



CULTURALLY-RESPONSIVE RELATIONAL PRACTICE AT THE CHALK-FACE: A JOURNEY TO AUTHENTICITY

Tute Porter-Samuels and Wendy Holley-Boen

ABSTRACT

This research provides chalk-face insights from a group of predominantly Pākehā teachers grappling with culturally-responsive relational practice (CRRP), in a time and environment where external factors can affect self-efficacy and limit personal agency. It details a two-phased professional inquiry undertaken with fourteen teachers from one Kāhui Ako, whereby themes from a larger cross-school online survey were unpacked through a series of semi-structured focus groups. In every phase of this research, including this final telling, the emphasis was on foregrounding the stories of teachers. Findings critique taken-for-granted assumptions about teachers' roles and responsibilities for embedding CRRP, and stress that in our efforts to stop defiscing students, we do not unintentionally deficise teachers.

Research Paper

Keywords:

culturally-responsive relational practice, teacher voice

INTRODUCTION

According to Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, and Richardson (2003), teachers' enactment of culturally-responsive relational practice (CRRP) is central to the success of Māori and Pasifika learners. The research underscores the urgency in identifying and addressing barriers to embedding CRRP, especially given the resources and plethora of indigenous research readily available (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, Richardson, 2003; Hill & Hawk, 1996; MOE, 2011; 2013a; 2013b).

Teachers, in their relationship with Māori students, have the greatest influence on their educational achievement, and teachers being able to have a positive influence requires taking an agentic position in enacting CRRP (Bishop, et al., 2003). Accordingly, this research centred on the teachers' role in embedding CRRP. Only in looking back on the data did I (Tute) start to understand the extent to which I had internalised commonly-held assumptions about teacher-student relationships, and the ways

unconscious blaming of students, perpetuated by poor understanding of CRRP, limit teachers' perspectives of Māori and Pasifika potential.

CONTEXT

Teacher morale is arguably at its lowest point, considering 30,000 primary teachers and principals took industrial strike action three times between August 2018 and May 2019. The protests sought solutions to workload; provision for more time; resourcing for learning support; and valuing the profession through increased pay (NZEI Te Riu Roa, 2018). Media coverage relayed stories of teachers in their daily struggle meeting increasingly high demands of the job, while managing increased accountability and public scrutiny. In addition, the country is facing major health and social issues including: unprecedented levels of child poverty (Children's Commissioner, 2012) and incarceration, particularly of Māori (Wilson, 2018); rising housing costs creating homelessness (Children's Commissioner's Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty, 2012); unregulated and readily accessible synthetic drugs (Arnold, 2018); and an under-resourced health system struggling to cope with needs including mental health (Controller & Auditor-General, 2017). This is the current societal environment that flow into schools and classrooms, and which led me to explore enablers and barriers to teachers' ability to embed CRRP given the complexities of their practice.

This research was conducted in 2018, in five schools which form a Kāhui Ako - I (lead author) am Deputy Principal/SENCo in one of the participating schools. I have lived and worked in this area for the last 12 years, including my role as Chair of NZEI Te Riu Roa Wellington Area Council and my former role as Resource Teacher: Learning & Behaviour. In 2018, a TeachNZ Study Award gifted me time to complete my Masters in Specialist Teaching, and serve as Negotiator for the *Primary Teacher Collective Agreement* bargaining. The majority of participants know me from one or more of my roles. The roles

I engaged in alongside this research no doubt both enhanced and complicated the research. For this reason, particular attention was paid at each phase to checking for bias. Furthermore I bring to the research the lens of a Tongan educator, one who was also whāngai to Māori (of Ngati Haua descent). The achievement and success of Māori and Pasifika children are strong drivers of my education career.

Rationale

This research sought not to find gaps in CRRP research but rather to explore any challenges of implementation that may be influenced by other reasons for Māori and Pasifika learners continued struggle in the education system. We believed that exploring teaching practices and cultures of relationships in these five schools could offer insight into enablers and barriers to deeply embedding CRRP and how these can be resolved. Knowing how teachers across the Kāhui Ako understand and enact teacher-student relationships can only contribute to deepening a shared understanding of CRRP.

This research aligns with literature suggesting an analysis of, and possible shift in, teacher discursive positioning is potentially necessary. This shift is one that is away from narratives of underachievement, deficit, and disadvantage to a perspective of strength, potential, and empowerment (Bishop et al., 2003). If this is the case, then we need to face the challenges together and create a culture across schools that promotes a strength-based orientation.

Inquiry questions

1. What does relationship look like to teachers across the Kāhui Ako and what role does it have for them in teaching and learning?
2. How is CRRP understood by teachers and how is their understanding enacted in classrooms?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The aim of *Ka Hikitia*, Māori succeeding as Māori, has yet to be realised (Alton-Lee, 2015). Drawing predominantly on Te Kotahitanga (Bishop et al., 2003) and AIMHI (Hawk & Hill, 1996), this research seeks to understand the ways teacher-student relationships contribute to this, how teachers might act differently, and how their actions could enhance student engagement and success. We take a social-emotional development perspective, whereby students' daily interactions and relationships with their teacher are critical to developing emotional well-being, and emotional well-being influences students' engagement (Andersen, 2009; Craig, 2015; Evans & Harvey, 2012; Graham, Powell & Truscott, 2016; McGrath & Bergen, 2015; Reeves & Mare, 2017).

The causal interconnectedness between social-emotional development and quality relationship is acknowledged, but beyond the scope of this research.

Prioritising relationship

Children's positive development hinges on their contexts, including schools, offering them reliable, supportive relationships (Reeves & Le Mare, 2017). Notably, the focus is on the *adult's* actions, including their ability to read children's cues and respond appropriately (Reeves & Le Mare, 2017). In the classroom, relational pedagogy requires teachers to consciously and explicitly focus on quality and responsive interactions with students. Through relational pedagogy, teachers create classroom environments that promote both academic and social-emotional growth (Reeves & Le Mare, 2017).

