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ABOUT TLRI

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

- build a cumulative body of knowledge linking teaching and learning
- enhance the links between educational research and teaching practices—and researchers and teachers—across early childhood, school and tertiary sectors
- grow research capability and capacity in the areas of teaching and learning.

ABOUT TLRI

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This is the newsletter for the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) community. Inside you'll find articles, news items and important dates. This newsletter is also posted on the TLRI website at www.tlri.org.nz

A model of dissemination



We are always looking for ways to get TLRI research findings in front of practitioners and the latest stage of the InSiTE project is part of that effort.

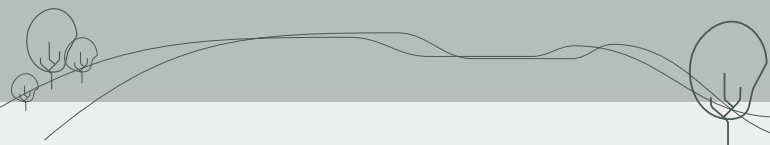
The TLRI InSiTE project explored teaching and learning in science and technology in Years 1–8. We then commissioned members of that research team to look at how to disseminate the findings, including focus groups with teachers about what works for them.

The result is a series of publications contained in a freshly designed TLRI folder. They present material from the InSiTE project in a number of different ways:

- An overview of the research
- A planning document for science and technology teaching, which is available as a Word template download.
- Booklets on successful teacher/student interactions in science and technology classrooms

- Stories from teachers with approaches they have found useful.

The material will be available in PDF form on the website. It is designed to get TLRI research teams thinking about how they might present their own findings to practitioners and to provide possible models for them to use. It is presented in an attractive way for practitioners, with features such as pullout quotes and photographs. As project teams plan their final dissemination activities, they can put a publishing proposal to the TLRI co-ordination team. The idea is for the TLRI to provide additional support for publishing where a project's findings have particularly rich messages for practitioners.



The Alfriston project

The recent two-year TLRI research project into longer learning periods at Alfriston College was a successful researcher/practitioner collaboration.

The project brought together a team consisting of key members of the teaching staff at Alfriston and New Zealand Council for Educational Research chief researcher Rosemary Hipkins.

It investigated the school's use of 100-minute lessons and three-day learning episodes, beginning with surveys of teachers and students. The second year of the project delved further into the types of learning that can occur in longer learning periods and how success can be documented. In addition to paying the researcher's costs, the school used the TLRI funding to pay for release time for the teacher leading the project and the teacher in charge of the three-day learning episodes.

"Most projects are initiated by tertiary sector researchers, who then seek the school partners. This was initiated by Alfriston, who asked me to be involved," Dr Hipkins explains.

She says it was important to keep a flexible approach so that the project could evolve, while also keeping an eye on the key research questions. The professional development and practice aspects so important to the school had to be carefully balanced against the research aims and the need to generate findings that could be disseminated more



Lynda Shanks

widely. This balancing act was assisted by a project monitor within NZCER, Josie Roberts, who liaised directly with the teachers leading the research and asked critical questions that ensured the research questions were always central.

Project member Lynda Shanks, who is a deputy principal at Alfriston College, says it was great to work with an experienced researcher who was able to challenge their assumptions in a nonjudgemental way.

"It also made it much more authentic as sometimes it's easy to get caught up in thinking that 'our way' is the way forward and you can get quite insular. Rose was able to ask questions or suggest focuses that allowed us to go much deeper than we anticipated. Without her expertise I don't believe we would have got there on our own, as our day-to-day work would have possibly masked our thinking."

She says they had a good practitioner team as each teacher brought different skills and they came from different learning areas. The common factor was they had all done postgraduate study.

She adds: "I miss the [research] days and would thoroughly recommend this as a way forward for further collaborative research and learning in partnership."

Details of the Alfriston project and its outputs are available at: www.tlri.org.nz

The art and science of TLRI proposals

In April TLRI co-ordination team member Marie Cameron gave a presentation on the art and science of writing a TLRI proposal to the Faculty of Education at the University of Canterbury. Several participants had not previously applied for TLRI grants and some were from other faculties. Marie discussed key aspects of the application and selection process. Her discussion included advice on:

- selecting a strategic research question that aligns with the TLRI (but not trying to make personal interests "squeeze" into the criteria)
- researcher/practitioner partnerships, and clarifying the roles of those who will be working together
- matching data-collection techniques to the research question and writing about this in a convincing way



Marie Cameron

- quality assurance
- selecting the grant type and funding request
- enhancing the links between educational research and teaching practices—the "so what?" aspect of research and the implications for practice
- the importance of practitioner outputs as well as research outputs.

