

*Mantle of the Expert -
Dramatic Inquiry*

Sabbatical Report

Term 2 2017

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Acknowledgements

I underestimated the value that I would gain during my sabbatical, particularly the uninterrupted quality reflection time during professional readings and the highly skilled people I visited.

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I would like to acknowledge Dr Viv Aitken of Waikato University who I was privileged to meet at my daughters' school, Kaurihohore, during a professional development day on Mantle of the Expert in 2013. Her extensive knowledge and expertise has influenced, challenged and changed many beliefs about engaging students in learning.

In particular, I would like to acknowledge Renee Downey, a teacher at Otaika Valley School, for completing Dr Viv Aitkens masters level summer paper on Mantle of the Expert, and her committed efforts since 2014 exploring these approaches within her class, as well as the sustained leadership and support of her colleagues.

I would like to acknowledge the staff who have worked to challenge their practice, play with drama and step outside their comfort zone to engage students in learning.

I would like to acknowledge the Ministry of Education for the commitment towards providing sabbaticals to enhance learning within New Zealand Schools. This is truly a great privilege and of the highest value to student learning.

I would like to acknowledge the Ministry of Education for providing the Teacher-led Innovation Fund, which is running alongside my sabbatical, to allow what we hope to be a significant change to the learning at Otaika Valley School in the long term.

Lastly I would like to acknowledge Sue Bleaken of Melville Intermediate and Gay Gilbert of Hillcrest Normal School and their principals for allowing them the time to share their extensive knowledge of Mantle of the Expert, Process Drama, Dramatic Inquiry and how these approaches have been and are used within their schools. Both of these educators have significant influences upon student learning and I will take a lot away from my time with them to consider, when I plan to develop our own expertise at Otaika Valley School.

Executive Summary

The intention is to explore a dramatic inquiry approach to learning called Mantle of the Expert, through the eyes of a principal who has had an unconventional journey through New Zealand education, and views student engagement and disengagement through different eyes. The events leading to this principal exploring Mantle of the Expert are discussed with links made to a project being explored in more depth through the Teacher-led innovation fund.

Mantle of the Expert is briefly explained, as this report would never do it full justice, to give the reader an insight into this unconventional, to most of New Zealand, inquiry approach. Two visits to schools with expert coaches who have worked extensively with Waikato University lecturer Dr Viv Aitken and Mantle of the Expert are shared, with school wide implementation and sustaining teacher practice as a major focus. The benefits for students are seen to be authentic learning opportunities where students are fully engaged in the learning as experts. Drama games are carefully planned to create learning opportunities where students take on the roles of people or creatures in imagined scenarios to solve problems they really want to solve. Indications from a range of sources show positive outcomes for student engagement and achievement, social skills, critical thinking, responsibility.

Purpose

I wanted to spend time reading and reflecting on Mantle of the Expert to support the curriculum learning we have been exploring with some teachers within our school. On a personal level, I wanted to increase my theoretical understanding of this approach to support my gut feelings, anecdotal evidence and success stories with student learning I have witnessed within the classes involved in this approach over time. With my increased understanding, I believe I will be able to better support and plan for

school wide development of the curriculum to make learning fun, authentic, challenging and enhance students learning.

Background and rationale

I started my education as a typical country boy who didn't believe in school other than eating his lunch and playing sport. I believed I was not academic, a bit dumb and school wasn't for me. These beliefs stayed with me and influenced my attitudes towards learning, the value I placed upon education and my life choices until I left at age 16 years, with 3 subjects to my name in school certificate. I worked for 3 years in a couple of manual jobs while I pursued my dream of becoming an All Black. That was all I was good at, that was my belief and self-talk at the time. At age 18 I played for the North Auckland senior provincial team with a debut against Argentina's national side. One year later I had a major back injury from either rugby or building or both. I was unable to work manually and had no academic qualifications of significance or use. During this dark time of "What will I do with my life?", pain and doubt of oneself, I decided to apply to be a teacher because I could manage my pain by not being at a desk all day and would be able to move around a bit. There was no deeper reflection at that stage other than I needed to make a plan to support myself financially. I didn't even know if I liked children. My application was turned down with the suggestion I needed more academic qualifications. Therefore, I decided to return to high school as an adult student to complete my sixth form certificate, which led to entry into Auckland College of Education, where I just scraped through academically to complete my diploma of teaching. I taught in South Auckland, completed my TESSOL (Teaching English in Schools to Second Language Learners) diploma, then took six months unpaid to finish my Bachelor of Education. All the while trying to prove to myself that I was able to be academic.

