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ABOUT TLRI

The Teaching & Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) is a government programme that aims to:

- build knowledge, through partnership research, about teaching and learning
- use this knowledge to create improved outcomes for learners
- create partnerships between practitioners and researchers to maximise the value and usefulness of research.

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Update on third year TLRI projects

In this issue of *Partnership*, we thought we'd share an insight into how three TLRI projects are faring in their third year of study. Here are three articles summarising each project's key findings so far and looking at how their projects are contributing to the TLRI aim of building new knowledge about teaching and learning, and providing opportunities for collaborative investigations between teachers and researchers in a variety of sectors.

Interactions between teachers and students in science and technology classrooms

Everyone, at some point, has been to school, but this does not mean that everyone can teach. Special knowledge is required by teachers to teach science and technology effectively to different students. This pedagogical content knowledge is important, as teachers need to bring together what they know about science and technology ideas with what they know about teaching science and technology. They need to know how they can teach their students science and technology ideas so their students can learn the ideas. Assessment for Learning (AFL) highlights the importance of classroom interactions around ideas. Effective classroom interactions rely on teacher knowledge and classroom practices.

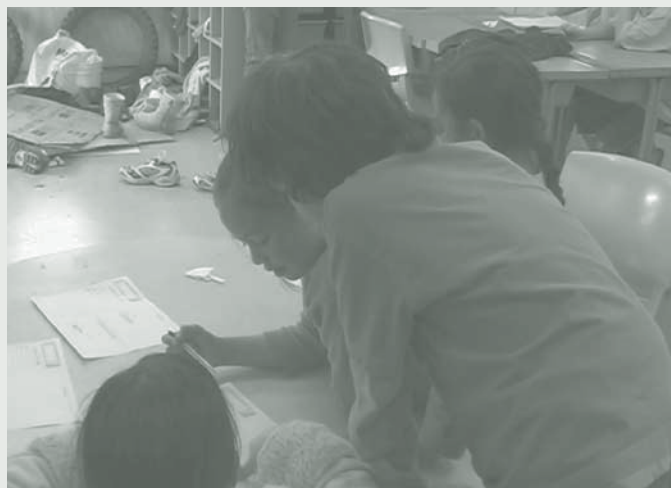
Classroom interactions between teachers and students in science and technology in primary and intermediate schools are the focus of this TLRI study. The classroom InSiTE (Interactions in Science and Technology Education) project team consists of Bronwen Cowie, Judy Moreland, Alister Jones, Kathrin Otrell-Cass, Christine Deeley, and 12 teachers from six schools in the wider Waikato region. The focus of the project is on enhancing teacher-student AFL interactions and the important ideas, skills, and attitudes that underpin science and technology.

As part of this process, they are interested in the role teacher knowledge about students, the subject, and learning plays in effective interactions.

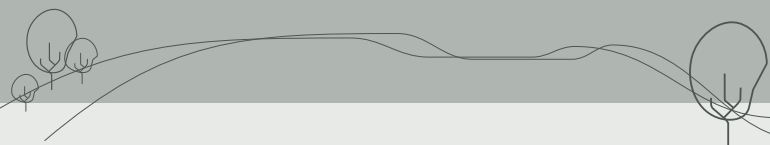
Key findings

The InSiTE team looked at lesson planning that focused teachers on developing student ideas about the nature of science and technology, and on developing student conceptual, procedural, societal, and technical understandings and skills. Discussions with teachers highlighted the complex ways these aspects interrelate. The researchers and teachers have become aware of the need for teachers to establish a sense of continuity across tasks and time, so that their students experience their learning as connected and coherent. The teachers changed their planning

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Teacher and students interacting in a science and technology classroom





Making a difference: The role of Initial Teacher Education and induction on the preparation of New Zealand secondary teachers

This TLRI project aims to look at how beginning teachers feel about the preparation they received from Initial Teacher Education (ITE) prior to starting their first year on the job, and their experience of the induction processes available to them. The national project team, led by Glenda Anthony and Ruth Kane from School of Curriculum and Pedagogy, Massey University, surveyed 855 beginning teachers entering their first teaching year (75 percent of total national cohort of teaching graduates) and interviewed 100 of those same participants 6 and 12 months later.

