

Acknowledgements

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Purpose

Understand how schools implement personalised learning approaches and research the pedagogies that assist to authentically deliver learning that is ākonga centred.

Key items to investigate:

1. Research in the area of personalised learning
2. Investigate professional resources and texts that can provide practical strategies to assist teachers in their practice.
3. Visit schools that successfully implement personalised learning approaches for priority learners and children with diverse learning needs.

Executive Summary

- Aotearoa has a rich and strong history of innovative educators from classroom teachers, leaders in kura, researchers, consultants, sector leaders and elected representatives. These people help us all continue to forge innovative ideas and pedagogies.
- Innovative learning environments (ILE) are a structural concept of classroom layout, we need to challenge the more exciting pedagogies that provide a way to assist our ākonga to develop competencies and dispositions for the changing world we live in.
- Developing a deeper understanding of: Learner agency and engagement, Pace of learning/ self direction and facilitation, Pace of learning, self direction and facilitation and Collaboration and competencies enable educators to better facilitate and provide ākonga with authentic and personalised learning opportunities.

Ko te ahurei o te tamaiti aroha o tātou mai

Let the uniqueness of the child (learner) guide our work

As educators it is our role to, challenge current structures and paradigms, develop an inquiring mindset and have passion to make a difference to the ākonga keeping them at the centre of this learning adventure.

Over recent years we have become locked in the eternal paradigm of assessment and narrow focus of literacy and numeracy in both primary and secondary schools. This paradigm has created anxiety not only with ākonga and whanau who are focused on achievement standards, NCEA credits and tests for OTJs but also on the education profession that has prevented them from expressing the art of the teacher and their facilitation of learning.

As a country we have a rich history and many kiwi educators and leaders have forged the way in keeping our ākonga at the centre of learning over many years.

From the early 1940s Sylvia Aston Warner, a pioneering kiwi educator, moved with her husband to Pipiki on the Whanganui river. Her educational ideas started taking shape. Like many Māori teachers at the time, she found the subject matter of the standard reading books too removed from the real-life experiences of the Māori children in her care to be useful. She decided to make use of the children's own personal stories to encourage them to learn to read. She produced a series of infant reading books that featured Ihaka, a young student who had made an impression on her. Sylvia believed in organic reading and writing. She believed that learning must be real. It must start from a person's experience and relate to their world.

Children were then able to learn quickly and, in the process, develop their inner strength.

Sylvia quickly adapted what we now term contextual learning that was based on real experiences that ākonga could relate to.

In 1939 Peter Fraser and Clarence Beeby (assistant director of education at the time) made the following statement:

"The Government's objective, broadly expressed, is that all persons, whatever their ability, rich or poor, whether they live in town or country, have a right as citizens to a free education of the kind for which they are best fitted and to the fullest extent of their powers. So far is this from being a mere pious platitude that the full acceptance of the principle will involve the reorientation of the education system."

On 1 May 1940, Clarence Beeby was appointed director of education and took charge of the department.

Beeby's vision formally commits the government to enabling every child, each citizen, to reach their potential. Stated simply, it was about, as he put it, *"making the education system responsive to the needs of the individual kid."*

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Beeby also established what we now know as the polytechnic system. *"Apart from all these airy-fairy ideas,"* he told Ian Fraser, *"we had to get a new system of technical education"*.

Although Fraser and Beeby established a change that helped move ākonga more towards the centre of learning and *'education of the kind for which they are best fitted and to the fullest extent of their powers'*

The development of the polytechnics to more meet the needs of further education became an important development during this era as it provided ākonga the opportunity to extend passions in the rising levels of technology on the world stage.

In December of 2004 Steve Maharey became Minister for Education. Maharey reframed the discussion from the 1940s and began using the term 'Personalised learning' He expressed that:

'Personalising learning is a way of renewing Clarence Beeby's vision of equal opportunity for all students. In Beeby's time as Secretary of Education in the 1940s, our system was transformed to open up education to those sections of the community that had been excluded in previous generations. Beeby's vision went much further than inclusion. Today we are working to build a system that is geared up to equip every child. Maharey, suggested clearly that "Personalising learning is a way of describing the shift that is happening in our education system as we respond to the challenges of the 21st century." (Ministry of Education, 2006, p.3) and also that our education *"system must fit the learner rather than the learner fit the system."* (Ministry of Education, 2007a, p.3). Maharey says, *"We will see teaching shaped around the way different students learn and, we will see more care taken to nurture the unique talents of every pupil.*

The system must fit the learner rather than the learner fit the system

Through the promotion of personalising learning, the new curriculum gives teachers greater flexibility to apply their professional knowledge, and use new and innovative teaching approaches.