My journey through the academic realms of New Zealand education strongly resonates in my belief about how students learn and some of the significant barriers to learning that students/family's self-belief can have upon a learner. For me I have always strived to build belief in students as they learn and to make links to what education can do for them. Over my 20 years of teaching I have seen many forms of apparent new ideas, and fads within schools. Inquiry learning models in particular, where schools strive to make learning relevant for the individual child, to name a relevant one. I worry about the education reform and direction of education in New Zealand with its drive to find ways to improve underachievement with questionable narrow curriculum. I worry about my colleagues surviving the increasing political demands on teachers, principals and schools to solve the many social and educational issues within society.

I was that under achiever who left school with more qualifications than some, but not enough to give me the options I wanted in life.

It was through this lens I viewed Mantle of the Expert, when I was invited to my daughters' school, to attend a day exploring the use of this approach within schools. As a teacher, I quickly saw the potential to achieve many of the things I had strived to achieve for my students.

I encouraged an innovative teacher to attend Dr Viv Aitkens masters level paper at Waikato University. I encouraged the Board of Trustees to fund this paper and costs.

I encouraged a teacher to explore these approaches by herself for a full year, without collegial support. She still speaks to me, most of the time.

I encouraged this teacher to lead curriculum development with staff for a full year throughout staff meetings, and offer planning support.

We experienced some exciting results, engagement and enthusiasm towards learning within the class of teachers who embraced change.

We were successful in gaining \$36,000 through the teacher-led Innovation Fund to explore these approaches, with a focus on whether a group of teachers can support achievement in writing, particularly among Maori students through deepening their understandings of kaupapa Maori / cultural responsive practice and dramatic inquiry.

This fund has allowed us to use the expert knowledge of Dr Viv Aitken with our staff to explore the theory, practice and teaching approaches that define these approaches. Dr Viv Aitken is the only approved facilitator of Mantle of the Expert in New Zealand. An approach Dorothy Heathcote developed in the United Kingdom 30 years ago.

Ultimately, I am pursuing this topic because I am convinced it will have significant influence on student learners within our school. I believe learning this way would have engaged me as a learner, and that it would have engaged some of the students I strived to motivate and build self-belief in as learners in during my classroom teaching career.

Methodology

I spent one day in 2013 with Dr Viv Aitken on an overview of Mantle of the Expert and Drama for Learning approaches.

This was followed by discussions, observations and data shared by Renee Downey, classroom teacher Y3/4 over 2014. During 2015 I participated in drama games designed to prepare students for learning within a Mantle of the Expert inquiry and planning workshops within staff meetings.

In 2016 I encouraged 2 teachers to continue exploring these approaches. I watched their confidence and knowledge grow and exceed my knowledge. I participated in a full day with Dr Viv Aitken, staff and a few invited schools.

In Term 1 2017 I participated in 2.5 days of professional learning with Dr Viv Aitken.

During sabbatical, I read a number of articles that were used by the teacher during her master's level paper on Mantle of the Expert, as well as notes taken and resources provided during the above mentioned professional development days.

I have explored the New Zealand and United Kingdom websites for Mantle of the Expert for resources and readings.

I visited two Hamilton Schools that have worked with these approaches over time, of which one school has had extensive in-school support. The two deputy principals of these schools have extensive knowledge and experience within my area of study and were both wealth's of knowledge to support my plans for successful implementation within Otaika Valley School. During this sabbatical, I have made 18 pages of notes to help support the where to next.

Findings

I have had some findings, particularly during the visits to two schools and how they have implemented these approaches. Importantly I had many confirmations and deepening understandings of Mantle of the Expert and the benefits for student learning. For the reader, I will try to explain in simple terms how this approach can work within schools.

Mantle of the Expert is a planning process that allows children to take on the role of experts, role play authentic and often complex situations where they co-construct their understandings through experiencing how others may think, feel and act. The content, knowledge and skills naturally flow through a combination of 3 elements; Inquiry learning, process drama and the structure of Mantle of the Expert planning.