Key findings

With the study in its third year, a number of interesting observations are emerging through the questionnaire and interviews.

Preparedness

The project found that, in general, respondents to the initial questionnaire reported feeling prepared across all but a few areas of teaching. Less than 1 percent (6 teachers) reported that they felt “not at all well prepared” to begin their teaching career.

Respondents reported that they were generally well prepared in terms of knowledge of how social, physical, and emotional factors and experiences influence students’ learning. But, they felt less prepared in their ability to meet students’ diverse needs, especially the needs of students from non-English speaking backgrounds and less prepared in terms of their knowledge and understanding of teaching practices concerning the inclusion and support of Māori students.

Induction experiences

What also came through strongly was that year one teachers have highly variable induction experiences, such as access to suitable mentors, professional guidance in curriculum, and appraisal reporting. The diverse range of people

entering teaching, many of whom are going through a change of career, often has different requirements for, and expectations of, an induction process. That is, there’s not a one-fits-all model for providing an induction.

At the end of their first year of teaching, 31 percent of the study’s cohort of beginning teachers expressed dissatisfaction with how the school induction programme was meeting their perceived needs and expectations. In general, beginning teachers who were in small/sole charge departments, had moved to new communities, were part-time, or who started part way through the year, were less able to access appropriate induction support and guidance.

For those beginning teachers who rated their induction experiences highly, there was clear evidence that they were involved in professional relationships with colleagues who both valued them and recognised their special needs as beginning teachers.

Contribution to teaching and learning research

This study provides national data on the crucial years of teaching: the

continuum from ITE to beginning teaching. The longitudinal case studies follow the beginning teachers in their first two years of teaching. The knowledge generated in this project complements parallel research projects, such as the New Zealand Teachers Council’s Learning to Teach programme (<http://www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz/communication/publications/research0008.stm>) and NZCER’s Teachers of Promise (http://www.nzcer.org.nz/default.php?cPath=76&products_id=1178).

To date, positive feedback was expressed from the beginning teachers who have completed their first year. Many have commented on how much they have enjoyed the opportunity for their voices to be heard, being able to talk about their experiences, and reflect on their experiences in schools.

By sharing their experiences, beginning teachers have provided a useful insight into the current strengths and weaknesses of the ITE preparation and induction processes across a wide range of secondary schools. When combined with additional data from in-school mentors, this study will provide a comprehensive insider perspective into beginning-teacher experiences.

Beeby Fellowship

One of the TLRI’s researchers is this year’s recipient of the Beeby Fellowship: a joint initiative between the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) and the New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO.

Deborah Fraser, an associate professor of human development and counselling at the University of Waikato’s School of Education, will use the Fellowship to produce professional development resources on the teaching of the Arts, aimed at primary school teachers.

“The aim is to provide a stimulating and motivating resource that will help change and enhance teachers’ practice,” Dr Fraser says.

The idea grew out of the TLRI research project (<http://www.tlri.org.nz/projects/2004/arts.html>) she led along with two colleagues, Graham Price and Clare Henderson, and in collaboration with teachers in ten primary schools. It explored how the Arts are taught in New Zealand primary schools and gave the teachers the opportunity to question their practice and experiment with alternative methods.

Key learning competencies across place and time

Kimihia te ara tōtika, hei oranga mō to āo

This TLRI project explores key competencies and learning dispositions in a range of early childhood and primary school settings and investigates features of the teaching and the learning environment that enhance them.

