2018 Secondary Principal's Sabbatical Report

Title
Wellbeing in a diverse community: the potential for Positive Education to increase wellbeing for learning at Linwood College and in our two Kāhui Ako, Tamai and Aupaki

Author and School:
Richard (Dick) Edmundson, Linwood College, Christchurch
en@linwoodcollege.school.nz

NZ Secondary Principal's Sabbatical:
Term 2 2018

Executive Summary
14 points and a diagram:

1. Positive Education uses the evidence-based research from the field of Positive Psychology for school communities to experience flourishing wellbeing.
2. There is clear evidence that all schools can substantially benefit from attention to Positive Education. Wellbeing and educational achievement will increase.
3. Context matters. A school's context, its internal and external factors, should be the major determinant on how any planned programme of intervention, including Positive Education, is implemented. If context is ignored, the planned programme's effectiveness will be diminished, potentially to the point of ineffectiveness.
4. Culture counts. Culturally responsive and relational pedagogy is central to students' wellbeing, and for most, their achievement.
5. Restorative practices are integral to culturally responsive and relational pedagogy.
6. Home background is the main determinant of educational achievement. However, teachers and school leadership can also make a substantial difference.
7. All teaching is complex. However, effective teaching in lower decile schools is even more complex. Not all teachers have, or have developed, the dispositions and expertise that are vital for effective teaching in the greater complexities – depth and number – of lower decile schools.
8. Because of these greater complexities, teachers in lower decile schools should be paid more than teachers in higher decile schools.

9. Wellbeing and learning are interdependent. In general, upper decile students and/or students with strong cultural grounding have greater social buttressing. Greater social buttressing can mitigate to an extent the effect of low self-efficacy and/or low achievement on wellbeing.
10. Mindset, growth and fixed, reliably predicts achievement across all students.
11. Mindset, growth and fixed, is an even greater predictor of achievement for lower decile students.
12. Upper decile students are more likely to have a growth mindset than lower decile students.
13. Lower decile students who do have a growth mindset are significantly buffered against the effects of poverty on achievement.
14. Culturally responsive and relational pedagogy benefits all students but is a necessity for effective teaching and student growth mindsets in lower decile schools.

Summary diagram
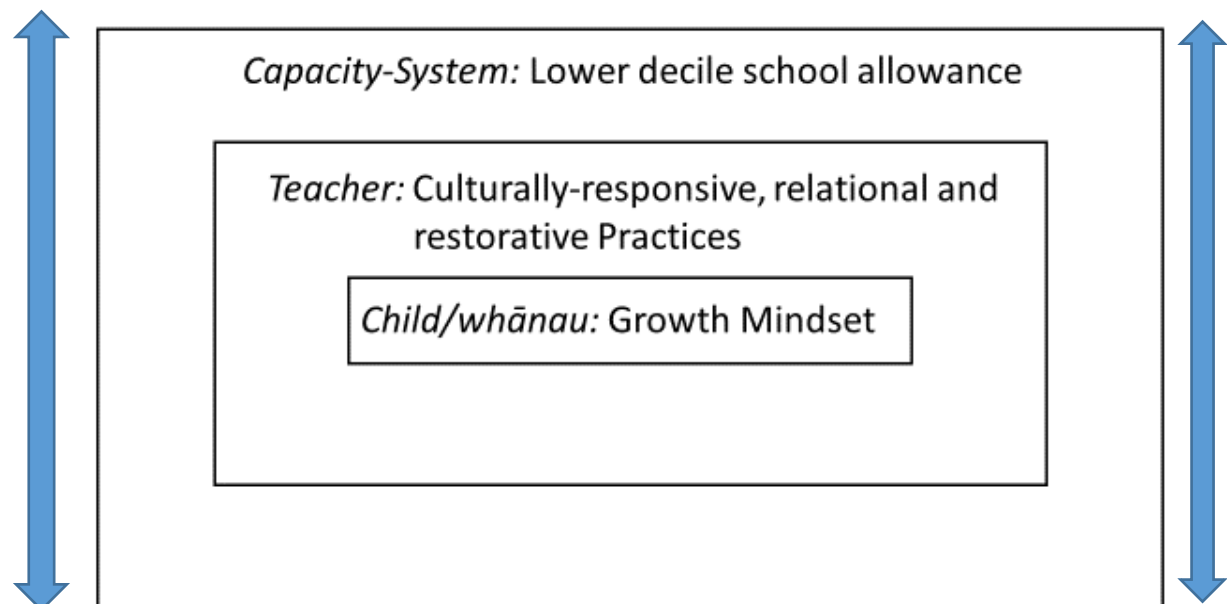
Explanation

I use the wording lower decile and upper decile students in this report. They are not my preferred wording as they are inaccurate but I use them as they are used in some of the literature and are commonly used in the profession.

