage of Year 6 students achieving at or above the expected level (see Figure 3.3) and a considerable reduction in the percentage of Year 6 students categorised as ‘at risk’ in 2002–2007 (see Figure 3.4).


Figure 3.3: Year 6 Students at or above the Expected Level of Achievement in Numeracy, 2002–2007

Figure 3.4: Year 6 Students at Risk in Numeracy, 2002–2007
An ERO report on good practice in mathematics found that schools that demonstrated quality mathematics programmes shared a number of characteristics. Each school had:

> participated in Ministry of Education numeracy projects and used that professional development to review and establish high-quality teaching practices for mathematics
> organised their mathematics programme with a strong focus on numeracy
> undertaken, or were completing, a school-wide review of the mathematics programme
> provided teachers with opportunities to work together and share practical ideas and resources
> collected and analysed school-wide student achievement information in mathematics.

**ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING**

The TPLD BES shows that teachers require a thorough understanding of assessment tools in order to diagnose student learning problems and identify steps to address them.

Following an evaluation of the quality of schools’ collection and use of assessment information, ERO published reports in 2007 citing good practice for primary and secondary schools.

Schools that demonstrated good practice:

> ensured teachers had a shared understanding about the purpose of assessment
> expected teachers to be knowledgeable about their students’ achievements and interests
> ensured school managers, teachers and students were aware of the rationale for the decisions being made about assessment

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> gave teachers the opportunity for professional development in assessment
> encouraged their teachers to use data effectively to improve their teaching
> expected assessment information to be drawn from a wide range of sources: day-to-day interactions with students; analysis of students’ work; and more formally designed and administered assessment tasks
> ensured teachers could analyse both numeric and narrative assessment information and interpret the results so they were understood by all potential users of the information
> encouraged teachers to use formative assessment strategies that ensured the purpose of activities was understood and that students received effective and useful feedback
> identified groups of students who needed extra assistance and the specific assistance that was needed, monitored the students’ progress and gathered comprehensive school-wide data on their achievements
> identified trends and patterns in students’ achievements and compared the achievements of groups of students within the school
> established clear expectations for achievement and assessment, including making collation and reporting easier so comparisons could be made to agreed achievement targets.

Primary schools demonstrating good assessment practices also built strong relationships with students’ families and whānau that contributed to their learning. Secondary schools demonstrating good assessment practices promoted the philosophy that student learning rather than credit acquisition should drive assessment practices.

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**SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Students requiring special education in New Zealand are not a homogenous group. Each is an individual with his or her own needs and will respond best to the nature and style of education that best addresses those needs. Teachers who are effective in meeting the needs of special needs students are typically effective in meeting the needs of all students.

GSE, Tai Tokerau, worked with a group of teenagers with a range of disabilities and special education needs to find out what they found helpful. They agreed that one of the most helpful things was having great teachers. They said that a great teacher:

- Gives me help only when I need it
- Knows my disability limits me, but still challenges me to do my best
- Knows me as an individual
- Allows me to take time out when I need it
- Understands my disability but doesn’t bring attention to it when it’s not needed
- Treats me like everyone else in the classroom
- Knows me as an individual
- Is interested to learn about my disability
- Has good contact with my parents.

RTLB provide advice and guidance to teachers of students who are at risk of low achievement due to learning and/or behaviour difficulties. This may include direct teaching, demonstrating good practice and providing teaching strategies so that students receive appropriate learning programmes and behaviour management on an ongoing basis. There are approximately 780 RTLB working in clusters of schools (see the discussion box on Targeted Professional Development on page 52 for an example).

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Targeted Professional Development: Effective Teaching Pilot Scheme 2007

This local initiative aimed to increase the use of effective teaching strategies in the classroom to meet the needs of diverse learners. Eight schools in the South Wellington RTLB cluster took part. Three RTLB collaborated with a senior lecturer from Victoria University of Wellington to develop a targeted teacher professional development programme. This was based on a review and analysis of student data and ecological assessments from the RTLB casework in the cluster.

Teachers participated in a series of workshops throughout 2007 on four major themes: effective teaching strategies, learning theories, personal theory development and inclusion. There was a major focus on encouraging teachers to think critically and analytically to increase their teaching capacity and capability.

The programme included using research on practice, professional reading, peer coaching, modelling and time to practise strategies learnt. Voluntary teacher participation was a key part. Teachers used personal journals to reflect and set goals, and were challenged to show how their practice was changing.

The evaluation process included a comparison of pre- and post-data that indicated positive shifts in teachers’ use of effective strategies to promote student learning. Teachers are making links between theory and practice, facilitating learning and gaining confidence in their teaching.

Other cluster benefits included a decline in waiting lists, a reduction in the RTLB referral rate in five of the participating schools and fewer direct requests for teacher aide support. Referrals indicated that teachers had implemented effective strategies prior to referral and therefore intervention goals were centred on environmental changes.
TEACHER EDUCATION AND INDUCTION

The development of effective teaching practice occurs at all stages of a teacher’s career. Ensuring the effective teaching of students starts with selecting people with suitable knowledge, skills and dispositions for pre-service teaching programmes. Knowledge, skills and dispositions are then developed through teacher education programmes and the induction phase for provisionally registered teachers (PRT).

