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## **Retrospective: A tribute to the past editors from the current editorial team**

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### **Two decades of *Kairaranga*: Looking back to look forward**

This retrospective, as the first piece in the new online version of *Kairaranga*, looks back over two decades of the print version of this journal. The current editorial team pays tribute to the original editors and acknowledges their vision and achievements. Locating the journal within the changing educational landscape over the past twenty years, this piece provides a meta-analysis and reflection of the articles published from 2004 to 2021. It explores the key themes that emerged as threads across 24 *Kairaranga* issues published between these years.

Looking forward to *Kairaranga*'s future, there is a commitment to honouring the past. The original vision and focus of *Kairaranga* will remain: to foreground evidence-based practices that put learners at the centre. Opportunities to weave new *Kairaranga* threads will be explored, including expanding the voices and perspectives of contributors, widening the journal focus to equity issues across learning support and enabling online and multi-media submissions in both English and te reo Māori.

Looking back to look forward, the core kaupapa of this interprofessional journal stays constant, so that *Kairaranga* can continue to promote educational equity across Aotearoa.

### **Looking back: A changing educational landscape and the beginnings of *Kairaranga***

*Kairaranga* was launched in 1998, at a time when education in Aotearoa was at a crossroads. The Education Act was passed in 1987, guaranteeing all children aged 5-19 a free education at any state-funded school. In 1993, just a few years later, the Human Rights Act reconfirmed the rights of individuals and prohibited discrimination and exclusion from regular education (Moore, 1999). Special Education 2000 (SE2000) policy was introduced in Aotearoa New Zealand in 1998 with an underpinning of inclusion.

As part of SE2000, the Resource Teachers Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) workforce was created. Resource teachers were, and still are, seen as contributing to the Ministry of Education's vision of "an education system that delivers equitable and excellent outcomes" (Ministry of Education, 2020, p. 5).

Against this backdrop *Kairaranga* was established in 1998 as a practice-focused journal for Resource Teachers Learning and Behaviour (RTLB). The creators of *Kairaranga* were part of the first cohort of university training of RTLB in 1998. During their academic study, they realised that “there wasn’t a place for RTLB research to actually be published, where we could have an independent voice” (interview with Steeghs, 2022). From their initial discussions around a kitchen table, the founders created a practice-focused journal with their tagline of “*weaving educational threads, weaving educational practice*”. These threads of practice were aligned with, and in response to, the changing policies, frameworks and approaches that emerged out of SE2000.

SE2000 presented a vision of needs-based and non-categorical support for all learners. Barriers to learning were seen as external rather than internal to the individual, requiring thoughtful consideration of the child and environment to ensure a ‘goodness of fit’ (Moore, 1999). Educational spaces, instruction and curriculum were challenged to “reduce exclusion to its irreducible minimum, because environments now permit the maximum level of inclusion” (Moore, 1999, p. 11). It was envisaged that schools would take responsibility for all learners, teachers would have the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to meet the needs of every learner, and the resource teacher workforce would be “skilled, coordinated, evidence based and forward thinking” (Disley, 2009, p. 63). RTLB were charged with working alongside teachers to identify solutions to reduce barriers to learning, build teacher capability, and further school-wide inclusive practices (Ministry of Education, 2020).

At the time of SE2000, and arguably still today, there were two competing paradigms in education (Moore, 1999). In the *functional limitations paradigm*, some students were viewed as unable to benefit from regular instruction, categorised and diagnosed according to deficits, and provided with supports focused on remediation. ‘Inclusion’ denoted the setting, and all too often “mainstreaming simply relocated the attitudes, special materials, special curricula and teaching techniques of special education to the regular classroom” (Moore, 1999, p. 5). The learner was seen as needing to fit the classroom rather than the classroom fitting the learner. In the competing *ecological paradigm*, the focus shifted to the interaction between diverse learners and their multi-layered environments (Moore, 1999, p. 4). From a sociocultural perspective, difference was seen as natural, to be expected, and a result of interactions between learners and environments rather than within-learner and fixed (Florian & Graham, 2014). Learning support could then be framed as “extending what is generally available to everyone (as opposed to providing for all by differentiating for some) while taking into account that there will be differences between learners” (Florian & Graham, 2014, p. 465).