We have been blessed with not only the examples above but also of teachers, leaders and facilitators who have kept this approach alive over many years. Learning is personal. We all bring our own experiences that have shaped who we are today and what our beliefs and values are that drive us. There are many research articles, policy papers and theories that endeavour to articulate the definition and pedagogy of personalised learning.

The Education Review Office in its **glossary of terms**, uses the following definition:

'In essence it refers to learning that is tailored to the specific needs and interests of each student. In a personalised learning environment, the learning objectives and content, as well as the method and pace may all vary (so personalisation encompasses differentiation and individualisation.) Typically students know and understand how they learn and make choices about what and how they learn. This is negotiated with the teacher and will be set within a framework to meet clear learning objectives.'

Tailored to the specific needs and interests of each student

Below are key areas that I believe assist in developing a strong pedagogy in relation to personalised learning. These have been gleaned from research and observed in schools I visited during my sabbatical:

- Learner agency and engagement
- Pace of learning/ self direction and facilitation
- Passion and inquiry
- Collaboration and competencies

Learner agency and engagement

“Putting the learner at the heart of the education system” (Leadbeater, 2008)

Bray and McCluskey 2015 state that *‘in a personalised learning environment, learning starts with the learner. Learners understand how they learn best so they can become active participants in designing their learning goals along with the teacher.’*

Learners take responsibility for their learning. When they own and drive their learning, they are motivated and challenged as they learn. Learner agency refers to the level of control, autonomy, and power that a student experiences in an educational situation. Authentic assessments, experiential or project based learning, and mastery-based learning all provide opportunities to increase student agency. With more learner agency can come higher levels of engagement and commitment to the learning process.

Co-construction of the learning pathways between the learner and teacher is at the heart of learner agency.

In a number of schools I visited (Both primary and secondary) this was clearly articulated by staff and when conversing with learners it was evident that they were in control of their own learning and inquiry. One secondary school begun planning from the NZ Curriculum objectives and then worked with learners to negotiate inquiries that they may be interested in investigating and researching. NCEA achievement standards were then back mapped to the learning inquiry. This provided a clear scaffold for learning rather than a scaffold for NCEA assessments.

Co-construction of the learning pathways between the learner and teacher is at the heart of learner agency.

The New Zealand Curriculum key competencies are about developing the dispositions and sense of agency that empower the individual, and help them better understand and negotiate the perspectives and values of others, contributing towards more productive and inclusive workplaces and societies.

It is important for educators to provide a concise and solid framework for learning to happen.

The Education Review Office domain 4 indicator expresses that:

“Students are given explicit instruction in learning strategies (such as goal setting, self-monitoring and deliberate practice) that enable them to take control of their learning, develop meta-cognitive skills, self-regulate, and develop self-efficacy and agency.”

When both learner and educator are engaged and focussed, learning becomes powerful. Part of engagement is the ability to make learning relevant and contextual. This is exciting and with clever planning educators can still work with individuals to assist in targeting gaps in literacy and numeracy as these areas can at times prevent the learner from full engagement in learning that they are focussed on. These areas are still the bread and butter of teaching but can be reframed in a more contextual and personalised way within the learning environment.

Pace of learning, self direction and facilitation

The ability of educators to assist learners to improve and to also target under achievement is paramount.

Bray and McCluskey 2015 state *'When teachers differentiate instruction, learners are identified based on their challenges in a specific content area and skill levels. The teacher uses existing differentiated curriculum or adapts instruction to meet the needs of different groups.'* This is the heart of our profession. John Hattie uses the term micro teaching and it rates within the top ten of the effect size for teaching.

Hattie explains that it *"typically involves student-teachers conducting (mini-) lessons to a small group of students, and then engaging in a post-discussion about the lessons"* (Hattie 2009, 112).

The art of facilitation of the educator assists in the pace of learning and as detailed on domain 4 of the ERO indicators: *'Teachers use differentiation and a variety of teaching strategies to engage students and ensure a balance of surface, deep and conceptual learning.'*

***adapts instruction to meet the
needs of different groups***

During my visits at one primary school I saw two Year 7 boys writing a report as a summary of an inquiry relating to a balloon propelled rocket. They were finding it difficult to articulate their ideas while writing the report. They had started to disengage. watching from a distance they decided to get advice from a teacher from another location in the school about what to do. They then got advice from the associate principal and office staff and worked with them outside to articulate their summary. The boys then moved back to their learning space and co-constructed their report while their pod teacher worked with them on sentence construction and paragraphing. The school provided them the ability to keep engaged by providing choice of who to ask for help and then their classroom teacher worked with them in micro teaching the report.

Passion and inquiry

We know that we learn best when we are passionate.

