

Sabbatical Report 2019

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– Purpose:

The professional learning I will undertake will be focused on how culturally responsive learning approaches and changing pedagogies are catering for the wellbeing of students and improving achievement and outcomes for priority learners. I plan to visit a number of schools in New Zealand, particularly in the Waikato, Hawke's Bay and Poverty Bay.

– Acknowledgements:

I wish to thank the Raureka School Board of Trustees for their encouragement and support to apply for this leave. This was a wonderful opportunity to investigate how culturally responsive learning approaches are used in schools.

I would also like to thank the Principals of the schools, I visited, who freely shared their processes with me and gave up their valuable time to do this.

I am also very grateful to the Ministry of Education for making sabbaticals available to New Zealand Principals.

– Background

My proposed sabbatical around 'how cultural competency approaches and changes to pedagogies are catering for the achievement of students and improving outcomes for priority learners' is certainly relevant given New Zealand's current educational climate. I am Principal at Raureka School and like many other New Zealand Schools, we are going through a change process.

I have been part of the Poutama Pounamu programme as run by the University of Waikato. The PP website outlines the following:

Poutama Pounamu extends opportunities to schools/kura, communities and Kāhui Ako to ensure each learner's prior knowledge and experience provides the foundation from which new learning can build and potential can be released.

Under the Treaty of Waitangi, partnership, protection and participation is the right of all learners, Māori (iwi) and non-Māori (Pākehā and Taiwi).

The ako critical contexts for change:

- *professional knowledge and adaptive expertise together with*
- *relational and culturally responsive pedagogies and*
- *home school collaborations*

promote an accelerated pathway of change towards equity, excellence and belonging.

Poutama Pounamu Online has been developed on the premise that achieving equity and excellence for all young people remains the major challenge of education systems across the world

The course encourages exploration of how, to achieve equity and excellence for those students currently underserved by our system. It utilises the Ako: Critical Contexts for Change - a transformative, paradigmatic reform model for accelerating student achievement. This underpinning theory of action is based on over 15 years of research into what works best for Māori students and how this can work more effectively for all.

Poutama Pounamu Online brings together Kaupapa Māori, Critical Theories and a Socio-cultural Theory of Learning in order to form a strong, coherent and theoretical practice base, and from which Māori students' belonging, learning and achievement in schools is promoted. This theoretical framework moves beyond treating all people the same (equality) towards more equitable practices where we are responsive to the needs and potential of individuals, in particular those who may be marginalised. In this way, the simultaneous success trajectories are used in order to promote and monitor excellence for all.

<https://poutamapounamu.org.nz/elearning/about>

I need to continue to broaden my knowledge around Cultural Responsive pedagogies to ensure children and staff at Raureka School are well served and are given the best possible leadership ensuring these transitions to the use of cultural competency pedagogies are as smooth as possible. I want to observe how schools are currently using these cultural responsive approaches to improve achievement. There is growing evidence around the importance of students being self-managers, being able to demonstrate key learning dispositions (KCs), being safe and secure in their learning, and engaging in collaborative knowledge building. Peter Johnston describes the need (for the development of student agency) clearly. He says that 'developing in children a sense of agency is not an educational frill or some mushy-headed liberal idea. Children who doubt their competence set low goals and choose easy tasks and they plan poorly. When they face difficulties, they become confused, lose concentration, and start telling themselves stories about their own incompetence. In the long run they disengage, decrease effort, generate fewer ideas, and become passive and discouraged. Children with strong belief in their own self-worth work harder, focus their attention better, are more interested in their studies, and are less likely to give up when they encounter difficulties than children with a weaker sense of agency (Skinner, Zimmer-Gembeck, and Connell 1998).

Feeling competent, these children plan well, choose challenging tasks, and set higher goals. Their concentration actually improves when they face difficulties, and in the process of engaging difficulties they learn more skills.' (Johnston 2004) Research clearly shows that people do not learn well 'as spectators.'

I want to look closer at culturally responsive learning practices and have schools share (teachers and students) with me the impact these pedagogies are having on their learners, particularly those students who are Maori, Pacifica or hard to move priority learners.

Russell Bishop from Waikato University conveys how the answers to improvements in Maori education do not lie in the mainstream. I want to see how teachers using culturally responsive approaches are assisting students to make connections across the curriculum, with their strong personalised approach (e.g. where Maori achieve success as Maori). I want to see how schools are moving these students from a state of reliance/ apathy/ disengagement to one

where students recognise that they can make powerful choices and can act with purpose. Where they move from being extrinsically to intrinsically motivated. New Zealand's traditional system, is a 'one-size-fits-all' model where the teacher is the holder of the knowledge and the students have been passive recipients. Nuttall in his book 'The hidden lives of learners' spoke about how in traditional classes students already know 40-50% of what they are being taught. Cultural Responsiveness is particularly topical at present. Many schools are developing culturally responsive programmes to try and enhance the 'equity, excellence and belonging, building strong foundations for the future' for students and staff. I want to see how schools are using cultural responsive pedagogies so all students, regardless of culture, are engaged, happy, have a choice and voice and are achieving.