Supporting the SE2000 shift towards a more inclusive education system, the original editorial board saw *Kairaranga* as a place to weave threads of inclusive practice together. In line with expanded notions of evidence-based practice, in which lived experience and practice wisdom are valued alongside formal research evidence (Bourke et al., 2005), they encouraged a wide range of contributions. Submissions were accepted from teachers and other practitioners alongside academic researchers and students, which included the perspectives of children, family, and whānau. These threads became core to the format of *Kairaranga*, underpinned by their ethos of weaving threads together. These threads were woven into 238 articles over the two decades that the journal was stewarded, first by the Ministry of Education, and from 2005 by Massey University. These threads foregrounded and celebrated educational practice across specialist and inclusive education over this

time. Unpacking these threads within the context of educational change provides a unique insight into the area of learning support in Aotearoa post SE2000.

## Weaving threads

In order to explore the threads that were interwoven across the two decades of *Kairaranga* publications and compile them into this retrospective, the current editorial team took the following approach. All available digital copies of *Kairaranga* were first uploaded to the *Kairaranga* website ([www.kairaranga.ac.nz](http://www.kairaranga.ac.nz)). Back issues published between 2004 and 2017 were reviewed and the following data were extracted from every article: journal title, date of publication, name of author, author's affiliation, author's position within the organisation, and the keywords listed by each author for every article. A more comprehensive review of each article followed to identify whether the article included the voices of teachers, parents, children, or other groups and to generate a brief one-sentence description of each article.

This analysis provided a snapshot of the different voices that contributed to *Kairaranga* over past editions and the topics that were covered. It provided a retrospective lens through which to examine what was important to contributing practitioners. Article descriptions were then synthesised into themes. These themes form the threads for the next part of this discussion and cover contributors' voices, perspectives, language shifts and enacted principles. For each theme or thread, the data are briefly summarised and interpreted with suggestions for the next era of *Kairaranga*.

### **Thread 1: Voices**

*Kairaranga* has consistently focused on practitioner voice, providing a space for practitioners to share insights on their practice. To date, 238 articles have been written by 298 unique authors. Many of these authors have contributed to multiple articles across the corpus. As part of the submission process, *Kairaranga* authors recorded their professional role, and these data were collated into six categories: lecturer or equivalent, RTLB, psychologist, teacher, MOE employee, and other. Lecturers (or equivalent) had wide-ranging experience; some articles were written by emerging researchers and others by researchers who held senior academic roles within their institutions. This category was substantially larger (28%) than the RTLB category (18%), which was the next largest category. A similar proportion of authors identified as psychologists (10%), teachers (13%), and MOE employees (10%). Various advisor and service provider roles fell within the MOE employee's category. The "other" category (14%) covered a diverse range of professionals within the public, private, and voluntary sectors. This included occupational therapists, physiotherapists, students, private sector employees, employees at a trust/charity/association, speech language therapists, parents, *Kairaranga* board members, and authors who did not provide role information. Figure 1 illustrates the proportion of *Kairaranga* authors associated with each professional role.