Acknowledgements

- Linwood College (LC) BOT
- The SLT and staff at LC, particularly Melissa Young, Acting Principal
- MOE
- Colleagues and fellow-professionals

Acknowledgements continued

For my existing bed-rock thinking:

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For our conversations:

- Sue Ingle: LC Head of Guidance
- Melissa Young: LC Acting Principal
- Dave Turnbull: LC BOT, Te Waka Unua BOT, formerly Cashmere HS Principal
- Janeane Reid: Te Waka Unua Principal, Tamai Lead Principal
- Chris Nord: Mt Pleasant School Principal, formerly Aranui Primary Principal
- Emma Lumb: Redcliffs School BOT, Hagley Community College Tertiary Pathways Manager
- Robin Sutton: Hornby HS Principal, formerly Christ's College Deputy Headmaster
- Simon Scott: Hornby HS DP, formerly Hornby Primary School DP
- Gary Roberts: Hornby Primary School Principal
- Kate Mclachlan: Hornby Primary School DP
- John Bangma: Mairehau Primary School Principal
- John Quinn: Christ's College Director of Wellbeing & Positive Education (ex Linwood HS pupil)
- Dr Kevin Knight: NZ Graduate School of Education Director
- Dr Gabrielle Wall: GCSN GM (Greater Christchurch Schools Network)
- Arnika McPhail: GCSN Programme Manager
- Dr Chris Jansen: Leadership Lab
- Professor Letitia Fickell: UC Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor School of Teacher Education
- Assoc Prof Kathleen Liberty: UC School of Health Sciences
- Assoc Prof Sonja Macfarlane: UC School of Health Sciences

Purpose

My purpose was to research Positive Education as to its potential to increase wellbeing for learning at Linwood College and our two Kāhui Ako. This is in the context of many students and adults experiencing post-traumatic stress in the post-earthquake East Christchurch environment.

As my research unfolded, the effect of poverty on educational achievement became the epicentre of my thinking. It had always been a key part of the equation but as my research unfolded, I realised it was going to be a bigger factor than I had previously thought. This report reflects this.

My original purpose from my sabbatical application

Positive Education is an international movement: the International Positive Education Network, IPEN, www.ipositive-education.net IPEN has strong connections to the Positive Psychology Center of the University of Pennsylvania.

In New Zealand, and in Christchurch in particular, Positive Education, is a growing movement. In March 2017, New Zealand's first Positive Education conference occurred in Christchurch for "all those interested in combining the science of wellbeing with best practice education." (Conference information)

There are reasons for choosing to focus on wellbeing and in particular Positive Education.

1. There is high need for a co-ordinated approach to student wellbeing in East Christchurch. This is well-referenced in recent educational, health and social research. Dr Kathleen Liberty, University of Canterbury, and Dr Sue Bagshaw, the Collaborative Trust, are two prominent researchers in this field. Dr Liberty has been working with various Tamai Kāhui Ako schools on resilience in the context of a post-traumatic stress-disordered (PTSD) community: "The emerging earthquake generation." See – http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/regional/283413/the-emerging-earthquake-generation

   "A mental health timebomb." See Radio NZ Checkpoint interview with Dr Sue Bagshaw, 1 June 2017 –

   http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/checkpoint/audio/201846035/christchurch-sitting-on-mental-health-time-bomb

2. The schools in Aupaki Kāhui Ako have already been working with Positive Education. See – www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/84536024/Christchurch-schools-promote-wellbeing-through-character-strength

Linwood College is a re-developing school committed to learner and teacher agency through power-sharing and evidenced-based practices, including:

1. culturally responsive and relational pedagogy
2. collaborative practices for a connected curriculum
3. responsive learning environments

4. pathways
5. student leadership through service
6. authentic whānau partnerships: from informed participants to determining constituents

Linwood College is having an entire whole-school rebuild, the physical expression of our redevelopment through the evidenced-based practices above. My purpose was to research whether Positive Education can be a framework for student wellbeing for positive learning dispositions both within LC and our Kāhui Ako.