Participants said they appreciated the chance to discuss proposals and how these might align with the TLRI requirements. If you are interested in a presentation in your area, contact Diana Todd at NZCER on: Diana.Todd@nzcer.org.nz

Priorities for TLRI research

Every year we ask leading educators for their perspective on priorities for teaching and learning research. This year Professor Jeff Smith, co-director of the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP), and Ministry of Education's senior manager, research, Lynne Whitney, discussed the research questions in the international assessments New Zealand runs.

Professor Smith says NEMP is a treasure trove of research data and is open to anyone interested in probing.

"One of the big advantages for researchers is that if you see something in NEMP, you can say it's the case for all New Zealand, because of the nature of the sample. It is not like being a researcher and persuading a principal to let you look at one group of kids in one school," he says.

NEMP has assessed students on almost all aspects of the curriculum over the years and the rich data includes video tapes with the children. While comprehensive reports are made, he says there is much more information that could be extracted from the data. For example, there is a lot of material that relates to the key competencies in the curriculum.

"You could go back and rescore according to key competencies, such as the ability to work with others, managing self and so on."

Lynne Whitney manages international assessments such as the OECD's PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) assessments such as TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) and PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study).


She says the first step is for researchers to understand the purpose of the different assessments and what they can and cannot tell us. While the Ministry of Education reports on the main results and does some further analysis from the data, she says there is real scope for research questions to be generated, in particular through the TLRI lens of the implications for teaching and learning.

Just one example is PIRLS data suggesting New Zealand teachers are keen on silent reading relative to many other countries. "You look through the information the teachers supply, and you think: 'What is it about our assumptions about how children learn that leads us to focus on silent reading? When does silent reading support student progress? Is it good for some students and not for others, and what is it about silent reading that may best support progress in reading?'" There is a lot to unpack."

The full interviews are available at: www.tlri.org.nz

SIGNALLING YOUR INTENTIONS

Last year we introduced new output requirements for the TLRI. These meant that rather than writing a single final report, project teams work toward a series of both research- and practitioner-based outputs. This year we are introducing a new feature called an Intentions Poster. This will outline the project's aims, say why the research is important, what is planned, any partnerships involved and the intended approach to data collection and analysis. The idea is to set down very clearly at the beginning the agreed approach for the life of the project. We also hope it will give those interested in the TLRI an understanding of what they might expect from projects in terms of benefits for research and practice.



**TEACHING & LEARNING
RESEARCH INITIATIVE**

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Sustainability of Student Achievement and Effective School Practices Partnerships

TLRI grant holders: Mei Kuin Lai (Project Leader), Stuart McNaughton, and Helen Timperley University of Auckland

Project start date: January 2008. Project Finish date: December 2009

The project team is working with two clusters (13 decile 1 schools) with mainly Māori and Pasifika students two years after their participation in TLRI reading comprehension interventions. Approximately 5000 Year 4-6 students, 120 teachers and 29 school leaders will be involved in the study.

Aims
To examine whether gains in achievement made during two previous TLRI literacy interventions were sustained after the interventions. We were interested in finding out if:

- student achievement continued to improve at the same rate as during the interventions, and
- the achievements were sufficient to reach expected national achievement levels, and if this occurred
- To identify and explain the practices that enabled schools to continue improvements in achievement.

Schooling improvement initiatives have shown that students can improve in their achievement as a result of well designed interventions. We are curious about whether and how these gains may be sustained after the intervention is over. There is very little research where researchers continue to track student achievement after the end of an intervention, and only a handful of studies that have found evidence that gains have lasted.

Our criteria for sustainability of achievement is that student achievement will continue to accelerate at a similar rate to what it did during the intervention.

Our hypothesis is that students in schools that engage in organisational inquiry about student learning and their own teaching practice and schools that continue to work closely with others will continue accelerations in achievement.

Why is this research important?
Our previous TLRI's showed that Māori and Pasifika students made average gains of up to one year in addition to expected national progress over a three-year period. These results are important given the historical underachievement of Māori and Pasifika students.

What we plan to do

Data
We will collect reading achievement data (STAR) at the beginning and end of the first academic year, and at the beginning of the second year.

We will interview all school leaders, the developers of the intervention, external facilitators working with the clusters and Ministry of Education staff.

Teachers will complete surveys on pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) and leadership, and school leaders will complete a leadership survey.


We will observe school school meetings where student achievement data is discussed and examine relevant school documentation.

