The ever-growing need for high quality counsellors in schools

Education under fire - evaluating education programmes in Gaza

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Leading learning, changing lives
Caitlin Richardson
Faculty of Education graduate, Caitlin Richardson is a teacher at Campbell’s Bay School on Auckland’s North Shore. Not only is she inspirational, passionate and determined for her students to succeed in learning and in life, she loves alliteration and a good story.

Watch Caitlin’s story. Visit: www.education.auckland.ac.nz/caitlin-richardson
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Te Kuaka

Te Kuaka is a publication of the Faculty of Education at The University of Auckland.
The magazine title relates to the migrating Kuaka, or godwit. In this context, the Kuaka’s journey is used as a metaphor for our own students’ journeys and the hope that they may return to the University from time to time to gain new knowledge and understanding in their profession. We hope that they may return to the University to share their successes with you. We hope you enjoy reading this issue of Te Kuaka.

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Editorial

The power of words

Recently I watched a video clip on YouTube¹ about the power of words to change our world. The clip shows a blind man sitting at the foot of some steps with a tin can collecting money thrown to him from passersby. Next to him is a handwritten sign that reads: “I’m Blind Please Help.” He gets a few small coin donations but then a woman stops, re-writes his sign and moves off. The blind man starts to receive a flood of donations. When the women returns he asks her what she wrote and the camera pans back to show the handwritten message: “It’s A Beautiful Day and I Can’t See It”.

The video clip, which has been produced by purplefeather.co.uk – a company that specialises in helping refine messages to enable people to make better connections with others, got me thinking about the messages we send about teaching. I am not talking here about the media messages that often focus on the sensational, extreme and critical but on what we say publicly and not so publicly about our profession. We commonly hear teachers talk about the stress, the difficulties, the long hours, and the lack of appreciation. While these are undoubtedly features of the profession, what worries me about these messages is the impression they create in those who might be considering teaching as a career. Whether they are transmitted in one-to-one conversations with students considering their career options, or even indirectly communicated from observations these students make about their teachers, or more publicly stated in response to uninformed criticism of teachers (long holidays, short hours), the impression that builds is one of a profession that you would be foolish to enter. Admittedly negative impressions of teaching are influenced by many factors other than teachers’ messages about teaching. But this is perhaps all the more reason why we need to be public about the positive reasons that each of us entered, and stay in, the profession. We entered it to change lives, to inspire and be inspired, and to communicate what we love about learning. We entered it because we enjoy working with young people.

So what might happen if the consistent messages the leaders of the teaching profession, and each and every one of us in teaching, communicated were those that motivated us to join and stay? So in response to students who might ask about teaching, rather than “It’s a tough job” why not: “I love this job, it has its bad days – what job doesn’t – but I am so lucky to be doing work that inspires me”? And rather than complaining about lack of resources: “We change lives, with more we could do even better”. And instead of lack of appreciation: “This is a hugely satisfying job where the rewards come from the growth and change I see in students”. Pollyanna-sounding? Maybe. But the future of the profession does not lie in the policies of political parties, nor in the refinement of standards, nor in competitive comparisons of “good schools” – it lies first and foremost with those of us who currently enjoy and appreciate teaching’s wonderfully satisfying rewards. It behoves us to communicate these future generations in ways that inspire them to join us and to sustain the flow of vitality and enthusiasm that every profession needs.

¹ www.youtube.com/watch_popup?v=Hzgzim5m7oU&vq=medium
Avondale College counsellor Sia Sinisa’s eyes are glassy and her voice is compassionately soft as she remembers the day a young student sat in her office adamant to die. The 14-year-old girl was new to the school but instead of being excited about the future, she hid under a blanket of suicidal ideation.

“Suicide is never about one problem, it is multi-faceted and this student carried all the despair in the whole world on her shoulders,” says Sia.

Like many youth who think life is not worth living, the teenager was carrying “baggage” built up over a number of years. It was only during her first year at Avondale College that a school nurse identified psychological issues and referred her to the school counsellor.