The Mantle of the Expert approach was developed by UK-based drama educator Dorothy Heathcote (1926 – 2012). It was a culmination of over 40 years of practice, which saw Heathcote lauded as “one of the greatest teachers of the twentieth century” (John Carroll, cited in Heston, 1993, p. 1). Heathcote saw Mantle of the Expert as a “clear system” with “operant laws”, which she defined and explained through numerous charts and addresses over the years (see <http://www.mantleoftheexpert.com>; Heston, 1993).

Often teachers shy away from the idea of drama and think of it as acting and performing for an audience, which it can be. Here lies the important understanding of how this type of learning works.

The teacher often plans a situation to “Hook” the learners into solving a problem. The teacher may go into role to do this by reading a letter from a fictitious person. The students join in by establishing a company or expert team (sometimes referred to as responsible team). They receive a commission to work for a client and use inquiry and research to help solve the problem, find solutions, design new products or systems. The opportunities for learning across the curriculum are endless. A key component is student involvement in the situation, instead of having the teacher pass on the knowledge or finding information on google.

I discussed my personal academic and probably social failures as a male student at school. I often didn't see the point of school work and was disengaged as many underachieving students remain today. This process draws children into working for a purpose instead of for their teacher. The roles for learning are flipped. The Mantle of the Expert approach very carefully works on what is called “building belief” within the students while they participate in an imagined situation in real time. This is when process drama techniques are used to go in and out of role as a whole group. It isn't about acting. Children get to express themselves in small groups or as a whole group where there is often no audience. The teacher carefully allows students to share when they are comfortable. A lot of it is about exploring how people may be thinking about an issue or problem that happens in real life. The children get drawn into the emotional side of these situations and often end up really wanting to solve the problems for others (client). Children want to write letters of complaint, argue passionately to save things or work really hard on the maths to solve a problem that suddenly has a purpose. In short this is why I am completely convinced about Mantle of the Expert.

“Working in Mantle of the Expert mode permits goals to be very select and purposeful because all results are to be “published for purpose” promised to a client. This removes the work from student study for the teaching purposes proposed by the school. It places students in the mind frame of researchers for a client who needs their work.

School visit 1.

It would be helpful for the reader to have a context for learning, which I can show from my visit with Sue Bleaken, Deputy Principal, Melville Intermediate School. Sue invited me to observe and participate in a session with withdrawn students, who volunteered to work in Mantle of the Expert as an extra session above their classroom commitments, for a set time.

This group of children were the crew on board a failing cruise ship liner. The owner of the company communicated that they intended to decommission the ship, as it was no longer viable. Passengers were finding the cruise boring and bookings were in serious decline (this is where the students get “hooked” in and start to build belief in the process).

A team of experts is formed from the crew (class) with the purpose of saving their jobs and the cruise liner. They identified the roles within such a crew. Application letters to apply for roles within this crew (expert team) were written, skills were considered, they identified the experience required within these different roles, CV's were written and salaries were researched on career websites.

I sat in on a role-played interview for a position within this team. In this case the captain, first mate, and others sat and interviewed the prospective CEO who would help lead the change required to persuade the owners not to decommission the liner. I was impressed with the level of knowledge and questioning skills this group of students had during this role play interview. The teacher was not involved other than to use drama conventions to scaffold the learning. The students were able to go out of role as they prepared for the interview to discuss what types of questions to ask. All students were involved in the process of sharing their knowledge (co-construction) to scaffold and support the interview panel. They went back in time to revise previous learning (drama convention) to discuss how to meet and greet an interviewee. They paused (drama convention) during the interview when a student needed support with appropriate questions, many examples were provided, and the students in role continued.

The students were in the learning situation and learning from it in real time. They were able to go in and out of role easily in what can be called the “What if world” and “What is world”. This is called praxis

- *People work from within situations rather than learn about circumstances. Thus the two areas of the brain thinking and identifying work in symbiosis, “do” and “reflect” create praxis, and embrace perform mortality, responsibility and ethics.’*
- *Thinking during action produces a different engagement*
- *Internal coherence then drives the planning for Mantle of the Expert work.*

Sue and I discussed that these types of learning contexts can help lift the horizons of these decile 3 students to what the world could look like for them, and what is required of them as people/workers in a real world. My own experience resonates here. I also think back to my time teaching in a decile 1a school in South Auckland with the many second language learners and their battle to succeed in New Zealand and our education system.