The inclusion of *culture* to relational definitions of pedagogy acknowledges and incorporates the contextualised knowledge and understandings of diverse cultures, and recognises power differences between minority and dominant cultures (Bishop, et al., 2003). CRRP listens to, is informed by, and responsive to, Māori (Bishop et al., 2003). Understanding the characteristics of CRRP and how it can be embedded in classroom practice is critical.

Teacher role

In his research meta-analysis, Hattie identified teachers and teaching as the most powerful influence on achievement (Hattie, 2003). In increasingly diverse classrooms, the task of 'knowing' the learner is enormous, as it involves understanding their social interactions and the socio-cultural context of their prior learning and experiences (Allen, Taleni & Robertson, 2009).

Alongside cultural diversity, teachers contend with the complex needs of diverse learners. Craig (2015) highlights the critical work required by schools to create socially- and emotionally-safe environments. By understanding attachment and the emotions that result in maladaptive behaviour, teachers can work closely with students, teaching them self-regulatory strategies.

Effective teaching in trauma-sensitive schools aligns with CRRP research, whereby teacher characteristics are broadly conceived as:

1. Personal attributes and attitudes.
2. Discursive positioning – beliefs and mental images of others.
3. Ability to explicitly connect culture and learning.

1. Personal attributes and attitudes

Teachers' attributes and attitudes - including temperament, tolerance, flexibility, effort and disposition - significantly influence the strength and quality of relationships (Hill & Hawk, 2000). Monk (2004) argues that the teacher's behaviour, beliefs and values are just as important as the subject they teach.

In synthesising three separate studies (primary to tertiary), Hawk, Cowley, Hill and Sutherland (2001) found common characteristics of effective relationships. Students valued teachers':

- Understanding of, and empathy towards Māori and Pasifika culture
- Care towards each student – as a caring extended family member
- Mutual respect in the way they treat and speak to students
- Willingness to go the extra mile
- Passion for teaching and desire to enthuse and motivate – and vulnerability by giving something personal of themselves
- Patience and perseverance
- Genuine belief in students' ability

Respect included teachers modelling desired attitudes and work ethics; not putting themselves 'above' students, valuing and inviting feedback, and giving helpful explanations and reasons.

2. Discursive positioning

In Bishop et al.'s (2003) Te Kotahitanga study, teacher-student relationship was identified as the greatest influence on Māori students' educational achievement. They argue that by taking a 'non-agentic position', putting the issues or blame on students and families, teachers free themselves of responsibility for the problems - and for the solutions.

Students want teachers to be sensitive to – not stereotype or judge them for - the things that are going on in their lives (such as family, relationships, family violence, poverty and grief), knowing and understanding that these issues affect them and their engagement (Children's Commissioner & NZ STA, 2018b). Although social issues are significant, teachers can mitigate their negative impact on students (Alton-Lee, 2015) by setting high expectations, communicating a belief in their abilities and agency, and engaging them in quality teaching and learning.

CRRP calls on teachers to care for students as culturally-located human beings; to reciprocate respect with students and whānau; to show compassion in terms of *awhiawhi*; making effort to

understand the world(s) of students (Bishop et al., 2003). Students will therefore know their teachers care as much about their health and well-being as they do about their academic achievement – because both are important to them (Cavanagh, Macfarlane, Glynn & Macfarlane, 2012).

Bishop (2017) argues that beliefs and biases originate in the mental images we have of others. The Children's Commissioner and NZ STA (2018a; 2018b; 2018c), released reports on what matters to students in education - students in early childhood through to secondary. They remind us of our individual and collective responsibility to champion – not hinder – the success and achievement of all learners.

- **Understand me in my whole world** – learners want to be seen for who they are and to be understood within the context of their home life and experiences
- **Relationships mean everything to me** – learners have a range of significant relationships which can be enablers or barriers to their achievement; many said they cannot learn without a trusted relationship with their teacher
- **I need to be comfortable before I can learn** – the learning environment has an impact on their wellbeing; and they need to feel happy and comfortable in order to learn
- **People at school are racist towards me** – many feel they are treated unequally because of their culture and they experience racism at school
- **Teach me the way I learn best** – learners want to be taught to their strengths and abilities and want learning content that is relevant to their lives and future
- **It's my life – let me have a say** – learners want to have a say in their education and want teachers to involve them in their learning

Children's Commissioner and NZ STA (2018a, p. 28-29):

3. Connecting culture and learning

In socio-cultural constructivist pedagogy, students and teachers co-construct knowledge within their interactions (Nuttal, 2003). Power is shared between students and teachers as they explore what counts as *teaching, learning and knowledge* (Nuttal, 2003).

Power relations can be viewed and mitigated through kaupapa Māori metaphors of *manaakitanga* and *whakawhanaungatanga* (Bishop, et al., 2003) – both underpin the type of extended-family relationship that characterises CRRP (Cavanagh, et al., 2012).

What teachers perceive as effective is not necessarily experienced similarly by students (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh & Teddy, 2007). Students feel their teachers do not understand their cultural identity (Children's Commissioner & NZ STA, 2018c), they want to be acknowledged and respected as Māori, and have their experiences as Māori viewed

as strengths (Cavanagh, et al., 2012). In contrast, many students experience being Māori in mainstream as a negative experience, wherein teachers are covertly racist towards them and do not view them as achievers (Bishop & Berryman, 2006).

For Māori and Pasifika learners, learning experiences are inadequate without links between culture and learning (Glynn, 2013; Samu, 2006). Addressing the negative narratives of Māori students requires deliberate action, addressing the 'cultural deprivation' discourse in teaching and in schools (Bishop, 2017).