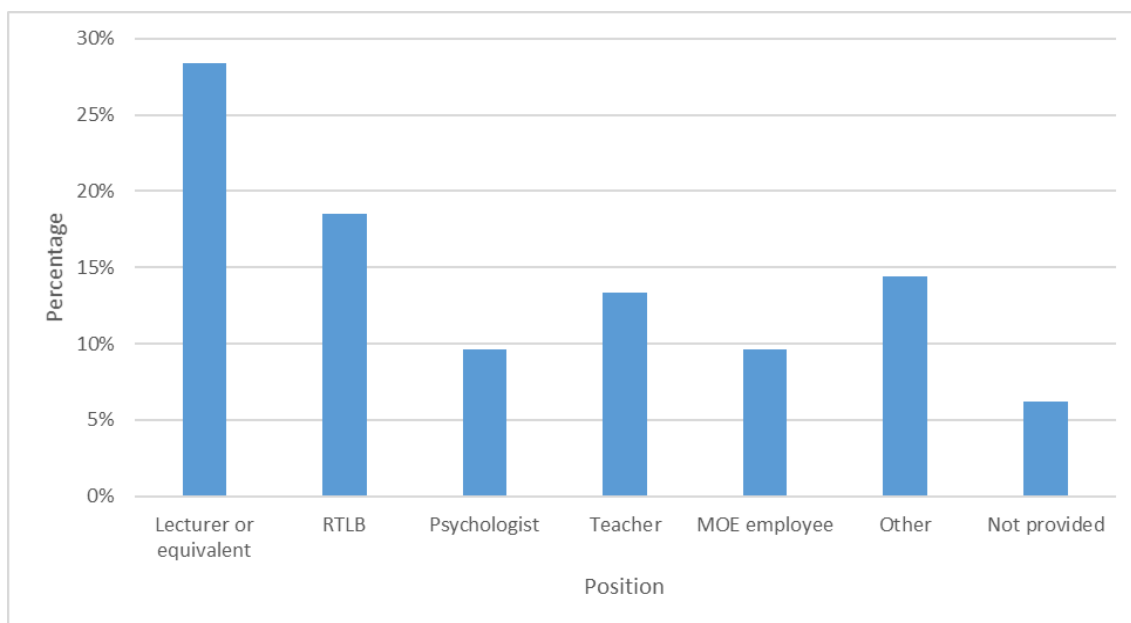


Figure 1. Percentage of Kairaranga authors within each professional role

Looking back, it is interesting to note that university lecturers or equivalents contributed to most of the articles in the *Kairaranga* corpus. Additionally, they played a critical role in encouraging, supporting and collaborating with teachers, parents and others to disseminate their ideas via submissions. Teachers wrote or co-wrote 32 articles and lecturers (or equivalent) supported teachers with 12 of these articles. Of the three articles written by parents, two were written independently and one article was co-written with a university lecturer. There were many other examples of author collaboration across the *Kairaranga* corpus. Of the 238 articles, 87 were written by two or more authors.

Looking forward to the future of *Kairaranga*, the new editorial team are committed to continuing to foreground these key voices from the sector, while also supporting a broadening of opportunities in this space. Acknowledging that academics have played a key role in contributing and supporting others to contribute to *Kairaranga*, this is an area that will be further strengthened. This could include inviting bespoke special editions showcasing various university professional programmes in Aotearoa – sharing their teaching, learning, assessment and ongoing professional development approaches as part of a series on the training and life-long learning of the professional workforce within the broader learning support area. Further opportunities might include working with masters and doctorate level researchers to publish their research in *Kairaranga*. Increasing the range and type of voices from the field is a key goal for the future, providing more support for parents, teachers and students, and perhaps using different formats such as video or audio interviews, visual spotlights on practice, as well as digital or photo-narratives.

### **Thread 2: Perspectives**

Looking back over the past two decades, *Kairaranga* has captured various perspectives of teachers, whānau, children and young people through surveys, interviews, focus groups, and narratives. The analysis of past articles showed that a small number of these focused on the perspectives of priority learners: groups of children often marginalised within the education system. Articles that focused on priority learners captured a diverse range of perspectives from parents, whānau, teachers who work with these learners, and the learners themselves. These articles focused on children with disabilities (see for example, Esera, 2008; Jongens, 2017; Pillay & Flanagan, 2011; Tippett, 2004; Ward, 2010, 2011), and children who identify as Pasifika (see for example, Knight-de Blois & Poskitt, 2016), Māori (see for example, Berryman & Woller, 2011; Bevan-Brown, 2006; Duncan et al., 2016; Hiha, 2015; Hunt, 2016), or other ethnicities at risk of underachieving within our school system (see for example, Smyth, 2013).

Going forward, there is an intention to focus on broadening the conversation to equity issues more widely. Perspectives will be sought on how best to promote social justice and celebrate diversity through educational practice with a view to creating more equitable education systems in Aotearoa. Particular areas of focus could include the perspectives of those whose learning needs are not being met by the education system, for example, those who belong to minority cultures and ethnicities and who experience difficulties at the margins of educational systems. Educational inequity comes in many forms including being denied enrolment in a school or having stipulations placed around enrolment, not having language or cultural world-view being acknowledged, hiding identity to feel safe at school, having low or biased expectations, difficulties and challenges relating to economic disadvantage, or disparities in relation to specific subject areas (Kearney, 2019). Articles that take on the challenges of bringing about educational equity will be encouraged in future *Kairaranga* editions.