Teachers from three primary schools and two early childhood centres are working in partnership with Margaret Carr and Sally Peters, from the University of Waikato, who are providing research assistance, while Keryn Davis, Sue Molloy, and Tina Williams provide ongoing support for the teachers in Christchurch and Rotorua. This project builds on a 2004 pilot project in nine early childhood centres and primary schools. Ways to define, document, and trace the development of learning dispositions and key competencies are explored in all the settings and, in one school, across English medium and Māori medium classrooms.

Findings

A number of findings across all the settings are emerging. These are tentative at this stage, as teachers and researchers continue to analyse the observation and interview data.

Relationships and belonging

The concept of “belonging” underpins the key competencies and the learning dispositions. Relationships and recognition of the cultural and social communities that are part of children’s lives and identities appear to be key features of belonging. Interviews with parents in one school project indicated that belonging was important for families too. That means that they want to understand what’s happening in the classroom and in the school for their child, and have an opportunity to have a say.

In another school, opportunities for children to have a say were picked up with enthusiasm: writing their own learning stories; and contributing their own views about what key

competencies might include.

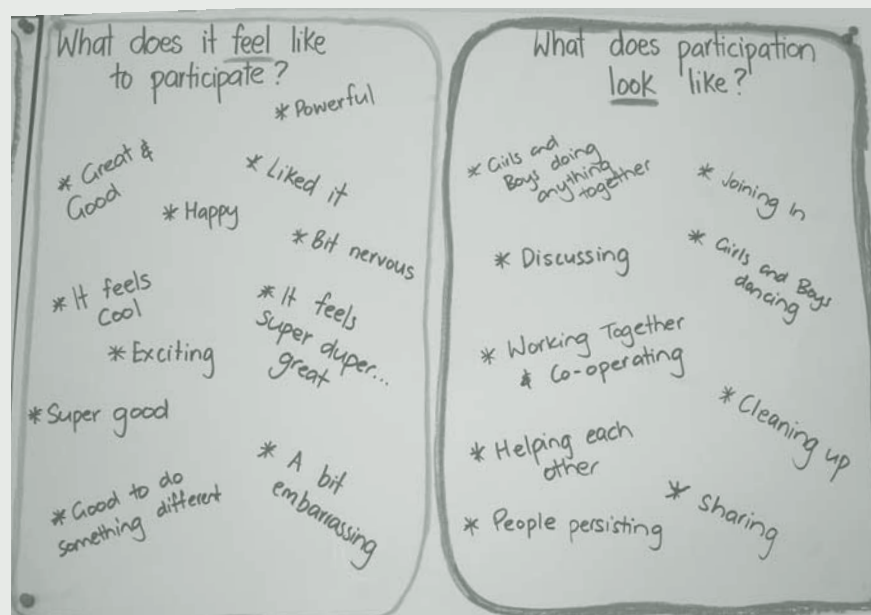
Suggestions for participating included “Doing something you haven’t done before” and “Giving things a go”, so they tried activities they hadn’t done before and then brainstormed about what this might look and feel like (see below).

One of the early childhood centres has explored the central underpinning idea of relationships with self, others, and place. Often, learning opportunities combine all three of these.

strategies, interviews with other teachers, and group discussions of teachers are providing data on teachers’ views and teaching strategies with key competencies and learning dispositions in mind.

Contribution to teaching and learning research

The data collected provides a repertoire of pedagogies designed to recognise and strengthen the teaching and learning of key competencies and learning dispositions. Teachers and learners are constructing opportunities together and families, whānau, and



Students' brainstorm of participation

Continuities and pathways

A second finding is that there are interesting ways in which teachers can describe continuity of key competencies and learning dispositions: as co-constructed pathways where children follow their interests, and through “story-lines” and data bases.

Contexts and intentions of learning

The context of learning has emerged as centrally important. The study also explores the notion of a balance of teacher intentions and learner intentions. Observations of teachers’

cultural communities are being included in the curriculum in a range of ways. Teacher-researchers have developed and refined research questions of interest to them, reflected on the data, and written working papers along the way.