NZCER released a report for the Ministry of Education in 2012 called 'Supporting future-oriented learning and teaching - A New Zealand perspective'

This report detailed that: *'Research clearly shows that people do not learn well as "spectators", as passive recipients of pre-packaged, bite-sized pieces of knowledge delivered to them by experts: good learning requires active engagement in the "whole game". The more people learn, the more they are capable of learning. Although some of these principles are understood by many teachers, our education systems and practices are often set up in ways that do not support these principles to operate in practice. If we are serious about building an education system that is capable of preparing young people for the "knowledge societies" of the future, we need to reconfigure it in new,*

more knowledge-centred ways. However, it will only be possible to do this when there is wider public awareness of the growing gap between the kinds of learning our young people are getting, and the kind of learning they need. There will also need to be wider public support for teachers and school leaders as they attempt what is effectively a paradigm shift in practice.'

We know that we learn best when we are passionate. This holds true for us as educators and also for our learners. Linking our learners to their passions that engage them and facilitate deep learning that is contextual and authentic helps us build understanding for our ākonga in an authentic way. Building passion learning into the timetable is powerful as this creates passion for learning, engagement and also assists in developing vocational pathways. These pathways assist ākonga from an early age.

Hedges, H. and Cullen, J. (2005) detail that *'Concept based learning (CBL), previously called problem-based learning ... is a learning concept that originated in Canada in the 1960s at McMasters University and was used initially to prepare medical students for practice (Alexander, McDaniel, & Baldwin, 2005; Dochy, Segers, Van den Bossche, & Gijbels, 2003).*

The process of CBL involves students being provided with a scenario, and undertaking a student-led process of hypothesising, which ultimately results in the development of the students' own learning needs. The identified learning needs are explored by the student group, who use current research and resources to consolidate a position and present this to their peers. As a teaching tool CBL utilises a group approach to learning – the process of working together creates discourse and leads students towards a solution focus.'

Using this inquiry approach to learning assists to:

- make learning real
- promote engagement of both ākonga and educator
- provides real life experiences to the learning within the school.
- provides the vehicle for ākonga to explore their passions in an inquiry mindset

As educators it is our role to provide the opportunity for children to explore their own passions and frame the learning around this and also challenge and them to develop the competencies and dispositions that will move them forward .

Four (two secondary and two primary) of the schools I visited used this inquiry approach to facilitate learning. It was relevant and from observations across the schools there was purposeful engagement.

Collaboration and competencies

**Naku te rourou nau te rourou ka ora ai te iwi
With your basket and my basket the people will live**

There are more schools now moving towards a Collaborative teaching environment. a number of examples include learning hubs that have three teachers working in a space with 80-90 children. They are being used in both primary and secondary schools. These environments encourage collaboration among educators to share and learn from each other.

The Alliance for Excellent Education report (2012) states that:

“When teachers collectively engage in participatory decision making, designing lessons, using data, and examining student work, they are able to deliver rigorous and relevant learning for all students and personalise learning for individual students” (Pg. 16).

learners see themselves as both participants and contributors to the learning process

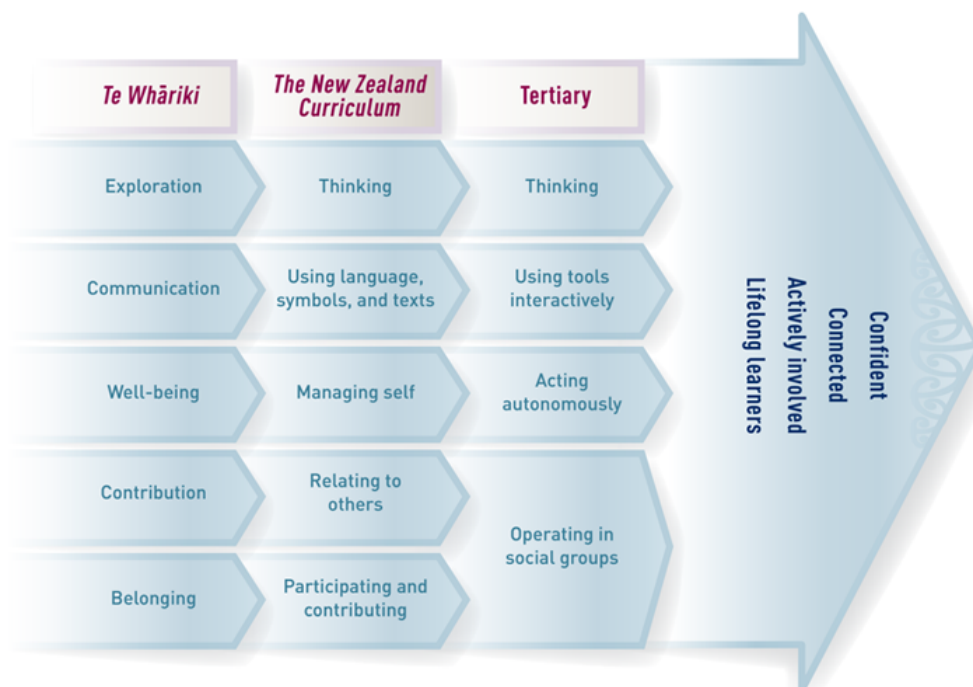
Of the six schools visited, five were working in collaborative environments with open space areas. The other school was also working collaboratively but in single cell classrooms but ākonga were able to move to spaces of choice in their classroom and around the school.