Shifting practice

It can be challenging to translate policy into practice. In the absence of clear directives, unintentional harm can be caused to the very students teachers want to support; and teachers relying on personal experiences of minority culture may default to surface level understandings (Siteine, 2017). For instance, in their study of 11- and 13-year old Pasifika students in mathematics, Nicholas & Fletcher (2017) found that in spite of good home-school relationships and their recognition of low achievement of Pasifika, teachers did not consider culturally-appropriate resources or approaches to support their Pasifika learners.

Te Kotahitanga was evaluated by Hattie as having a 0.82 effect size (Alton-Lee, 2015), where anything above 0.4 is considered significant (Hattie, 2003). With comprehensive professional development and support using the *effective teacher profile* framework, teachers transformed their relationship with students and became conscious of their discursive positioning (Bishop, et al., 2007) and its impact on students. As a result, student engagement and achievement improved (Alton-Lee, 2015) and teachers felt empowered in their roles.

Actualising the vision of *Māori enjoying educational success as Māori* is not a Māori problem to 'fix'. It is the responsibility of all educators.

METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

Considering the culturally-situated and relational focus of this research, the inquiry was embedded in Kaupapa Māori and Talanoa epistemological frameworks.

Kaupapa Māori Methodology - incorporating the concepts of *storytelling*, *connecting*, and *whakawhanaungatanga* (Rangahau, 2018). *Storytelling* acknowledges the 'diversities of truth' (Bishop, 1996 cited in Rangahau, 2018) and the contribution participants make in building a collective understanding. *Storytelling* recognises one participant's story impacts on other participants' stories, and as researcher, I too, am part of that

participatory connectedness (Rangahau, 2018). *Connecting* recognises the unique history shared between participating schools and the local community. With connections comes responsibility of accountability, benefit, representation, legitimisation, as well as consideration of power (Bishop, et al., 2007), regarding the gifting and use of participants' stories. *Whakawhanaungatanga* premises a non-hierarchical relationship with participants (Bishop & Glynn, 1999), requiring a research design built on openness and trust, one that positions myself equally as both learner and researcher. An indigenous approach is important to me as a Pasifika researcher, and I acknowledge the responsibility of upholding the tenets of these concepts for the good of Māori learners, their whānau, and community, particularly for a research outside the scope of a purely Kaupapa Māori methodological approach, by Māori for Māori.

Talanoa Research Methodology (Vaiotei, 2013) – incorporating the concepts of *vā* (*space*), and *fonua* (*land*). *Talanoa* (from Tongan culture) stresses the openness of conversations where participants can speak from their hearts without preconceptions (Halapua, in Vaiotei, 2013) and where empathy is central to its effectiveness and authenticity (Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba, 2012, in Vaiotei, 2013). *Talanoa* is facilitated by creating *vā* where "participants interact with reference to their own realities, guided by their aspirations, rules and in their familiar cultural milieu" (Vaiotei, 2013, p.196). In the interpretation of experiences, *vā* also encourages the researcher to notice what is being said, how it is said, and also what is *not* being said (Vaiotei, 2013). Central to *talanoa* is the interconnectedness of *fonua* which includes participants' worldviews, ways of being, language and culture (Vaiotei, 2013). *Talanoa* focuses the research on understanding participants' *fonua* (Vaiotei, 2013).

These indigenous concepts were enacted in several ways, including: aligning the research with Kāhui Ako achievement challenges to gift back to my community; giving something of myself including my connections with participants and the community; using a talking-wall of conversation openers (Appendix 1; Table 2) enabling participants to use them to lead conversations in a way they see fit; allowing participants to choose a suitable place and time for the conversations; creating a café-style setting, seated closely around a table with food and refreshments; avoiding the use of pre-planned question prompts in order to give undivided attention to participants through active listening, to learn and understand from them – their words, body language, feelings and emotions; and providing transcripts of recordings for participants' review and approval. The structure and sequence of this article also reflects a genuine commitment

to allowing the key messages to come from the participants themselves (Jones, Crengle & McCreanor, 2006).

Data gathering

Prior to the research being carried out, the inquiry proposal underwent an ethical review and was approved for compliancy to the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations Involving Human Participants (Massey University, 2017). I addressed all potential ethical dilemmas, particularly the need to protect the mana and anonymity of participants.

A mixed methods approach was deemed appropriate (Menter, Elliot, Hulme, Lewin & Lowden, 2011), and was carried out in two phases: 1) anonymous survey, and 2) focus talanoa groups (FTGs). Approval and support from the principals of each school were sought; they then discussed the research with their staff, encouraging voluntary participation.

Phase 1 Methods: Anonymous survey (see Appendix, Table 1)

Google Form was used for the survey; the link was emailed to principals who forwarded it to their staff. A total of 46 people completed the survey. They were asked to select their usual role: *Classroom Teacher* – x33; *Teacher-Aide* – x5; *SENCO* – x2; and *‘Walking’ School Leader* – x6. No other personal description was sought from participants. Through an inductive thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006), teachers’ ideas, values, and relational practices meanings were drawn to design the conversation openers for the FTGs. Primary focus was placed on the FTG data gathering to reflect the way relationships are formed – *kanohi ki te kanohi*.

Phase 2 Methods: Focus Talanoa Groups (FTGs; see Appendix, Table 2)

While FTGs were held with teachers and students, due to limited time-frame allowed for this professional inquiry, it is the teacher information which informs this research. Four teacher FTGs were held with a total of 14 teachers. The majority were Pākehā (x12), female (x13), and experienced teachers (<5 years x1; 5-10 years x5; >10 years x8).

With regards to the ‘Conversational Method’, Kovach (2010) argues relational assumptions are central to the epistemologies of indigenous methodologies. Complementary to the concept of fonua is what Jones, Crengle and McCreanor (2006) describe as *te tapu o te tangata* – the sanctity of each participant, and the information and experiences they gift in their sharing. To this end, a talking-wall is used to facilitate talanoa while respecting participants’ right to decide what to share and how to share it.