Analysis
The achievement data will be analysed using Hierarchical Linear Modelling (HLM) which will allow us to compare the gains made during the interventions and one year after the intervention. We will use standard analysis techniques for qualitative data to examine the school practices that may be associated with sustainability.

Our partners:
Mangere schools cluster: All schools in the Mangere Analysis and use of Student Achievement Data [AUSAD] cluster. Practitioner researchers: Karen Mose, Chairperson and leader of the Mangere Analysis and use of Student Achievement Data [AUSAD] cluster, and Alison Hall, Leader of the Senior Assessment Team in the Mangere [AUSAD] cluster)

Otago schools cluster: All schools in the Otago Extending High Standards Across Schools [EHSAS] cluster. Practitioner researchers: Nicky Knight, Coordinator of the Otago Extending High Standards Across Schools [EHSAS] cluster, and Colleen Gray, Principal, Mayfield Primary School.

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All new project teams will be required to produce their poster at their first milestone stage. They will then be posted on each project's webpage.

Templates are available on the website for research teams at: <http://tlri.org.nz/administration-information/>

Building knowledge together

TLRI co-ordination team director Robyn Baker reflects on the links between the TLRI and another education initiative.

A central aim of the TLRI is to build cumulative knowledge about teaching and learning so we both broaden and deepen our collective understanding of how to support learning. In the Expression of Interest (Eol) documentation we give a brief description of projects that have been funded in prior years. This is to make visible the work that is already available, that current research teams can draw on and built upon. We all know that resources in education have to be treasured. It is important that new work provides fresh insights into areas of long-term investigation as well as in areas that have been neglected. The interviews with leading educators that we include in the annual Eol packs, and put on the TLRI website—and which are

summarised in this newsletter—are intended to raise consciousness of fruitful areas for investigation.

It has not always been that easy to be strategic in identifying an area of research focus given the difficulty in locating records of earlier studies, especially theses. Knowing this, I was struck in a recent conversation with Adrienne Alton-Lee, Chief Education Adviser for the Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) project at the Ministry of Education, that the rationale for building the New Zealand Education Thesis (NZET) database was very similar to that of the TLRI. The NZET is also seeking to support cumulative knowledge building and collaboration between researchers, in this case with the ultimate goals of strengthening policy as well as practice in New Zealand education. This database makes visible the thousands of theses that have been written on New Zealand education (not all

within New Zealand) and provides a rich resource for researchers who are seeking to add to our knowledge base and provide a fresh look at old dilemmas. These theses also reflect an enormous investment of time and money, something to be treasured and used.

As co-ordinators of the TLRI we wanted to draw attention to the parallels between these two initiatives and the opportunity the NZET provides. We also wanted to remind applicants that the final selection decisions, which are always tricky given the competitive nature of the TLRI, are based on the quality of the individual proposal in terms of the strategic, research and practice priorities of the TLRI *and* its contribution to the overall TLRI programme.

The NZET database is available from the NZCER website at: www.nzcer.org.nz/edtheses

NEWS AND DATES

TLRI funding timeline

21 project teams have been invited to submit a Full Proposal for the 2010 TLRI funding round. The closing date for Full Proposals is 5pm August 27 2010. Final decisions will be made by an external selection panel and ratified by the TLRI Advisory Board. They will be announced by the Minister of Education late in November.

NZARE

Several TLRI research teams are presenting their work at symposiums and a number of others are giving papers at the New Zealand Association for Research in Education (NZARE) conference, being held at the University of Auckland, 6–9 December 2010.

Conference on assessing adult learning

NZCER is running a conference for researchers, practitioners and policy makers in Wellington on 16 August entitled *Assessing Adult Learning: Literacy and Numeracy Competencies*. More detail is available at: www.nzcer.org.nz/conference

TLRI programme development

The TLRI aims to build cumulative knowledge linking teaching and learning. To this end a series of reviews are being commissioned to examine how the completed TLRI projects have contributed to knowledge building. A review of the projects that have focused on the early years of education will begin in July. This will be followed by a review of tertiary sector projects, in early 2011, with the school-based review planned for later that year.

The TLRI is also seeking to further strengthen the collective understanding of research design, methodology, approaches to analysis, and effective dissemination strategies within the educational community. The intention is for the TLRI to act as a catalyst and a connector to further strengthen these areas in applications for TLRI funding. Over the next year the TLRI team will be organising opportunities for 'research conversations' with researchers who have a particular interest and expertise in these areas and are willing to share their expertise with others.