The above learning experience followed with a real-life expert from the Hamilton Tourism School who shared her knowledge relevant to their learning. I didn’t get to observe this but I am sure it contributed to building belief in the students and more expertise for them to meet the needs of their client.

Sue discussed the obvious benefits of learning of this group compared to the traditionally taught classrooms. During term 3 each year the whole school is involved in (Young Enterprise – PREP) where companies are formed to produce a product for sale for real. Because these students who have experienced Mantle of the Expert within the learning context described above and built beliefs and understandings in responsible teams or companies; have dramatized and gained experience discussing roles/skills/requirements for people working within these teams; have created CV’s, applied for jobs, written reports and solved problems to specific if not complex problems, they are already skilled when it comes to knowing what is involved in a company. These same students are then able to outperform and produce real products in the third term when the whole school focuses on, PREP. What tends to happen is non-Mantle teachers often spend up to 7 weeks struggling to do the writing tasks involved in companies e.g. business cards, application letters, CV’s, interviews and run out of time to actually produce something. Sue is able to quickly work through this learning as they have an in depth understanding and can create what is required to a higher level in much less time. This gives much more time for students to actually solve problems, test, discuss and redesign for authentic purposes in the real world of PREP.

This transference of skills and knowledge from the imagined world to the real world was a great example of how this approach can prepare students for the real world.

It is here I feel it important to bring up Key Competencies for the teacher/principal reader to make their own links.

I found huge value in observing a skilled practitioner using techniques I have read about in theory. Sue was working in Metaxis with the students. Where she was in and out of role, working alongside them, with them and supporting them as a teacher as well by modelling questions to prompt the children.

*For it has been suggested that children possess a highly-developed capacity for retaining a dual awareness and equal belief in both the real and fictional words of a drama - a capacity Boal calls **metaxis** (Boal, 1995).*

Melville Intermediate has also successfully used restorative practice within the school. I saw it as a strong use of values and key competencies used to create a culture of care. The school has made links to drama conventions using carefully selected picture books to help students emphasise with

others; understand what it is like to walk in others shoes; see others' perspectives in authentic contexts. Sue prepares lessons for these books for a school wide focus.

The drama focus is on respectful ways of working within class and in the school. Through drama the children will take part in a variety of activities that get them working together in groups, breaking down the barriers between groups and individuals and thinking of each other as the same as themselves in terms of feelings. Building positive relationships means unkindness is least likely to occur. (Bleaken,2011)

My experience and knowledge gained during my TESSOL training, planning and assignments while teaching children of up to 13 different cultural mixes showed me the importance of supporting second language learner's oral language. I would plan significantly for opportunities to explore new vocabulary to scaffold student language practice. We would use word card labels, pictures and diagrams to explore new concepts. I displayed the learning, revisited and revised many times more than I would in a classroom of predominantly first language English speakers. This front loading of language and concepts was required before even attempting the increased demands of written language. I have always considered oral language important and now reflect on the similarities offered within a classroom using drama conventions and role play to explore learning.

How does this all influence achievement? I believe I have discussed a few of the benefits previously in regards to key competencies, values, skills, engagement and knowledge, but thought it important to share part of an email from Sue Bleaken prior to my visit, that discusses briefly the potential in one specific area, writing.

I have been involved in Mantlesque ways of working since 1979. Viv's initial paper in 2009 cemented for me the innovative and engaging pull this pedagogy has for me not only professionally but also as a life-long learner.

In 2015 we began a contract to lift levels of literacy especially in writing through the MOE ALL contract. Given the licence to accelerate writing and the notion there is " no silver bullet" I worked with one teacher for a term using Mantle to lift levels of writing. My target group showed significant shifts of up to 1 curriculum level across a term. The second year I worked with two teachers and again the same accelerated pattern of shifts for target groups occurred. (Bleaken, 2017).

Questions I had prior to my school visits

- 1. What type of training do you provide to introduce MOE drama teaching methods?**
- 2. What have you found to be the most effective supports for teachers with MOE?**
- 3. Do you use any online support?**
- 4. How do you sustain methods/enthusiasm across your school?**
- 5. What does the classroom curriculum programme/balance look like across the school?**
- 6. Has Mantle had an impact on student achievement?**

School Visit 2

I was fortunate enough to be able to visit 2 very different schools who use Mantle of the Expert in different and similar ways. Sue's school is a decile 3, Intermediate School with approximately 200 students, of which 100 move on each year. The second school was a decile 8, Normal School with 400 students from Y0 – Y6. My questions allowed me to discuss a range of approaches, successes and challenges in different school contexts. When I return to Otaika Valley I will again have another school context where we are in the early stages of implementation compared to these schools.