Teaching collaboratively is the most authentic model for ākonga as they begin to see that learning is about connecting with others and how we can enhance our own understanding to the world.

Personalised learning environments have a highly collaborative ethic. They foster a culture where learners see themselves as both participants and contributors to the learning process. Collaboration within a personalised learning environment means more than just working cooperatively. The role of learner and teacher is interchangeable between all classroom members and movement to spaces that are appropriate for their learning to happen.

These collaborative environments assist the educator by providing a very flexible model to frame the competencies around the learning. The key competencies provide a roadmap for educators to really frame learning in New Zealand. Using the analogy of ‘keeping the end in sight’ we can scaffold dispositions that enable our ākonga to attain the vision and intent of the NZ curriculum and also provide the attributes to assist them to become life long learners.

Below is the competency pathway for education that is espoused in the New Zealand curriculum statement. The schools visited were using these to various degrees.



Careers NZ also uses a similar template that they call the employability skills that detail dispositions that employers wish to have with new employees.



Universities also detail key skills and attributes that they have gathered from research which employees require for their new graduates. Victoria University details below research they have undertaken with employers to attain an understanding of what to prepare their graduates for in the workforce.

What employers look for

Some careers, such as an architect or lawyer, demand a specific degree but increasingly, well-developed transferable skills and the ability to adapt are seen as important assets for today's workplace. Successful people have a flexible outlook and take advantage of opportunities.

Employers look for enthusiasm and passion as well as good grades. They hire graduates who are able to explain why they chose their particular course of study and why they enjoyed it.

The right attitude to life, study and work is what gives people a competitive edge when applying for jobs.

Our statistics show that our graduates are employed in a variety of sectors. Our annual Job Report shows that in 40 percent of vacancies advertised, employers did not specify any particular degree or subject area. There was a strong demand for graduates across all disciplines—doing any Victoria degree widens potential career options.

Employers look for enthusiasm and passion

Skills and attributes

Our research shows that employers value competencies that Victoria fosters, both inside and outside lecture theatres. In addition to sound academic achievement, these competencies include:

- analytical and critical thinking
- energy and enthusiasm
- initiative and enterprise
- interpersonal skills
- problem solving
- self-management
- team work
- verbal communication skills
- work ethic
- written communication skills.

In conclusion

We have a strong history for innovation in New Zealand. We also have innovative educators who are currently implementing pedagogy in the area of personalised learning.

Learning is an adventure and the way we facilitate and engage the 'art of teaching' will build the passion for the vocation we have as educators and also assist to build the passion and competencies for our ākonga to develop life long learning skills.

I believe it is critical we as educational leaders focus on:

- a) know, plan and use the NZ curriculum more effectively to deliver learning programmes that enable us to achieve the objectives espoused in the 'Education amendment act 2017'.

The objectives for the education system are:

helping each child and young person attain educational achievement to the best of their potential

» *promoting the development of:*

- › *resilience, determination, confidence, and creative and critical thinking*
- › *good social skills and the ability to form good relationships*
- › *participation in community life and fulfilment of civic and social responsibilities*
- › *preparedness for work*

» *instilling an appreciation of the importance of:*

- › *the inclusion within society of different groups and persons with different personal characteristics*
- › *the diversity of society*
- › *cultural knowledge, identity, and the different official languages*
- › *the Treaty of Waitangi and te reo Māori.*

- b) use student agency to develop learning that is relevant and engaging for all ākonga
- c) challenge our current delivery of learning to better meet the needs ākonga
- d) work with ākonga to assist them to personalise their learning for the vocation and passions they have in life, so their dispositions as life long learners provides them with the skills and competencies to reach their dreams
- e) developing a shared graduate profile at various stages of an ākonga's journey that can be used to back map learning pathways for children.

Spending time researching and also visiting schools has alluded to me the diverseness of education in aotearoa. there will be no one size fits all approach to learning but through gleaming into our forbears and looking towards the future we have the power to foster the leaders of our future and create a better society.

Ensuring ākonga are at the heart of this pedagogical shift is powerful.

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