Initial Teacher Education

A fundamental part of effective teaching is the recruitment of people with the right knowledge and skills into teacher education programmes. In 2007, there were 9,600 students in pre-service teacher education programmes, with primary teacher education students showing a decline since peaking in 2000 (Figure 3.5).

![Figure 3.5: Number of Students in Teacher Education Programmes, 1994–2007](image-url)
Māori, Pasifika and Asian student teachers made up 13 percent, 6 percent and 5 percent of the 2007 student teacher population respectively. The over-representation of women in teacher education has remained fairly constant over the past decade, with around 80 percent of enrolled students since 1996 being female.

**New Teacher Uptake Rate**

Over the past six years 30–40 percent of primary teacher education graduates and 60–70 percent of secondary teacher education graduates obtained teaching positions within one year after graduation. Over the longer term, this rate has remained relatively steady for secondary teacher graduates, while for primary teacher education graduates it represents a sharp decline from ten years ago.

**Beginning Teachers**

The first few years of teaching are critical to developing newly qualified teachers into effective teachers and to retaining them in the teaching profession. Assistance for new teachers, including, in particular, mentoring programmes, has a positive impact on teachers and their retention.63 Newly qualified teachers undergo a period of advice and guidance before becoming eligible for full registration. In this period, a teacher is categorised as being ‘provisionally registered’ and is entitled to a structured programme of mentoring, professional development, observation, targeted feedback on their teaching and regular assessments based on the standards for full registration. The nature of this induction plays a significant role in the future success of newly qualified teachers and on their retention. The quality of a teacher’s professional experience in their early years of teaching is a crucial influence on the likelihood of their leaving the teaching profession,64 which, in turn, impacts on teacher quality. However, research shows that the quality of induction in New Zealand primary and secondary schools is variable, with a significant minority of teachers receiving no or little advice and guidance.

In 2007, about 67 percent of primary and 45 percent of secondary beginning teachers were employed under non-permanent arrangements in their first year. ERO and the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) have both reported that PRT in permanent positions are more likely than those in temporary positions to benefit from meaningful advice and guidance programmes, and this improves the registration process for them.

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Specialist Classroom Teachers

A pilot programme was introduced in 2006 in secondary schools to create a new position of Specialist Classroom Teacher (SCT) to support and assist beginning teachers and other colleagues in developing and demonstrating purposeful learning environments and effective teaching practices. In 2007, 92 percent of secondary schools employed SCTs.

The review of the 2006 SCT pilot year involved visits to 12 schools around New Zealand for case studies of the implementation of the role. In all instances participants were highly supportive of the role in general and of their SCT in particular. These case studies primarily showed how diverse the implementation of the SCT pilot was in schools and the extent to which school culture and leadership played a part in determining what it looked like.

While the majority of the SCTs appeared to focus on generic classroom management, others focused on introducing the staff at their school to new pedagogies and ideas. The latter were most common in those schools that already had a strong professional learning culture and where there was a clearly defined strategic goal related to staff professional development and teaching practice.

In one school the SCT followed a disruptive class around, observing them with a range of teachers. One of these teachers had been perceived as someone who was ‘struggling’ with the class. The lesson the SCT saw was excellent and she was able to provide positive feedback. As a result, the teacher seemed to regain some of his enthusiasm and motivation – or perhaps self-belief – and his teaching improved.

In another school a PRT had taught in two schools in 2006 and so had worked with two SCTs. He noted that the SCT was very important in helping a new teacher settle into a school. Both SCTs had provided him with similar support, such as classroom management, ideas for teaching and learning, and structuring his work. They provided what he saw as the things new teachers did not get from other experienced teachers, who he thought had possibly forgotten what it was like to be a beginning teacher. These included a range of solutions for different situations, generic teaching strategies and ways to approach teaching. A really big part of the SCT role, he felt, was providing emotional support. In his first two terms he had felt like resigning but the SCT organised for him to observe other teachers and talked him through this challenging time.

CONCLUSION

Achieving successful outcomes for students requires teachers and professional leaders to engage in effective ongoing professional development that enhances their professional knowledge, skills and attitudes, and links to positive impacts on valued student outcomes.

The TPLD BES report describes not only the components of effective contexts for professional learning opportunities, but also the importance of content and activities, and the learning processes of the teachers themselves as learners.

School leaders must also support continued momentum as a result of professional learning. They do this by reinforcing the importance of student goals for learning, providing support to enable teachers to gather and analyse evidence of student progress towards goals and providing ongoing expert support when it is needed.

In 2007, there were a number of professional development programmes that showed clear links with improved student outcomes.

WHERE TO FIND OUT MORE

Visit www.educationcounts.govt.nz

Indicators

Effective Teaching

> Teacher qualifications: schooling
> Match of teacher qualification to subject taught: secondary schooling

Themes

BES

Visit www.tki.org.nz/e/tki/

Select a community

Literacy and Numeracy