Gay Gilbert is one of the deputy principals of Hillcrest Normal School. She has lectured in Drama at Waikato University and worked extensively alongside Dr Viv Aitken within Hillcrest with teachers and

student teachers over time on a number of in-depth projects. Some of these are published works. She has a wealth of knowledge and passion for the Arts and Literacy.

It is important to raise the ability to link curriculum to Mantle of the Expert planning, in authentic ways with the purpose of hooking children into learning. I make this statement as Principal of Otaika Valley School and the journey of teachers exploring Mantle, from many similar experiences documented in my readings and from discussions with both of these schools. My time with Gay was particularly valuable in answering questions about school planning, sustaining Mantle coaching and what is most effective in supporting teachers of Mantle.

From my understanding, this high functioning school, looks at curriculum broadly with room for individual passions, but also specifically on set curriculum areas of focus. See below...

2017

Term 1:	Science (Investigate)
Term 2:	Arts (Express)
Term 3:	Social Science (Engage)
Term 4:	Technology (Discover)

The whole school will focus on these areas during the term looking through the lens of the major focus (e.g. undiluted science). This is also the main assessment focus. This can be inside or outside of Mantle of the Expert or not at all. 2017 sees the challenge for staff to do at least 1 Mantle of the Expert for the year. What they don't want to see is teachers all doing the same. This would not fit with inquiry.

Gay will encourage teachers new to MOTE...

- to stick with teacher passions and strengths
- to stick to student passions
- to try something where they as teacher can be in role - a good example of this is the teacher being a character in a picture book. Where the teacher tries sitting in the hot seat (drama convention) within their own class, and the students question the teacher in role as the book character. This can be a non-threatening way for teachers to explore going in and out of role, as this is what they need to do within a MOTE.

Hillcrest uses backward mapping of the curriculum to plan towards the main curriculum focus.

The book *Connecting Curriculum Linking Learning* has the planning example (The Kaimanawa Horses) that probably shows MOTE in the purest form. I believe this example was explored during a project between Hillcrest Normal and Dr Viv Aikten of Waikato University. This model for the planning process is often used successfully with new staff to bring them on board with this approach.

A number of staff have completed Dr Viv Aitken's summer paper on Mantle of the Expert, this helps sustain this approach across the school. Gay is also in the position of full release to be able to work alongside teachers who want support or are new to the approach. She has a wealth of experience and resources to fall back on and an obvious commitment to sustaining this approach. We discussed their approach to curriculum that seemed to give clear assessment guidance with great flexibility within the curriculum. This fits with the ability for curriculum to be linked within this type of planning. I will take these thoughts back to Otaika Valley as we work on a school wide approach to incorporating Mantle as a key element in curriculum design and learning experiences.

Gay has shared a number of resources that she finds useful while coaching and mentoring teachers.

- Categories of Teams
 - Categories of teams
 - Examples of teams
 - Divisions of culture
 - Types of Inquiry Question

- Generic Products, Outcomes and Events Grid
 - Processes and Purposes
 - Stage 1 - Planning the Inquiry
 - Stage 2 - Planning the expert frame
 - Stage 3 - Planning activities and curriculum links
 - Stage 4 - Planning the start
- Core Element/Definition/What This Means for the Learning
- Frame Distance
 - Type of Role
 - Their responsibility in a drama
- Planning example of handwritten bubble map for “Wild and Free” completed with Gay, Viv and Lynette R10.
- QUESTIONS/QUESTIONS/QUESTIONS - Prompts to get students to take on belief and ownership
 - Considering implications e.g. So, perhaps we need to..., What might it mean? Etc.
 - Deepening / Connecting / reflecting
 - Hypothesising
- Powerpoint from Gay “Connecting Curriculum, Connecting Learning; negotiating and the Arts - Hillcrest Normal School.