Talking-wall is an adaptation of an approach used frequently in my NZEI leadership service; participants co-design session agendas by selecting one or two items from a selection of topical issues displayed on a wall. The talking-wall approach is replicated in FTGs as cards laid out on the table with different conversation openers designed from the survey analysis. In this way, the interview element of focus groups is removed, positioning the researcher as a learner alongside participants. Participants are able to collaborate together on how to lead their own conversation in a way that is meaningful to them.

The combination of the talking-wall and a café-style setting created a safe *vā* that promoted storytelling, connecting, *whakawhanaungatanga*, and *fonua*. Recordings of conversations were transcribed and emailed to participants for their review and approval. Ideally, for consistency with methodology, participants would collaborate in the analysis process, however the time constraints of this research project did not allow that opportunity.

Data analysis

Themes do not reside in data; the connections we make as researchers to the data enables us to select meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Both Kaupapa Māori and Talanoa research methodologies prioritise the experiences, knowledge, values and perspectives of participants (Rangahau, 2018; Vaioleti, 2013). Therefore an inductive thematic analysis approach, as carried out in this research, isolates latent themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006), recognises the experiences, meanings and realities of participants, and acknowledges that teaching does not occur in a vacuum but within nested and mutually constitutive systems of society (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This flexible approach honours the storytelling, connectivity, *whakawhanaungatanga*, *fonua* and *vā* concepts underpinning the process in which participants share and gift their experiences and stories.

The phenomenologist Heidegger (1996, in Vaioleti, 2013) argues that the observer of phenomenology cannot separate themselves from the world being studied - ‘being in the world’ of the participant is central to the authenticity of Talanoa research methodology (Vaioleti, 2013). It cannot be discounted that participants in this study felt more able to allow me insight into their world, the realities and challenges of it all, because of the connection they feel with me in my wider education role. On the day, I engaged fully with the focus groups, not taking notes other than a few notes to clarify later so as not to interrupt the flow. The sessions were audio-recorded, transcribed by me, and returned to participants to verify. No changes were made to the transcripts, but every participant valued the opportunity to ensure

their words were accurately portrayed. The themes identified through the subsequent inductive thematic analysis with the indigenous concepts incorporated from Kaupapa Māori and Talanoa research methodologies, validates the value and worth of such connections and the meanings that flow out from them.

FINDINGS

Five distinct themes were identified that offer a chalk-face teachers' perspective to the research questions:

- The centrality of relationships of care
- Owning one's learning journey
- Contextual influences and environment
- The preciousness of time
- Identity and wellbeing

There is also a sixth theme - 'shadows of disappointment' - which is not separate from the other themes but rather a *shadow* of them. Vā allows researchers to notice what is said, *how* it is said, but also what is *not* said. The prominence of *disappointment* as an underlying thread in conversations, and the arguable impact it has on teachers – their sense of identity, well-being, personal agency, and overall way of looking inwards and outwards of themselves and their relationships with others, deems it worthy to stand as a separate theme.

1. The Centrality of Relationships of Care

For teachers in the Focus Talanoa Groups (FTGs), relationship is central for learning.

"For some teachers, [relationships are] not what's important. You know, the kids doing well in maths, reading, writing – that's top most important. But actually to get that [learning], the relationship comes first."

By building trusting relationships based on openness, honesty and compassion, they give students assurance of safety and belonging which, among other things, helps lessen the impact of home factors that flow on to school.

"They feel okay to come in here and have a bad day, you know, we're all human. And, I think that's a big part of teaching – you've got to realise that students come with a lot of things that happen at home. They're trying to unpack it and ... deal with it and if you don't allow them that space to do it, and be there to listen, then those relationships are harder to build. So they've always got to feel like somebody's listening to them."

To this end, these teachers make genuine effort to

know the whole child, their parents, family and whānau. They share of themselves, showing their frailty as human beings, and deliberately and continually creating fresh starts for students - to restore and rebuild relationships.

"It's quite important to actually talk about it - this has happened and this is why I'm feeling a bit tired today - because I think it makes the kids more aware that they can come and talk to you about those things as well ... it makes us more aware of each other and how we treat each other when people are feeling different ways."

Teachers care so deeply about their students that they find it extremely difficult to 'switch off' from thinking about them.

"You wake up in the middle of the night thinking of a child, thinking, 'I wonder if they've got [inaudible] or if they've got this,' ... you're constantly thinking of them."

However challenging some children may be, teachers know that they leave lasting impressions on their lives – and it is often long after they leave, that the fruits of their work become evident.

"There was a yell from a [inaudible] car ... it was Joe [pseudonym, former Māori student], great big Joe. And I thought, that would look so funny, this elderly white teacher being greeted with this big Joe. And he gave me such a hug ... he says, 'I'm doing real-good now', he said, 'I do real-good.'"

2. Owning One's Learning Journey

This group of teachers seek ways to make engagement with parents easier because they value their cultural knowledge and expertise. Teachers seek parents' help in developing authentic cultural learning experiences. When this is unsuccessful, many teachers feel inadequate to provide the experiences their students' seek.

"We had such an amazing Pasifika group. They came and the hall was packed with parents. They made food – it was the most amazing food. We just talked about, for them, what was success for their children, and we had all these great ideas. And we had the next meeting - and there was two people."

Teachers know they have to continually challenge their own thinking and perceptions. To this end, they value opportunities to learn from their students and their parents, formal professional learning and development, and hearing how others navigate cultural identity - whether they be colleagues, friends, or family members.

“He doesn’t have an affinity with Māori culture and heritage because he’s been brought up as a white kid and that’s all he knows. And there’s just that dissonance you know, because that identity [has] not been ... acknowledged even. You know, you have kids turn up in class and on the roll it says they’re Māori but they’ve got no idea that they’re part Māori. And I don’t know if that’s a good thing or a bad thing – that’s just the way it is.”