Methodology

My original programme had five components:

Christchurch-based:

1. Reviewing the literature on Positive Education and Applied Psychology
2. Learning from our Aupaki Kāhui Ako partner schools as to how they implement Positive Education and from this how to create coherent pathways into LC and beyond
3. Learning from Christ's College as to their implementation of Positive Education
4. Learning from the "100% Project"

Australia-based:

5. Visiting schools experienced in Positive Education and recommended as Australia's pre-eminent Positive Education schools:

   a) St Peter's School, Adelaide
   b) Geelong Grammar School

I received MOE sabbatical funding to go to Australia but I did not in fact go. This was because after reviewing the literature and considering our Christchurch and NZ context, particularly the Treaty of Waitangi and NZ's position as a multi-ethnic community within a bicultural country, I decided that my first steps should be NZ-based.

The methodology was reading available literature and semi-structured interviews with:

1. school leaders across the decile range
2. university academics
3. personnel from other educational agencies

Research findings and conclusions

There are five main research findings and conclusions:
- I. Continue dialogic inquiry
- II. Wellbeing and learning are interdependent.
- III. "Growth mindset tempers the effects of poverty on academic achievement."
- IV. Policy and official documentation are flawed.
- V. It is time for a macropolicy change.

I. Continue dialogic inquiry

Linwood College should continue its present focus on dialogic inquiry for Mauri Ora.

Teaching = Relationships for Learning

↑

Inquiry
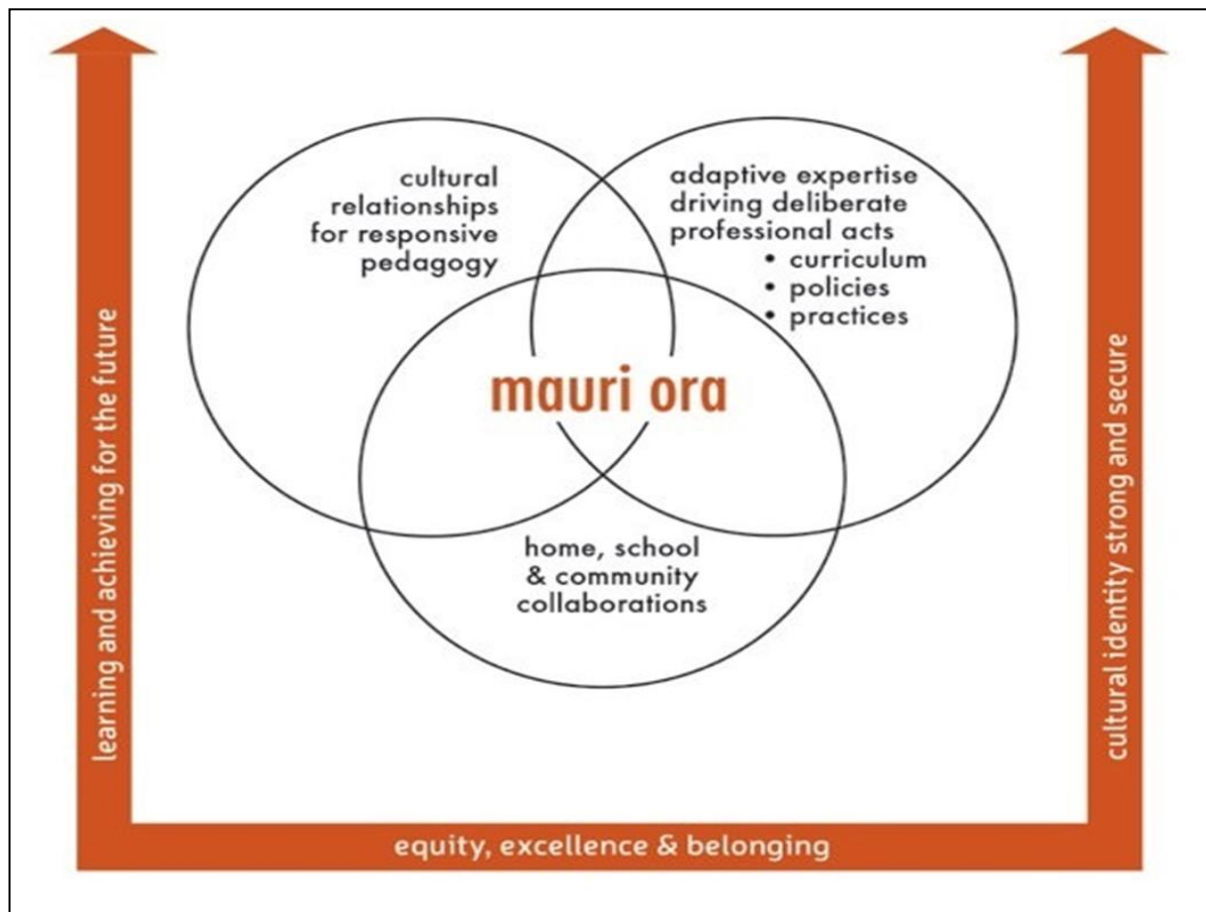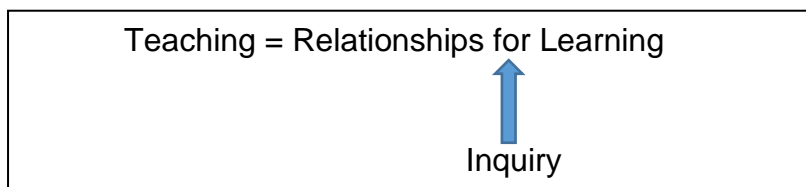
Quoting from the above diagram, LC's implementation of *cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy* and the *adaptive experience driving deliberate professional acts* should explicitly incorporate restorative practices and growth mindset.