These statements refer to the teacher knowing their students and building a programme that best meets students' individual needs and this being appraised to assess how well this is being done. Russell Bishop has carried out extensive research about how to improve Maori student achievement. Bishop (et al., 2009) argues that 'Effective teachers of Maori students create a culturally appropriate and responsive context for learning in their classroom... the teachers know and understand how to bring about change in Maori students... they care for the students ... building and nurturing a supportive and loving environment (Manaakitanga). They care for the performance of their students (Mana motuhake). They create a secure, well-managed learning environment by incorporating routine pedagogical knowledge with pedagogical imagination ... building individual roles and responsibilities to achieve (Whakapiringatanga). They engage in effective teaching interactions with Maori students as Maori (Wananga). They use a range of strategies that promote effective teaching interactions and relationships with their students (Ako), and they promote, monitor and reflect on outcomes that in turn lead to improvements in educational achievement for Maori students (Kotahitanga)'. Bishop's above mentioned strategies, although specifically targeted for Maori students, should also cater for the needs of other students as well.

– Method

In my sabbatical proposal I was to visit different schools in New Zealand. I visited/ interviewed Principals/teachers from seven schools who have been using the Poutama Pounamu Programme as run by Dr Mere Berryman from Waikato University. The schools were from a range of deciles (from 1-6). I talked to each principal/teacher to find out the following:

- How Poutama Pounamu is being implemented in their school?
- How many staff are involved in the programme?
- What has been staff buy in?
- What have been the outcomes of the programme?
- Has student achievement changed?
- Have there been any changes in pedagogy?
- What have the benefits been for the students/tamariki?

– Findings

– I planned to visit/interview schools who were enrolled with the Poutama Pounamu programme. I contacted a number of schools and seven principals/ teachers were open to either being visited or interviewed about their journey so far.

Each of the schools I visited/interviewed had a very different method for using culturally responsive programmes and the way that they had in fact implemented the PP programme. Some schools had one person enrolled and they were leading the school while in others the COL had designated either a Within School Teacher or Across School Teacher to implement the programme. In some other schools a number of staff were enrolled in the programme and these staff were supporting the change process. A number of the schools were using Rongohia te Hau: which is a tool that gives schools a picture of their pedagogy. ... **Rongohia te Hau** co-constructs the process for understanding classroom practice.

It is a tool that has been developed as part of the research Dr Berryman and her team at Waikato University.

Each of the schools had a different relationship with the Poutama Pounamu/ Rongohia te Hau providers and this could cause problems, especially if not all staff were overly enthused about the programme. Many of the schools only had one person working on the Poutama Pounamu programme itself so this could cause an issue. Luckily this didn't happen in many of the schools I talked to.

The schools that were making the most progress were the schools that had enthusiastic principals and staff who also got along really well with their provider. In every school the relationships being developed were by far the most important.

Everyone commented that the relationships within the school and amongst whanau and tamariki made the difference. Of the seven schools visited two had pulled out and one had since restarted again with a different lead person.

The bye in of the staff is so important and when staff do look at their students from a different perspective is when genuine change starts to happen. In a number of schools in New Zealand staff have been so used to looking at their students from their own cultural lens and this has stopped genuine teaching and support. After staff have looked at their own personal biases and made changes then the learning happens.

A comment from one principal was; *'The surface level bye in has been good but the deeper level understanding and implementation has been variable.'*

The outcome for each of the schools is also different however the schools that have had genuine bye in report the following

'This has been the foundation for our work, it has been amazing. We wouldn't have got the culture right and given us the cultural impact. Look deep within ourselves. This is now about our children.'

'... they are more accepting of the change, e.g. whanau conversations- children more engaged and ring parents to get them in. It has seen a Step up with the communication including transport, food, etc. Parents report that they now feel comfortable and welcome.'

'An interesting journey, with direction for us to proceed and help our tamariki succeed.'

Achievement: it has been too early to show academic achievement levels grow although each of the Principals, talked to, have said that the tamariki have valued the input from the teachers and they felt that since the teachers knew them for who they were that they were now open to learning. Some of the schools had said that they could show an improvement in

the attendance of students because of change of approach and also the improved whanau presence within the schools.

Pedagogy: The schools that have shown the most change has revolved around the building of relationships within school amongst students and with whanau.

Student benefits: Schools report that they are Building on relationships with students and Whanau. Feedback has come from whanau saying that this is helping them get more involved. This is because of the relationships that have been built up.

Relationships are the most important, if we get them right we get teaching right.

Comments from Principals:

The Principal input has been paramount in movement within the schools and this sets the scene. When staff see that we are all walking alongside each other progress happens. Leaders have had to let go and not micro-manage as has happened in the past. Trust and loyalty staff to get going and do things. Let others lead projects.

Relationships are so important. Broad and balanced curriculum supports students we need to make a difference for these children.

PP a great vehicle and the collegiality has made a difference. I am passionate about this process as our students have benefited.

Conclusions:

While Poutama Pounamu is being used differently in different schools the interviewees were generally supportive of the overall outcomes and benefits for tamariki. Staff have been able to look at their teaching style, look at their beliefs and then look at the children in front of them and realise that they do not necessarily learn in the same way that they do. When teachers look at this they are more able to review their teaching and also plan to genuinely meet the needs of the students in front of them.

The use of Poutama Pounamu has been beneficial for us as our staff have been able to look at things from a different perspective and be prepared to see someone else's point of view. When we do this students benefit.

We have had an improvement in the relationships between staff and students and whanau- more people are coming to school events and this is beneficial.

Our next steps are to continue to build on our start and find ways to bring in our whanau to show them that we are genuinely interested in what they have to say.

We still need to look at ways to find out what is important for student achievement for our Maori Whanau.

We are on a journey and we need to find the way to help all of our children achieve to the best of their ability.

– References

Bishop, R., et al., Te Kotahitanga: Addressing educational disparities facing Maori students in New Zealand, Teaching and teacher Education (2009),

<https://poutamapounamu.org.nz/elearning/about> Poutama Pounamu