Teachers make effort to improve their competency in CRRP but feel their efforts are sometimes misunderstood and judged.

“Māori achieving success as Māori; to be truly culturally-responsive I have to understand what that means - and do it. And it’s something every year that I keep wondering about, what does that really look like in the classroom?”

Although teachers position themselves as learners and can, for example, learn aspects of culture through their students, they recognise the challenge of fully understanding the depth of another person’s culture.

“No matter what you think you learn about somebody else’s culture ... unless you live it, [it’s] not a part of you ... the deepness or the richness of somebody else’s culture ... we might not ever [understand] ... but we can still appreciate that richness.”

3. Contextual Influences and Environment

Teachers talked about the positive impact of having shared values across the school and in the community, and the importance of school and classroom systems and processes reflecting those values.

“[School] values twenty-four-seven has got to be running in the classroom. Not just at Circle Time, [talking about] an odd one, it’s all day, underpinning everything.”

Teachers noted the influence school culture (including emotional culture) has on Māori students’ experiences and the extent to which tikanga is embedded. Many feel social-emotional skills are equally important as academic. They wish for the flexibility to focus on social-emotional skills without the pressure to cover all curriculum areas – and the associated guilt when they cannot.

“If I had more freedom to, without the pressure of ... the maths, the reading, and the writing - and actually having people recognise that relationships and social skills and cooperation, all of that kind of stuff, is

just as important as everything else we’re trying to teach.”

Many also talked about the challenge of keeping a strength-based, appreciative perspective in the face of ongoing challenges with time constraints, student behaviour, and general busy-ness of school life.

“You just have to keep creating that culture of being proactive and appreciative. It’s hard, one person starts, someone else chips in, suddenly ... it’s a difficult conversation to stop them.”

For some teachers, having access to wider support systems is critical – support from colleagues, management, and specialist services.

“Where are all these agencies supporting us? All the red tape, and the [students] are not severe enough [to receive assistance] but the well-being of our teachers is at risk – so what has to happen before we get the support from the Ministry?”

[Reply from another teacher]: *“Well somebody has to be hurt badly, a teacher or something isn’t it.”*

Teachers also talked about managing change; while they know it is important for students, the school, and wider community, change itself can nevertheless be a frightening experience that stretches and challenges personal confidence.

“I’m terrified because ... we are releasing control, returning control of education back to students and we’re trusting them to be co-partners with us. And I suppose if there was one thing that I could change it would be my degree of confidence – that I [could feel confident I] actually know what I’m doing.”

4. The Preciousness of Time

Time constraint was the most recurring topic, with teachers sharing the struggles for foreground relationships - *“when time is so stretched, you make choices ... [and] some ... important things suffer.”* They expressed emotions including guilt and ‘not being enough’ when they cannot do everything they need to do, or when they cannot be as available to others in the way they want.

“I think that’s the hardest thing about the day sometimes, as you have so much to fit in and you know that there’s children wanting to come and talk to you about this or they just want to come and have a chat.”

Teachers constantly feel stretched - to cover learning content; to make quality time for students, particularly

those with additional needs; time for parents; for planning; and time for their own well-being.

"It's a real hard juggling act to balance time for parents, fitting them in, and all your work and prep and PD and everything else on top. Like [colleague] says, it just piles on and it is snowballing - it is really snowballing."

Teachers identified what they would do more of if they had more time, including more: giving quality one-to-one time with students; participating in extra-curricular activities and school events; and being more involved in the community. They note the value of seeing students' weekend sport, on their relationship:

"You get to see a different child outside of school. You get to see a real child and they get to see you as a human not as a teacher. And seeing them at a game where they're successful ... can really bring that conversation back into the classroom and the positivities, like watching a sleeping child, your love returns."

Some teachers would just like time to bring the fun back to learning, to be able to go with the flow of a lesson, driven by children's engagement and interest, or just taking time out to celebrate learning - just for the sake of celebrating learning.

"Just things like sharing learning, you know, when you just get to sit and bask in the magnificence of whatever it is they've done, and just go, 'that's amazing'. You know, just time to sit alongside [students] and just go, 'aaahh.'"

5. Identity and Well-being

Teachers know their wellbeing affects their relationship with students and the quality of interactions in their classroom. Especially when the students and/or teacher are stressed, *"... relationships can get fragile, and it takes more work to keep them going at times like that."*

Teachers regularly go above and beyond to support their students but this also makes them susceptible to compromising their own time.

"I'd get phone calls at 6.30 in the morning and 9.30 at night ... it's not that I minded them ringing me, it just felt like ... in the weekend ... I've got to have a space."

Many of the stories point to the emotional toll on teacher well-being. They report losing their *"sense of humour... [their] sense of perspective"* and losing the ability to 'switch off' from school when at home.

Teacher 1: "I can't see me staying in teaching with the stresses cos like you say, it's no good for your health."

Teacher 2: "Yeah but you've got to step back a bit and leave it behind."

Teacher 3: "Easier said than done though."

The teachers talked openly about their vulnerability. They position themselves as learners to their students and are open when they do not have answers. By doing so, they build trust with their students.

"I always get nervous about the cultural responsiveness side of it because I'm a white lady ... so I feel really, you know, what's the word, imposter syndrome, when I'm trying to come in and do things from a Māori perspective - but I'm very happy to let the kids lead the learning there!"

Teachers talked about needing to strengthen their own identity because it enriches their teaching. They also know that understanding their identity enables them to help students find theirs.

"I haven't always got 100% energy and I'm not always perfect ... but I try to do something [outside of school] so that I've got all those other experiences that come back into the classroom with me and ... that identity comes back with me into the classroom. Your identity and your well-being have to be there otherwise ... I don't think you can have quality relationships with anybody, let alone students."