### **Thread 3: Language shifts**

Looking back over the *Kairaranga* article keywords that contributors identified as part of their submissions can signal important aspects of the paradigm and contexts of practice, as well as what contributors viewed as important over time. The language that contributors used provides insight into the shifts that have occurred over the two decades of *Kairaranga* submissions. Language is a powerful tool in terms of how reality is constructed and interpreted. Keywords such as 'behaviour management' versus 'behaviour as communication' or 'special education' versus 'inclusive education' can illustrate paradigm shifts in educational thinking and practice. A word frequency query was run in NVivo to determine the frequency with which keywords appeared in the *Kairaranga* past editions. Of the 494 unique keywords, only 44 words appeared more than 10 times, and these 44 words made up over half (51%) of all the keywords. Figure 2 is a word cloud that illustrates the results from the word frequency analysis. Words that appear frequently within the *Kairaranga* corpus of keywords are represented in larger font.



keywords were assigned to one of four categories (see Table 1). The first three categories reflect *Kairaranga's* guiding principles, and the fourth category includes words that describe the focus of an article. The percentages in brackets next to each word signals the frequency with which the word appeared within the *Kairaranga* keywords corpus. The table notes identify the words that typically appeared in pairs. This information was considered when assigning a word to one of the four categories. For example, 'intervention' could be assigned to the 'focus on practice' category. However, because this word typically appeared within the keyword 'early intervention', it was better placed within the 'Topics' category.

Table 1: Distribution of keywords

Category 1 Focus on practice	Category 2 Evidence-based	Category 3 Voices	Category 4 Topics
Education (2.5%)	Research <sup>2</sup> (2.0%)	Teacher (2.2%)	Behaviour (1.7%)
School (2.4%)	Effective (1.5%)	Māori (1.6%)	Inclusive (1.1%)
Practice (2.4%)	Based <sup>3</sup> (1.4%)	Parent (1.1%)	Inclusion (1.1%)
Professional <sup>1</sup> (2.3%)	Action <sup>2</sup> (1.3%)	RTLB (0.8%)	Autism <sup>4</sup> (1.0%)
Practices (2.1%)	Evidence <sup>3</sup> (0.9%)	Students (0.8%)	Disorder (0.8%)
Development <sup>1</sup> (1.7%)	Culture (0.8%)	Student (0.7%)	Relationship (0.7%)
Learning (1.6%)	Culturally (0.6%)	Management (0.6%)	Spectrum <sup>4</sup> (0.7%)
Strategies (1.0%)		Children (0.5%)	Collaboration (0.7%)
Teaching (0.7%)			Communication (0.7%)
Reflection (0.8%)			Literacy (0.7%)
			Reading (0.6%)
			Relationships (0.6%)
			Special <sup>5</sup> (0.9%)
			Needs <sup>5</sup> (0.6%)
			Social (1.1%)
			Skills (0.6%)
			Early <sup>6</sup> (0.9%)
			Intervention <sup>6</sup> (0.9%)
			Assessment (0.8%)

<sup>1</sup> professional development, <sup>2</sup> action research, <sup>3</sup> evidence based, <sup>4</sup> autism spectrum, <sup>5</sup> special needs,

<sup>6</sup> early intervention

The analysis found that over half (57%) of the 44 most frequently occurring keywords related to one of *Kairaranga's* three guiding principles, with the remainder relating to topics that were the focus of articles. This serves to illustrate that topics covered in *Kairaranga* over the past two decades have consistently been underpinned by its core kaupapa and aligned with its vision. Many of the topic keywords broadly relate to the school environment (e.g., behaviour, relationship, social, and communication). Subject-specific articles tended to focus on reading, with 'reading' and 'literacy' being the only subject-specific keywords that appeared within the 35 most frequently occurring words. The next subject-specific keyword ('mathematics') appeared in position 158 and made up less

than 0.1% of the keyword corpus. A strong emphasis on reading was also evident within a group of articles that focused primarily on children's academic achievement data. Of these 11 articles, 10 focused on some aspect of reading achievement. Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) appeared within the 35 most frequently cited words (0.8%). Other aspects of neurodiversity, such as dyslexia (0.1%) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (0.06%) appeared less frequently within the keywords. ASD was also the main focus of articles that included parent voice and the three articles that were written by parents all focused on ASD. *Kairaranga* has always had a strong, clear vision that articles reflect the educational context – and behaviour, inclusion, reading, mathematics and neurodiversity are arguably ongoing key topics of educational interest and change.