II. Wellbeing and learning are interdependent.

Learning comes out of wellbeing; eg: you cannot learn if you are not feeling safe; Marslow's hierarchy of needs.

In general, upper decile students and/or students with strong cultural grounding have greater social buttressing because they/whānau have more locus of control in other areas of their lives.

A higher level of social buttressing can mitigate to an extent the effect of low self-efficacy and/or low achievement on wellbeing. For lower decile students a sense of learning agency plays a greater contributing part of their wellbeing.

Wellbeing ⟷ Learning
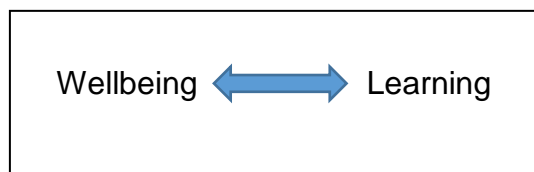
III. "Growth mindset tempers the effects of poverty on academic achievement."

The above is the title of an article by Susana Claro, David Paunesku, and Carol S. Dweck. This was a national Chilean study published in 2016 by the USA National Academy of Sciences. I was drawn to the article because of the prominence of Carol Dweck's research in NZ's educational community.

Its findings:

a) confirm that family income is a strong predictor of achievement through: reduced access to educational resources, higher levels of stress, poorer nutrition, reduced access to healthcare
b) a growth mindset reliably predicts achievement across all students (see "e" below)
c) students from lower-income families are more likely to have a fixed mindset. The article's authors state that to their knowledge this is the first documentation of this relationship. See the following bar graph for further information on this.

d) The mindsets of lower-income students' mindsets are even greater achievement predictors, both positively and negatively.
e) There is a double disadvantage for lower income students as lower income magnifies the negative effects of fixed mindset. These students comparatively lack the advantages from income - see "a" above - so have greater income obstacles to succeed.

Extract from the article's introduction
This study is the first, to our knowledge, to show that a growth mindset (the belief that intelligence is not fixed and can be developed) reliably predicts achievement across a national sample of students, including virtually all of the schools and socioeconomic strata in Chile.

It also explores the relationship between income and mindset for the first time, to our knowledge, finding that students from lower-income families were less likely to hold a growth mindset than their wealthier peers but that those who did hold a growth mindset were appreciably buffered against the deleterious effects of poverty on achievement.

These results suggest that mindsets may be one mechanism through which economic disadvantage can affect achievement.