6. Shadows of Disappointment

An underlying thread in every conversation was *disappointment*. This theme was not separate from the others but rather a *shadow* of them. A single experience of disappointment may be inconsequential, but layers of experiences of disappointment have an impact on individual teachers and their relationships.

There is no question about the commitment, dedication, and hard work that teachers invest in their role. However, alongside this, they carry a deep sense of 'not being enough', and over time, this impacts on teachers' well-being.

"Teaching right now makes me feel stressed out. It makes me feel worried and nervous and not as confident as I used to be ... because you always feel like you're not doing enough or you do what you know you have to do and there's always more things on that list that you know you have to get done, like it's never ending."

Teachers recounted trying multiple ways to engage parents, family and whānau but often with disappointing results. For instance, in reflecting on an extracurricular event:

“It took time to actually knit together. You’d have meetings and meetings and you’d have child care options, and you’d have food ... dinner was provided and then slowly the group would drip in. Then we finally got a group and we got the event going and we targeted more parents on that day and they came to the next one. And then the next one, it was like, back down to no one.”

Teachers shared personal experiences of shame, at being put down when trying to speak te reo, or having fear about making mistakes or causing offence by getting tikanga wrong. The outcomes are emotional barriers they work to overcome in order to support their students.

“It was more like, [I] didn’t want to get it wrong, like I was always so scared that I’d pronounce something wrong or I’d offend somebody or I’d do something that wasn’t quite within their culture and you’d try and ... they’d [the students] go home and their parents would be like, ‘That’s not what we do!’ So it’s more the idea that you didn’t want to insult the culture of that child.”

Teachers also find it *“hard not to take it personally even though you know you’re not meant to.”* Because they care about the relationship, it is difficult to see students push back with negative behaviour or fail their exams. Although teachers reflect on these events as good practice, the shadow of disappointment remains as a sense of personal failing.

“...you really take them [students] on board ... you can’t take a day off because your kids need you ... I don’t know how you can just switch off and go home and forget about it cos you just can’t. You’re always told ‘get to know your kids’, well I don’t want to know them anymore ... I take everything personally. They don’t pass so you go right back, what have I done for this child that hasn’t passed, what have I done - and that’s what we continuously do as teachers.”

DISCUSSION

These teachers provide a chalk-face perspective which runs contrary to assumptions about the limited uptake of CRRP. This group of predominantly Pākehā teachers understand CRRP, care deeply about their students and the relationship they have with them, and do everything within their influence to help them. Alongside this, they fortify their own professional practice, and manage their vulnerabilities and well-being. The responsibility of addressing the ‘cultural deprivation’ discourse in teaching and in schools (Bishop, 2017) cannot be left

for teachers alone without considering every layer of the wider society – from macro to micro – that influence educational relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Otherwise, ironically, in our mission to stop deficiencing students, we risk deficiencing teachers.

The challenges of implementing CRRP seem less about teachers discursive positioning and understanding of CRRP and more about their agentic limitations in limiting the nature and size of their workload. These limitations include time constraints; access to cultural knowledge and expertise, and additional support for challenging student needs. This takes an emotional toll on teachers’ sense of identity and well-being, and adds layers of disappointment from experiences of shame, fear, sense of inadequacy, and personal failure. While some teachers try to make light of their experiences, the disappointments are there all the same, like shadows, and must be considered for their impact, particularly over the longer term of a teachers professional career. This form of vulnerability, Kelchtermans (2008) argues, is a result of not having full control of the conditions in which teachers work, especially when the person of the teacher is so deeply involved.

If education is a series of relationships (Apps, 1996, in Monk, 2004), then *all* parties in those relationships should be considered. Whilst there are teacher well-being initiatives, Margolis, Hodge and Alexandrou (2014) argue that these are framed through a lens of *resilience*. This framing saddles teachers themselves with sustaining their own well-being, and prioritises the well-being of institutions over individuals. Moreover, these initiatives mask impact of school environments on teacher well-being – which is inextricably connected to student well-being (Bullough, 2005, in Kelchtermans, 2008). What responsibilities, then, do schools, communities, and government agencies as parties to educational relationships have - for workload and well-being?

Siteine (2017) makes a valuable point that policy directives need to be translated into practice. *Ka Hikitia* and *Pasifika Education Plan* present a vision of success for learners who otherwise are struggling in the current system. However, they do not offer teachers practical steps for implementation. The success of the professional development design of Te Kotahitanga (Bishop et al., 2003) included the ongoing support and feedback to teachers, the provision of time, the focus on in-class practise, and the access to experienced, knowledgeable mentors. This model is precisely what research on professional development found effective in changing teaching practice (Sheridan, Edwards, Marvin, Knoche, 2009, in Reeves & Mare, 2017). We cannot expect teachers, non-Māori teachers in particular, to effectively help Māori succeed as Māori without adequate support

and professional development such as offered by Te Kotahitanga.

CONCLUSIONS WITH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

This small-scale research offers valuable chalk-face insights into the barriers Pākehā and other teachers encounter in their efforts to implement CRRP. In contrast to commonly-held perceptions that teachers themselves are the barrier, this research foregrounds the mediating variable of limited professional agency which in turn deflates teachers' pedagogical practice, sense of identity and well-being. Knowing this, if we are to genuinely embed CRRP for the benefit of Māori and Pasifika learners, we must simultaneously consider the needs of teachers and the nested systems within which they operate.

Vulnerability is part and parcel of teaching (Kelchtermans, 2008) and a necessary condition for growth (Bullough, 2005). Teachers respond to vulnerability differently, alternately falling back on certainty and seeking growth (Bullough, 2005). In a supportive context, teachers are most-likely to own their learning journey, learn from discomfort, and identify and mitigate the shadows of disappointment.