Other Findings through my deepening understanding

The Mantle of the expert system of teaching involves a reversal of the conventional teacher-student role relationship in which the students draw on the knowledge and expertise of the teacher. When the mantle of the expert is used in drama, the teacher assumes a fictional role which places the student in the position of being “the one who knows” or the expert in a particular branch of human knowledge (Taylor & Frances, 1985).

The very fact that Mantle can involve a reversal of conventional teacher-student roles could challenge teachers. It will be important to support teachers’ through this change until they experience the benefits of a more student-centred learning model where students are heavily involved in co-constructing their learning. It goes without saying that teachers will have to adapt their teaching styles and develop new skills and knowledge to be successful.

Luke Abbot’s article (Two Key Components of the Drama System Known as Mantle of the Expert) attempts to explain and analyse the two big ideas behind the use of dramatic manifestation known as mantle of the expert. I attempt to capture the article in note form to identify some of the learning possibilities of this approach.

1. firstly the nature and educational function of the imaginary **responsible team** (or enterprise) and
2. secondly, the **commission** (triggered by an imaginary client).

- Big ideas and big questions:
 - Learning,
 - Co-construction,
 - Democracy
 - Responsibility
- Students take responsibility for their learning
- The Main purpose of any teacher intervention were, therefore,
 - To enable power sharing
 - To influence events
- Another colossal educational big idea
 - CO-CONSTRUCTION

- *In the classroom where drama is taking place, not only do we also seek similar goals in the safety of “no penalty”, we actively construct imaginary challenging circumstances in order to allow such injustices to be created, explored and dissected!*
- *It can be little wonder that the notion of responsibly lies at the heart of learning for living and it seems that the construction of responsible teams are of great benefit to our young learners and, as you know by now, lies at the heart of the system of mantle of the expert.*

The buffer of the well-meaning adult who will insist on giving lectures to children on what responsibility is all about is therefore a redundant and in my view, an outdated way of passing on the wisdom of our cultures. (Journal for Drama in Education, Vol 28, Issue 1, 2012, Two Key Components of the Drama System Known as Mantle of the Expert – Luke Abbott).

I believe these last statements links well to the examples discussed previously that show the potential for students using their key competencies while exploring values and beliefs outside of their normal experience.

Implications

Possible considerations/reflections and challenges to explore with teachers:

- A review and refinement of how to approach curriculum topics within and across the school
- The importance of maintaining student and teacher interest and flexibility in curriculum, learning and inquiry focus.
- Look into the Hillcrest Normal School model on the major curriculum area focus, while allowing individual choice around when a MOTE will be engaged in.
- A revisit of our Otaika Valley Curriculum Document to look at how we approach curriculum across the school. How we link curriculum. When? Why? How? What? Who? Where?
- Increase the sharing of Mantle planning to bounce ideas off each other, without doing the exact same MOTE.
- More time during staff meetings discussing how process drama can be used within literacy and numeracy inside and outside of MOTE.
- Refer to Sue Bleaken’s ideas on scaffolding in literacy outside of MOTE as they run in parallel (not discussed in this report).
- Make a plan for sustaining staff coaching with Mantle planning
- To utilise the newfound expertise in 4 staff members who have worked with the Teacher Innovation Fund project using Mantle and Kaupapa Maori methodology.
- Share all teachers learning journey.
- Incorporate drama conventions into regular staff meetings to help students and teachers preparing for Mantle; learn by doing.
- To continue to support the coaching and development of staff through highly experienced practitioners and academics within this field.
- Find the money to continue with this professional development after the Teacher Innovation Funding is used for collaboration using Mantle
- To convince the Board of Trustees to continue investing in this approach in the form of professional development and the funding of the Mantle paper for staff members who are willing to give up holiday time to study.
- For the Principal to be a key player in supporting this approach, link this clearly within the school Charter, vision, goals and annual plan.
- To discuss with the newly formed COL accessing Dr Viv Atken’s expertise as a Ministry approved and accredited Professional Development provider. I believe change to teacher practice needs highly skilled experts to work with the cross-school teachers to impact on learning. We may risk doing the same old same old if we rely on practising teachers as experts.

Benefits

I refer back to my previous discussion in the Background and Rational about academic underachievement and the importance of making learning relevant to learners, who are not engaged in school. I refer to the lens I looked through when I first came across Mantle of the Expert. That I have always strived as a teacher to build self-belief in students and sometimes lecture them of the importance of education, often by sharing my stories of failure and success.