Students from lower-income families are less likely to hold a growth mindset
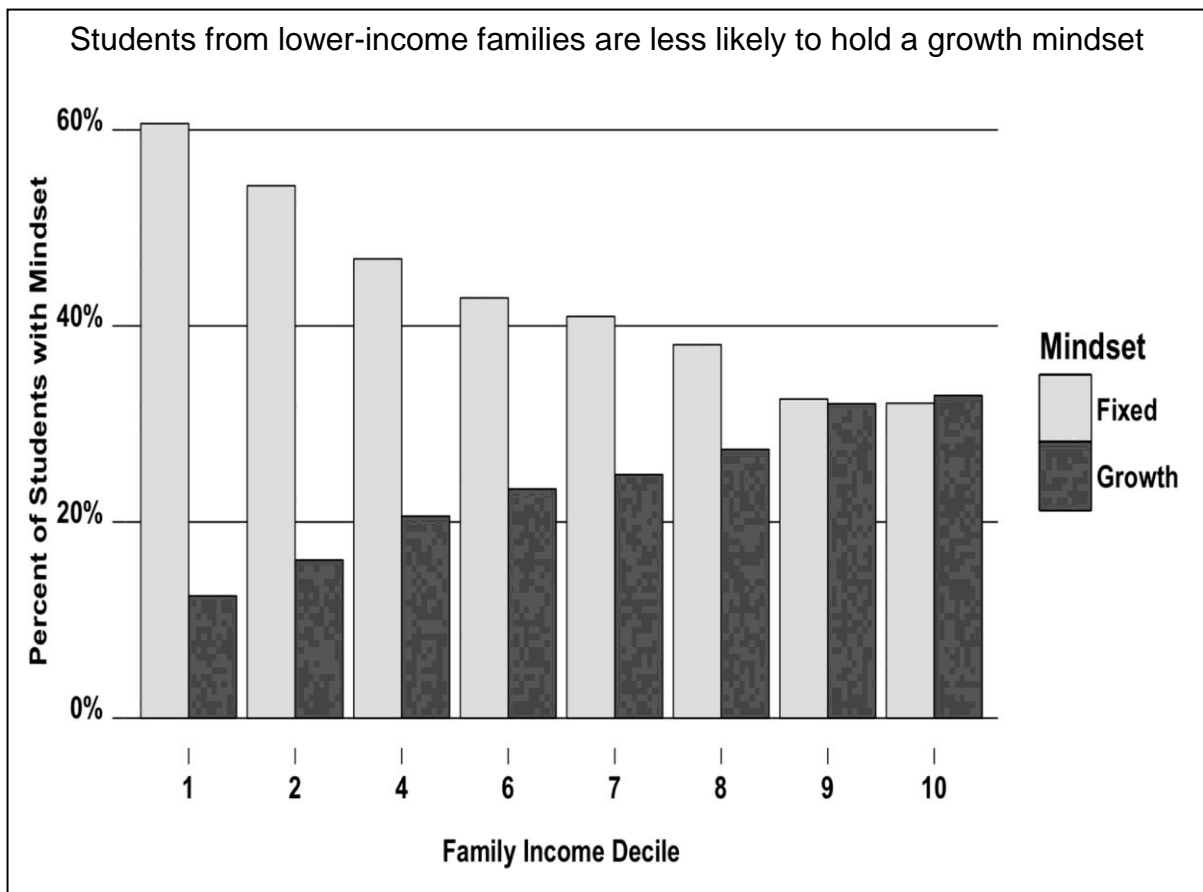
Three Claro, Paunesku, and Dweck observations   [direct quotation]

Observation 1
The observation that mindset is a more important predictor of success for low-income students than for their high-income peers is novel, although it is consistent with prior research, which has found that a fixed mindset is more debilitating (and a growth mindset is more protective) when individuals must overcome significant barriers to succeed.

Observation 2
To be clear, we are not suggesting that structural factors, like income inequality or disparities in school quality, are less important than psychological factors. Nor are we saying that teaching students a growth mindset is a substitute for systemic efforts to alleviate poverty and economic inequality. Such claims would stand at odds with decades of research and our own data. Rather, we are suggesting that structural inequalities can give rise to psychological inequalities and that those psychological inequalities can reinforce the impact of structural inequalities on achievement and future opportunity.

Observation 3
Although existing data cannot explain why low-income students more likely to endorse fixed mindset, this finding suggests those who hold growth mindset were appreciably buffered against the deleterious effects of poverty on achievement.

Growth mindset students in the lowest 10th percentile of family income match fixed mindset students from the 80th income percentile.
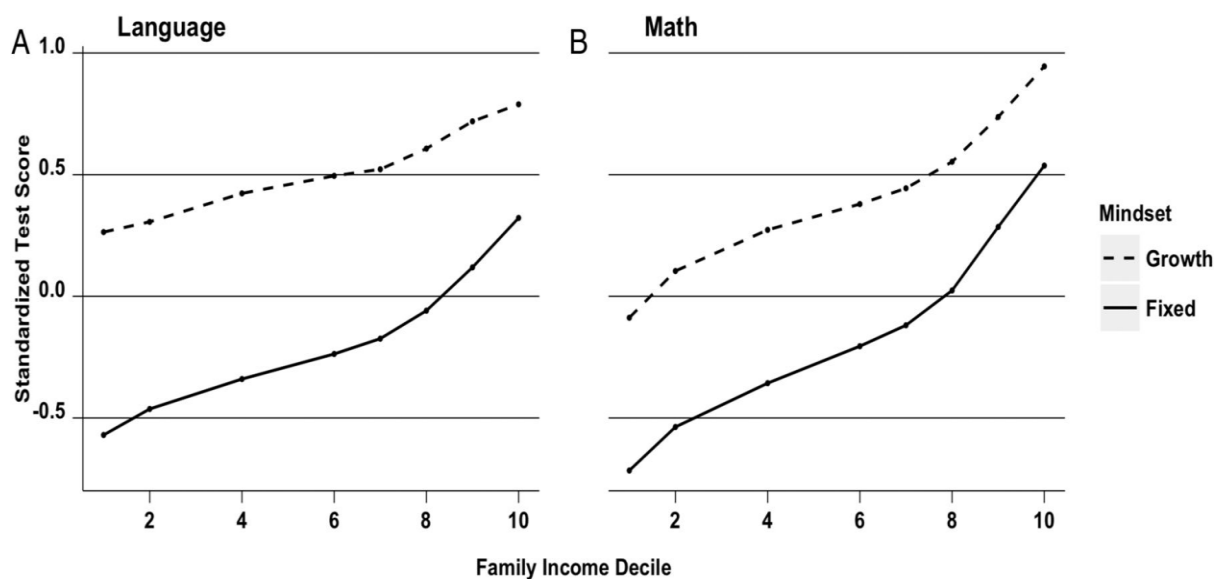
Importantly, it [mindset] is a belief that is potentially open to change.