As a sector, we must view teachers through the same lens of potential, strength and empowerment with which we view our learners (Bishop et al., 2003), actively challenging the defecising of teachers in the same ways we do for students. Māori learners (in fact all learners) need an environment in which they feel culturally-safe and surrounded by like minds, in order to make sense of their learning and derive meaning from it (Rawlings & Wilson, 2013. p. 22).

REFERENCES

- Allen, P., Taleni, L., & Robertson, J. (2009). "In order to teach you, I must know you". *New Zealand Journal of Education Studies; Vol 44*, No. 2, 47-62.
- Alton-Lee, A. (2015). *Ka hikitia a demonstration report: Effectiveness of te kotahitanga phase 5 2010-2012*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Andersen, R. (2009). *A new model of students' perceptions of the primary school classroom emotional environment*. Palmerston North: Massey University.
- Arnold, N. (2018, November). *Matters of substance*. Retrieved from At the Heart of the Matter: NZ Drug Foundation: <https://www.drugfoundation.org.nz/matters-of-substance/november-2018/getting-real-about-synthetics/>
- Bishop, R. (2017). Relationships are fundamental to learning. *Principal Connections; Vol 20:3*, 8-11. Retrieved from: <http://cognitioneducation.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Russell-Bishop-Editorial-for-CPCO.pdf>
- Bishop, R., & Berryman, M. (2006). *Culture speaks*. Wellington: Huia Publishers.
- Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Cavanagh, T., & Teddy, L. (2007). *Te kotahitanga phase 3 whānaungatanga: Establishing a culturally responsive pedagogy of relations in mainstream secondary school classrooms*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Tiakiwai, S., & Richardson, C. (2003). *Te Kōtahitanga: The experiences of year 9 and 10 Māori students in mainstream classrooms*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Bishop, R., & Glynn, T. (1999). *Culture Counts: Changing power relations in education*. Palmerston North: Dunmore Press Limited.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (2), 77-101.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Harvard University Press.
- Cavanagh, T., Macfarlane, A., Glynn, T., & Macfarlane, S. (2012). Creating peaceful and effective schools through a culture of care. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education; 33:3*, 443-455.
- Children's Commissioner & NZ STA (2018a). *Education matters to me: Emotional wellbeing*. Retrieved from: <http://www.occ.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Emotional-Wellbeing.pdf>.
- Children's Commissioner & NZ STA (2018b, March 26). *Education matters to me: Engagement*. Retrieved from: <http://www.occ.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Engagements.pdf>
- Children's Commissioner & NZ STA (2018c). *He manu kai matauranga: He tirohanga Māori*. Retrieved from: <http://www.occ.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Experiences-of-Maori.pdf>
- Children's Commissioner's Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty.(2012). *Solutions to child poverty in New Zealand: Evidence for action*. Children's Commissioner. Retrieved from: <http://www.occ.org.nz/assets/Uploads/EAG/Final-report/Final-report-Solutions-to-child-poverty-evidence-for-action.pdf>

- Controller & Auditor-General (2017). *Mental health: Effectiveness of the planning to discharge people from hospital*. Retrieved from <https://www.oag.govt.nz/2017/mental-health>
- Craig, S. (2015). *Trauma-sensitive schools: learning communities transforming children's lives, K-5*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Evans, I., & Harvey, S. (2012). *Warming the emotional climate of the primary school classroom*. Wellington: Dunmore Publishing.
- Glyn, T. (2013). From responsive social learning contexts to culturally responsive pedagogy: Contributions from early New Zealand research. *Waikato Journal of Education Te Hautaka Mā tauranga o Waikato; Vol 18:2*, 11-25.
- Graham, A., Powell, M., & Truscott, J. (2016). Facilitating student well-being: Relationships do matter. *Educational Research*, 58:4, 366-383.
- Hattie, J. (2003). Teachers make a difference: What is the research evidence? *Paper presented at the Australian Council for Educational Research Annual Conference on Building Teacher Quality*.
- Hawk, K., Cowley, E., Hill, J., & Sutherland, S. (2001). The importance of the teacher/student relationship for Māori and Pasifika students. *NZCER set 2002: No. 3*, 44-65.
- Hawk, K., & Hill, J. (1996, May 2). *Towards making achieving cool: Achievement in multi-cultural high schools*. Retrieved from Ministry of Education: https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/7558/Towards-Making-Achieving-Cool.pdf
- Hill, J., & Hawk, K. (2000). *Making a difference in the classroom: Effective teaching practice in multicultural high schools*. Retrieved from Ministry of Education. https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/7297/Making-a-Difference-in-the-Classroom.pdf
- Jones, R., Crengle, S., & McCreanor, T. (2006). How tikanga guides and protects the research process: Insights from the hauora tane project. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, (29), 60-77.
- Kelchtermans, G. (2008). Study, stance, and stamina in the research on teachers' lives: A rejoinder to Robert V. Bullough, Jr. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, Fall, 27-36.
- Kovach, M. (2010). Conversational method in indigenous research. *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, Vol 5, Number 1, 40-48.
- McGrath, K., & Bergen, P. (2015). Who, when, why and to what end? Students at risk of negative student-teacher relationships and their outcomes. *Educational Research Review*, 14, 1-17.
- Margolis, J., Hodge, A., & Alexandrou, A. (2014). The teacher educator's role in promoting institutional versus individual teacher wellbeing. *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy*, 40:4, 391-408.
- Massey University (2017). *Code of ethical conduct for research, teaching and evaluations involving human participants*. Massey University.
- Menter, I., Elliot, D., Hulme, M., Lewin, J., & Lowden, K. (2011). *A guide to practitioner research in education*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Ministry of Education (2011). *Tataiako: Cultural competencies for teachers of Māori learners*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education (2013a). *Ka hikitia: Accelerating success*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education (2013b). *Pasifika education plan 2013-2017*. Ministry of Education.
- Monk, H. (2004). *Relationships: The heart of teaching?* Wellington. A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MEd(Adult Ed); Massey University.
- Nicholas, K., & Fletcher, J. (2017). What supports 11- to 13-year-old Pasifika students in mathematics learning in New Zealand classrooms. *Education 3-13 International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education; 45:1*, 68-82.
- Nuttal, J. (2003). Influences on the co-construction of the teacher role in early childhood curriculum: Some examples from a New Zealand childcare centre. *International Journal of Early Years Education; 11(1)*, 23-31.
- NZEI Te Riu Roa (2018, October 24). *Kua tae te wa - It's time*. Retrieved from NZEI Te Riu Roa: <https://campaigns.nzei.org.nz/time/>
- Rangahau (2018, May 28). *Rangahau*. Retrieved from Twenty five indigenous projects: <http://www.rangahau.co.nz/methodology/57/>
- Rawlings, C., & Wilson, K. (2013). Tuakana-teina e-belonging report. Retrieved from <https://ako.ac.nz/assets/Knowledge-centre/RHPF-c39-How-Maori-distance-students-can-have-a-sense-of-belonging/85f5208101/RESEARCH-REPORT-Tuakana-teina-e-Belonging-Report.pdf>
- Reeves, J., & Le Mare, L. (2017). Supporting teachers in relational pedagogy and social emotional education: A qualitative exploration. *International Journal of Emotional Education; Vol. 9, No. 1*, 85-98.