Looking forward, the journal will hold true to these principles of foregrounding evidence-based practices that reflect multiple voices. *Kairaranga* will continue to reflect on, celebrate and stretch practice within early childhood settings, schools and kura. The journal will continue to centre the voices of mokopuna and whānau as well as the adults that work alongside them. *Kairaranga* will also place a greater focus on capturing voices that are not typically heard. Opportunities for researchers to include these under-represented voices will be one way of expanding both the topic areas and perspectives on these topics.

## Looking forward: New opportunities for *Kairaranga*

Contemporary definitions of inclusive education emphasise rights over needs, and charge schools/centres with responding to the diversity of all children and young people in ways that are equitable and welcoming (MacArthur & Rutherford, 2016). Equity in education is not the same as equality in education, which provides all with the same, *irrespective* of need. Equity provides for difference, *because* of need, ensuring that every student can access, participate and succeed in education (Kearney, 2019).

Alongside so much progress towards equity and inclusion for all, there are still significant challenges. Teachers may worry they don't have the skills to meet the needs of some learners (Lalvani, 2013) or report feeling underprepared for the demands of inclusive education (Florian & Graham, 2014). Additionally, teachers seek strategies for balancing the needs of all children, administrative requirements, class sizes, and increasing behaviour challenges (Wylie, 2007).

In response to these challenges and opportunities, *Kairaranga* will broaden its focus to include a wider range of voices and perspectives relating to equitable and inclusive education for all learners. The journal has come a long way from serving RTLB, and now aims to extend this to a wider interprofessional focus across the areas of learning support. The journal will continue to foreground the perspectives of academics, researchers, practitioners, educators, parents, whānau, students and mokopuna across the sector. Additionally, as a journal aspiring to be Te Tiriti-led, future submissions are invited in both in English and te reo Māori, reflecting Aotearoa's bicultural then multicultural context, drawing on local perspectives and foregrounding Māori and Pacific research and ways of knowing and doing.



The journal will be freely available online, as a way of inviting everyone into the conversation. This ensures articles are more accessible to the *Kairaranga* audience, and teachers, parents and practitioners can read as well as write for *Kairaranga*. In its multi-media format, *Kairaranga* can now welcome contributions in varied forms (video, audio, poetry, art) that allow people to contribute in the ways that suit them and their message.

The journal will broaden its scope to all professionals in learning support and to life-lifelong, life-wide learning across formal and non-formal settings. The editorial team seeks to work with experienced and beginning researchers. An open and transparent review process, including mana-enhancing feedback and scaffolding from submission-to-print, may serve as a useful support for some contributors. And finally, the cover artwork for each edition created by tamariki across the motu will continue. This core feature of *Kairaranga* goes to the heart of the original and ongoing vision for *Kairaranga*, that students are at the centre.

The new editorial team would like to pay tribute to all those who have contributed over the two decades to bring *Kairaranga* to what it is today. This include all 298 contributing authors and the reviewers for each article, the founding team and wider editorial board, the Ministry of Education and Massey University. Particular acknowledgement goes the original team of four RTLB who created *Kairaranga*: Cath Steeghs; Paul Mitchell; Graeme Nobilo and Carol Watts (view the [video interview](#) on the new *Kairaranga* site). Each prior edition of *Kairaranga* celebrates the tamariki and rangatahi from around the motu who have contributed their artwork on the covers over the two decades (view the [video compilation](#) of cover art). Ngā mihi nui ki a Angus Macfarlane as the previous and continuing cultural advisor for the journal (listen to the [Kairaranga waiata](#) composed and sung by Angus and Sonja Macfarlane). And gratitude goes to Alison Kearney for her tireless passion in stewarding the journal from the previous editorial team to the next, and facilitating it's new home in Massey University with a new editorial team.

The new editorial team are humbled and excited to further the *Kairaranga* vision – to promote equity in education and foreground evidence-based practices that puts learners at the centre through: *weaving educational threads, weaving educational practice*.

*Ngā tapuae o mua, mō muri*

*The footsteps of the past, informing the future*

#### Looking back – Past/ongoing editors

- Cath Steeghs
- Paul Mitchell
- Carol Watts (copy editing – ongoing)
- Graeme Nobilo (cover art – ongoing)
- Alison Kearney (Massey University – ongoing)
- Angus Macfarlane (cultural advisors – ongoing)

#### Looking forward – Current editorial team

- Wendy Holley-Boen
- Sonja Macfarlane
- Mandia Mentis
- Vickel Narayan
- Mike Sleeman
- Philippa Butler (production editor)

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