IV.   Policy and official documentation are flawed.

Professor Martin Thrupp, University of Waikato quotes Richard Valencia, Professor Educational Psychology, University of Texas:

"Macropolicies establish the boundaries of possibilities."

Therefore, what is New Zealand's policy and official documentation narrative?

The official narrative acknowledges the disparities in NZ students' achievement and seeks to remedy this. There is some acknowledgement of the effect of home background on achievement but the greater emphasis is on the positive in-school difference that effective teaching and leadership can make.

Three representative samples of text are:

1. ERO: Raising student achievement through targeted actions 2015

The biggest challenge for the New Zealand education system is the persistent disparities in achievement. Setting effective targets and creating the conditions in which all kids [sic] *can excel will reduce these disparities.*

When this happens, the focus is on the students with leaders and teachers adapting their practice to realise their students' potential.

2. ERO: Raising student achievement through targeted actions 2015

This report is full of stories of schools taking action to make a difference for kids previously at risk of underachievement. The stories echo what we already know matters most in achieving positive student outcomes. The key ingredients for equity and excellence in education are articulated in the School Evaluation Indicators.

At the heart of these stories is the expectation that every student can achieve excellence <u>with the acknowledgement that some kids</u> [sic] <u>*need more help than others to get there.*</u>

I have underlined the final words as they lightly acknowledge different students have varying depth of need, but the narrative still focuses on the in-school influences, ignoring the greater influence of the external factors.

3. *Briefing for the Incoming Minister of Education, Hon Chris Hipkins October 2017*

   1. *We have defined our purpose as shaping an education system that delivers equitable and excellent outcomes.*
   2. *We are focused on the major challenge for the NZ education system: achieving equity and excellence in outcomes for an increasingly diverse population.*
   3. *The quality of teaching and leadership are the two strongest in-school influences on progress and achievement for children and young people.*

      [This point is true, but in my view, following it should be the point that home environment is the greatest single determinant of educational achievement.]

   4. *Education needs to equip all children, young people and students with skills and competencies for life and work. This requires the education system to have high expectations for everybody, respond and connect to the language, culture and identity of all children and young people and students, be free of bias, and <u>removes barriers to participation, learning and achievement.</u>*
   5. *We work across government to support better social and economic outcomes.*
   6. *We work closely with agencies in other sectors to address long term economic and social outcomes….Addressing wider social issues better helps support children, young people and students to attend and engage in learning.*

Again, the underlined words in point 4 lightly acknowledge factors external to a school. Points 5 and 6 do go further but, as I insert after point 3, the briefing document does not state that the factors external to a school have greater influence on achievement than internal factors do.

Martin Thrupp calls this lack of balance the "politics of blame." I believe it is a deliberate imbalance and that it borders on intellectual dishonesty. Certainly, it is a deliberate ignoring as there is clear evidence of the dominant influence of the home and social environment. Two representative examples of this evidence are:

1. Professor John Hattie's effect size meta-analysis
   https://visible-learning.org/category/visible-learning/

2. Sir Peter Gluckman, PM's Chief Science Advisor, 2011
   Improving the Transition:
   Reducing Social and Psychological Morbidity During Adolescence

   Another pervasive finding in the research literature is that rates of many types of childhood problems, including childhood conduct problems, tend to be higher amongst families facing sources of social inequality and deprivation, including poverty, welfare dependence, reduced living standards and related factors…. multiple sources of social, economic, family and related disadvantage.

   These findings highlight the fact that the general socio-economic milieu within which children are raised has farreaching consequences for their healthy development.