Samu, T. (2006). The 'Pasifika umbrella' and quality teaching: Understanding and responding to the diverse realities within. *Waikato Journal of Education*; 12:2006, 35-49.

Siteine, A. (2017). Recognising ethnic identity in the classroom: A New Zealand study. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*; 26:4, 393-407.

Vaiolleti, T. (2013). Talanoa: Differentiating the talanoa research methodology from phenomenology, narrative, kaupapa Maori and feminist methodologies. *Te Reo, Vols 56 & 57*, 191-212.

Wilson, T. (2018, February 26). *NZ Herald: New Zealand: Crime*. Retrieved from NZ Herald: https://www.nzherald.co.nz/crime/news/article.cfm?c_id=30&objectid=12001728

APPENDIX

Table 1. Anonymous Survey Questions

[NB: Format differs from actual survey on Google Form]

Question 1

I am completing this survey within my role as (select one)

- Classroom teacher
- Teacher aide
- SENCO
- 'Walking' school leader

Question 2

How important are these relationships? [Using scale of 1 to 10; 1=Not important; 10=Very Important]

- Student ↔ Student
- Student ↔ Teacher
- Student ↔ Parents/family/whānau
- Student ↔ Senior leader
- Teacher ↔ Teacher
- Teacher ↔ Parents/family/whānau
- Teacher ↔ Senior Leader

Question 3

How well do you feel you achieve/enable these relationships? [Using scale of 1 to 10; 1=Not Well; 10=Very Well]

- Student ↔ Student
- Student ↔ Teacher
- Student ↔ Parents/family/whānau
- Student ↔ Senior leader
- Teacher ↔ Teacher
- Teacher ↔ Parents/family/whānau
- Teacher ↔ Senior Leader

Question 4

Do you wish to comment on other relationships not covered in the last section?

Question 5

Briefly describe a time you found relationships made a difference to a student/group of students with learning and/or behaviour needs?

Question 6

- (A) Name 2-3 key factors you think ENABLES positive/effective relationships.
- (B) What do you think are the main BARRIERS to positive/effective relationships?

Question 7

Briefly describe what culturally-responsive relationship means to you.

Question 8

- (A) In the last 12 months, what support have you (individually/as a syndicate or staff) received to build positive/effective relationships? [Enter Nil if you haven't received any]
- (B) If you answered 'Nil', what support would you have liked to have received?

Question 9

Is there anything else you want to comment on about educational relationships not already covered?

Table 2. Focus Talanoa Group Conversation Openers

Teaching makes me feel...	I chose a teaching career because...
As a teacher, I hope to...	
I build/restore trust in a relationship by ...	Possible solutions to negativity, deficit thinking, and lack of care could include...
Teacher identity and wellbeing <i>are/are not</i> factors in quality relationships because...	If I had more TIME, I would to improve relationships
I want to see relationships with parents/family/whanau that look like ...	Shifting teacher mindset requires...
"[If they feel]... their teacher fails to understand their cultural identity, they don't see them as someone with potential to help."	"...they do not see themselves or their culture reflected back to them in their school."
<i>"I was asked to do a haka for some visitors to school because the principal wanted to give a cultural experience. But it was annoying because that's like the only time he cares about Māori culture."</i>	If you could change anything at all in order to have better teaching and learning relationships with students, what would you change?

AUTHOR PROFILES

Tute Porter-Samuels



Tute Porter-Samuels is Deputy Principal and SENCO of Wainuiomata Primary School. Prior to this role she was an RTLB in Te Awa Kairangi Cluster 29. She has a particular interest in learning support as well as the success and achievement of Maori and Pasifika learners. Tute was fortunate to receive a TeachNZ Study Award in 2018, allowing her to complete a Master in Specialist Teaching. Her heritage is Tongan and she has a special connection with Ngati Haua. Outside her professional roles, she spends every minute with her four children, friends and whanau.

Email: tutep@wainuiomata.school.nz

Wendy Holley-Boen



Wendy Holley-Boen is a senior lecturer in the Institute of Education at Massey University and a member of Massey's Equity through Education Centre. She is an educational psychologist, teaching mainly in the Specialist Teaching Programme. Wendy has a special interest in mentoring others, and is grateful to Tute for the opportunity to support and learn from this important professional inquiry.

Email: W.Holley-Boen@massey.ac.nz