Through this lens and purpose, I believe Mantle of the Expert approach has shown many examples of successfully achieving both, student self-belief and authentic learning opportunities where they experience skills required in the world outside of school. This approach has shown positive outcomes for students who struggle and those who require extension challenge.

The benefits are...

- Engaging disengaged students
- Motivating students to want to learn
- Extension of students
- Raising levels of thinking
- Exploring values in a range of safe contexts with often complex issues
- Learning to work together to solve problems
- Supporting others learning
- Curriculum is able to be explored in a natural way without the risks of compartmentalising learning
- Sharing expertise
- Co-construction with teachers and students
- Improving confidence in well supported drama conventions
- Improving oral language
- Fun to teach
- Improving academic performance through a deeper understanding of concepts, values, arguments about issues that matter to them

The following findings help confirm the consistent messages from my readings...

- *the greatest impact upon student performance is in the domains of higher-level cognitive skills and affective measures, rather than merely in factual recall.*
- *The focus of these studies was science in the context of society. The most important observations were of high levels of student activity, expressed as “broad debate” and “interesting discussions”, showing students taking an active part in their own construction of knowledge. It is argued that the students profit from exercising this newly acquired knowledge in role-play, and that observations are consistent with constructivist learning and epistemology.*
- *The cross curricular potential in drama gives the opportunity for a style of learning that does not break knowledge and skills into artificial units, but permits exploration of the world using whatever medium is appropriate.*
- *If students are to gain an appropriate level of understanding, they need to recognise that ethical decisions are complex. If the best preparation for making ethical choices is experiencing the complexity of reason and emotion and reflecting on the different parts, then role-play in dealing with ethical dilemmas can provide a tool for that purpose (Odegaard, Marianne, 2003).*

Conclusions

My studies and school visits have increased my understanding of the pedagogy within Mantle of the Expert teaching and learning. This increased understanding has affirmed and solidified my vision for the school curriculum at Otaika Valley School. What this provides me with is a conviction to continue down this path of learning and professional development to engage students in learning and make learning mean something to them. My studies will help me form a more detailed plan of a way forward to achieve school wide implementation of this approach, to meet the school vision of “Together We Grow”. It is the belief, at Otaika Valley School, that teachers are stronger together when they share their expertise and success. As it is with students. The benefits for learners are clearly apparent through my observations within our school, the schools visited and the success stories documented in my readings.

The challenge that has become much clearer is how the school achieves this through the strategic plan and curriculum design. I have ideas for continuing the professional development and increased focus on drama conventions to support oral language, self-confidence and preparation for success in the co-constructed learning model.

- Oral language / drama conventions implemented across the school at different levels
- Principal support and involvement in teaching drama conventions (focus of picture books/ values/oral language/text responses)
- Planning support
- Teacher training / collaboration

I now have a clearer vision for pulling the curriculum together within our Otaika Valley School Curriculum document.

I visited two schools that are distinctly different but very clear and strong in their pedagogical beliefs. It has been a privilege to have a sabbatical that I know will continue to impact on my practice, leadership and passion for education. The two schools clearly had exceptionally talented, experienced and knowledgeable leaders of curriculum with Mantle of the Expert. Both schools were able to sustain this type of learning in different ways within schools of 200 and 400.

Our school of 150 students has one developing expert and some enthusiastic learners of this approach, which includes me. What has enabled our success so far, is the Otaika Valley’s Board of Trustees support in the form of paying for the Mantle University paper and costs for one teacher and investing professional development money into bringing experts whom make a difference.

We are also privileged to gain \$36,000 to explore this approach through the Teacher-led Innovation Fund, that has allowed considerably more professional development, expert coaching and tuition and teacher collaboration and planning time. If Communities of Schools are going to work, expert support from relevant professional development providers could be the key to success across schools.

My hope for New Zealand education into the future is an environment and resource that allows schools to succeed following a curriculum that works for them. Mantle of the Expert allows curriculum to be linked in authentic ways that hook learners in. They want to learn. Maths and Literacy are not explored in isolation. This would be a great travesty.

As a Principal in New Zealand with hopefully 20 years of service left in me, I will be striving to achieve my original goal within the schools I lead.

That is to build self-belief in students and make learning relevant to them so they want to learn.

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