The imbalance in New Zealand's policy and official documentation narrative, ironically, and sadly so, itself becomes part of the problem.

Writing in Vicki Carpenter's and Sue Osborne's 2014 book, **Twelve Thousand Hours: Education and Poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand**, Thrupp states:

Over the last decade, New Zealand has seen discussions around deficit thinking shift outside the pattern of most international literature towards a position where any consideration of poverty or socio-economic constraints by teachers or others in the education sector has become labelled as deficit thinking as well.

Such all-encompassing "blanket" anti-deficit thinking perspectives put all the responsibility for student achievement on teachers and schools.

[Thus] some politicians and policy makers state student achievement is the result of school-based factors only. References to wider contextual issues such as socio-economic factors are ruled out as excuses for poor teacher or school performance.

Under a subheading of *Towards a more complex account*, Thrupp continues:

It is futile to try and stop teachers from thinking about socio-economic influences on teaching as teacher deficit arguments try to do. Where we ask teachers not to think about wider structural reasons for underachievement, they will certainly still think about those things but often keep their views to themselves.

It is much better to have such thinking out in the open, and some informed understandings circulating....

V.   It is time for a macropolicy change.

It is widely accepted that teacher and school leaders can make a substantial difference to achievement and wellbeing. Gluckman states:

Children spend in the region of 15,000 hours at school. Given this, it is not surprising to find that the nature and quality of the school environment play an important role in shaping children's behaviour.

Effective teaching is entirely worth focussing on. Hattie's research and Te Kotahitanga and its subsequent programmes show this clearly. However, it is time to recognise that while all teaching is complex and therefore can have degrees of difficulty, effective teaching in lower decile schools is even more complex, and therefore more difficult.

In her own chapter, "Pedagogies of hope: Dialogical professional development", in **Twelve Thousand Hours: Education and Poverty in Aotearoa New** Zealand, Vicki Carpenter has two subheadings:

1. Teachers can be part of the problem
2. Teachers are part of the solution

She writes:

It is both a challenge and a privilege to be a teacher in one of NZ's low-decile schools, however, the schools and communities do not need "missionaries". Good teachers are part (but not all) of the solution to inequitable educational outcomes; ideally low-decile school teachers are public intellectuals who impart pedagogies of hope.

Carpenter continues:

• *Not all teachers have, or have developed, the dispositions and expertise which are vital for successful teaching in high-poverty contexts.*

• *Not all teachers are suited to teaching in low-decile schools; those who do succeed in such contexts often have additional and specific strengths.*

- *Effective teacher lists offer attributes desired of good teachers in all NZ classrooms; …they are necessary but not sufficient for effective teaching in NZ's high-poverty schools.*

And:

Low-decile-school teachers and leaders have every reason to take pride in their work; far more than what is asked of other teachers is asked of them, and far more is given.

It is through dialogue (critical inquiry) that effective lower decile teachers develop the necessary teaching dispositions and it is teacher-student dialogue that is the foundation for effective teaching in such environments.

Carpenter quotes Freire (1972) and Schor (1992):

Freire
Dialogue is the encounter in which the united reflection and action of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed and humanized, this dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person's 'depositing' ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be 'consumed' by the participants in the discussion ….

[Dialogue] is an act of creation; it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one man [sic] by another.

Schor
Mutual discussion is the heart of the method. Dialogue is simultaneously structured and creative. It is initiated and directed by a critical teacher but is democratically open to student intervention….

Dialogue is neither a freewheeling conversation nor a teacher-dominated exchange. Balancing the teacher's authority and the students' input is the key to making the process both critical and democratic.

As effective teaching is worth focussing on and as teaching in a lower decile school is more complex than in other environments, it is time for a national discussion on Carpenter' views. Further to this, the present policy settings are not achieving the desired outcomes as shown by:

1. MOE: "The major challenge: achieving equity and excellence"
2. ERO: "persistent disparities in achievement"
3. Gluckman: "general socio-economic milieu within which children are raised has farreaching consequences"

Therefore, it is time for the introduction of a salary allowance for teaching in lower decile schools. There is precedence for this in the PTSA, the Priority Teacher Staffing Allowance. The allowance would benefit the whole system as what is effective teaching in lower-decile environments – the pedagogy of dialogue – is effective teaching for all.