For more information about this project, see (<http://tlri.org.nz/projects/2004/keylearning.html>)

Interactions between teachers and students in science and technology classrooms

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practices by specifying how they would make these links explicit. In the classroom, they used a range of artefacts, whole class reviews, and group and individual conversations to reinforce these links and to enhance the learning of students. The researchers and teachers are working to better understand both the dimensions of AfL interactions and the complex interplay of these interactions.

Contribution to teaching and learning research

The researchers conducted reflective interviews with teachers and students in order to develop a more robust understanding of effective interactions between teachers, students, and the important ideas, skills, and attitudes that underpin science and technology. Most of the teachers in the study were new to research, but found that being involved with the processes of audio-taping teachers and students, videoing whole classes and groups of students, photographing student work and students at work, and collecting and analysing student workbooks, teacher plans, and lesson materials, particularly enlightening.

In the second year, the InSITE team worked with teachers to develop a shared understanding of the learning they intend for their students by planning together. They also spent more time reflecting on the nature and meaning of different classroom episodes.

As the study hits its third year, the team is undertaking the final round of classroom-based research. They plan to write case studies to highlight effective classroom practices and the impacts on student learning. They anticipate that this joint writing will extend their collaborative research partnership.

For more information about this project, see <http://tlri.org.nz/projects/2004/insite.html>

New members join the TLRI Advisory Board

The TLRI Advisory Board provides strategic leadership for the initiative. It is responsible for setting the priorities and selection criteria for the research programme funding and for recommending these to the Minister. The Board also provides advice to the programme co-ordination team (based at NZCER) and makes recommendations about activities that would assist to achieve the aims of the TLRI.

Three new members have joined the TLRI Advisory Board this year.

Liz McKinley is the director of the Starpath Project for Tertiary Participation and Success. She is of Ngāti Kahungunu and Ngāti Tahu descent, and since 2005 has been an associate professor in Māori Education at the Faculty of Education, University of Auckland. Liz is also a principal investigator on the team that is investigating the supervision of Māori doctoral students, funded by the Ministry of Education through the TLRI. Her previous experience includes teaching and administration in secondary schools, preservice and inservice teacher education, and national curriculum development.

Tom Prebble is an education consultant and researcher. Formerly responsible for the extramural, e-learning and international programmes at Massey University, in recent years Tom has been Professor of Higher Education at Massey, led a number of research studies in tertiary education, and most recently served as interim director for

Ako Aotearoa, the newly established National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence.

Frances Salt has been the National Manager of Reporting Services for the Education Review Office (ERO) since 2002, and has worked for them since its inception in 1989. Before being appointed to ERO, she was an inspector of secondary schools, the director of the Kohia Teachers' Centre in Auckland and a teacher of English, mathematics, French, and Latin in secondary schools in Auckland and Vancouver, Canada. Frances has studied self-review, evaluation, and management on fellowships at the Institute of Education, University of London and at The Wharton Business School, University of Pennsylvania.

These members join: Professor Clive McGee, Waikato University; Professor Helen May, Otago University; Dr Peter Lind, New Zealand Teachers Council; and Rob McIntosh, Ministry of Education. Rob McIntosh is the Chair of the TLRI Advisory Board.

Expressions of Interest

The current round of Expressions of Interest (EOI) has now closed. Applicants will be notified by Friday, 29 June 2007 whether they have been shortlisted and invited to submit a Full Proposal (FP).

TLRI symposia at NZARE

At the end of last year, the TLRI held three symposia at the NZARE's "Manaakitanga: Feel the Spirit" conference (Rotorua, 5–8 December 2006), focusing on early childhood, school, and tertiary sectors. Nine project teams presented papers on selected aspects of their research: three reported on findings from their literacy-related projects; three reported on the way

their projects are contributing to the TLRI aim of developing new understanding about teaching and learning; and three reported on the partnership relationship between researchers and practitioners and the impact this is having on building expertise about teaching and learning, and research.