Summary diagram
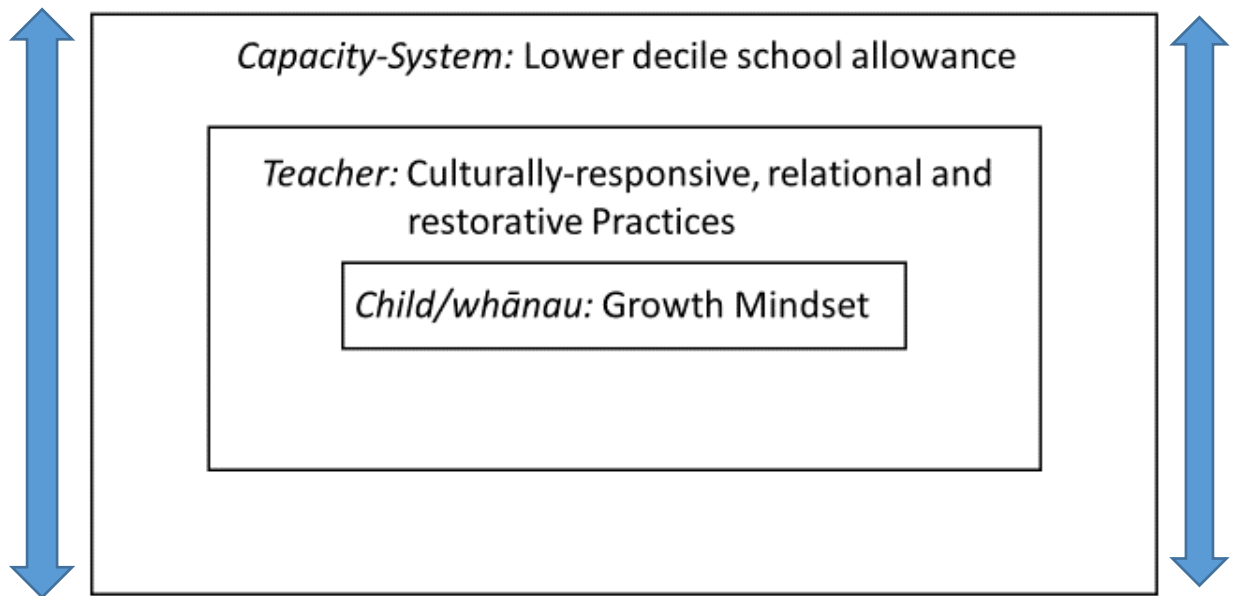
Powerpoint slides:

The following are all the slides – 68 of them! – that I have created for various presentations of this research. I select from these slides to suit the intended audience.

Some of the slides repeat directly what is in this report but others have further information, both new information and deeper material of existing information.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B30M5z-h-vZ1aVE5MEh1amJWM3kzMWUtazdiWGh0cnhXWnBN/view?usp=sharing

References

ERO documents

- *Wellbeing for Young People's Successs at Primary School* 2015
- *Wellbeing for Young People's Successs at Secondary School* 2015
- *Wellbeing for Success: A Resource for Schools* 2016
- *Wellbeing for Success: Effective Practice* 2016
- *Accelerating student achievement: a resource for schools* 2015
- *Raising student achievement through targeted actions* 2015
- *School Leadership that Works* 2016
- *Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako in action* 2017
- *Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako:*
  Collaboration to Improve Learner Outcomes 2017
- *Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako:*
  Working towards collaborative practice 2017
- *School Evaluation Indicators* 2016
- *Effective internal evaluation for improvement* 2016
- *What drives learning in the senior secondary school?* 2018

Other sources

- *Improving the Transition: Reducing Social and Psychological Morbidity During Adolescence*
  A report from the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor, May 2011
  [Background report to The Prime Minister's Youth Mental Health Project]
- *Briefing for the Incoming Minister of Education*, Hon Chris Hipkins Oct 2017
- *Twelve Thousand Hours: Education and Poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand.*
  Vicki M. Carpenter & Sue Osborne. Dunmore, 2014.
- *A Framework for Understanding Poverty. A Cognitive Approach.*
  Ruby K. Payne. aha!, 2013.
- Martin Haberman https://habermanfoundation.org/pedagogy-of-poverty/
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  Susana Claro, David Paunesku, and Carol S. Dweck.
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  August 2, 2016. 113 (31) 8664-8668
- "Toxic Stress in Children and Adolescents."
  Advances in Pediatrics 63 (2016) 403-428. Bucci, Marques, Oh, Harris.
- Grow Waitaha
- The Starpath Project
- *Resilience.* A film: James Redford, director.
  [ACE: Adverse Childhood Experiences.]
- *Poutama Pounamu* and sources from *Kia Eke Panuku*
- Course material: Professor Angus Macfarlane's *Cultural Diversity* paper, 2016