“There was a lot of anger but underneath those layers was a lot of hurt and pain. There are always a lot of emotions, tears and guilt, especially for students who can’t get answers.”

For several months, the pair worked together in conjunction with external psychiatrists, clinicians and a counsellor who specialised in the student’s cultural background, to improve her mental wellbeing and will to live. A smile suddenly emerges on Sia’s face: “That was a few years back. She is doing really well now”.

Unfortunately, it doesn’t always end in smiles. Each year, around 100 youths aged 15 to 24 take their own lives, and that number is rising year on year. Ministry of Health figures reveal New Zealand has one of the highest youth suicide rates in the OECD. We have the second highest male youth suicide rate and the third highest female rate out of 14 developed countries. In 2010, the second most common cause of death for youth was suicide with 113 incidents - just three tragedies behind car accidents.

Sia, who is studying toward a Master of Counselling at The Faculty of Education, says that within the six years she has been working as a counsellor there has been a significant increase in the number of students who are suicidal or self-harm. She says the role of a school counsellor has become more complex because mental health issues in youth are increasing.

“When I first started I hardly got any students presenting themselves as suicidal or self-harming, now I’m not surprised by it anymore. The work we deal with is not just peer pressure stuff or relationship break-ups, more and more is to do with mental health.”

Counsellors were first employed by schools in the late 1960s and were primarily there to provide guidance and counselling to all students while assisting in crisis management. In the early 1970s, policy changes resulted in a 1 to 500 ratio of counsellor to students. That was later followed by the inception of guidance network schools where teams of counsellors were established, particularly in larger schools. Back then it was reasonably rare to work with students who were suicidal or knew someone who had taken their own life. Today it is a very different story.
For Sia’s masters degree in Counselling, she undertook a research project (supervised by Dr Jan Wilson) on the sensitive topic of teenage suicide – particularly in the Tongan community. The idea for her research topic came about after a tragic spate of suicides by teenage girls in South Auckland almost two years ago. She had also noticed a significant increase in the number of Tongans, particularly females, who came to her for help.

“In South Auckland there were 6-7 suicides one after the other within a month, with the youngest being a 13-year-old girl. That really affected me in terms of being Tongan, having a 14-year-old daughter myself and seeing it in my work. It got me asking, why are these young Tongan girls deciding that it is better to die than to talk or find solutions?”

As part of her research, Sia interviewed five parents/caregivers who had lost a child to suicide. She spent at least four hours with each person as they shared their very personal and unique stories experiencing the different emotions attached to grief – anger, sadness, guilt, pain and, in some cases, laughter as they remembered the happier moments with their loved one.

A common theme that presented itself during her research was that those who ended their life were all New Zealand-born Tongans.

She says there is a great need for further research regarding the reasons for the rising rates of youth suicide in Pacific Island communities in New Zealand and why Pacific people born in New Zealand are twice as likely to suffer from mental disorders compared with those born in the Pacific Islands.

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“School counselling is by far the most complex and demanding type of counselling practice and that is not widely recognised. Some people think that it is just about listening, but that is far from the truth. Counsellors need to be able to identify signs of suicide and provide ongoing support to those who are bereaved. “With grief you have to put quality time aside, it is not just a one-stop station.”

When a student’s life is at risk, sometimes the counselling process may involve breaking confidentiality so the counsellor can reach out for help for a student from support agencies and inform key people such as teachers and parents. But often, when a student acknowledges their distress and their need for a supportive network to keep them safe, student and counsellor work together to develop a safety plan involving others. Then, when they head home each night, the counsellor reflects on their work. “Counsellors are always reflecting on an intervention. Was that enough? Could I have done better? Was that the most effective for our clients or students?”

An event called ‘Linking Arms When Suicide Comes Calling’ was organised late last year by the Faculty of Education’s School of Counselling, Human Services and Social Work and the Auckland branch of the New Zealand Association of Counsellors to provide school counsellors with the opportunity to come together to reflect on their experiences of working with suicidal young people.

Around 100 school counsellors attended the event, which was the first in a series of planned events. It included discussions on identifying and supporting the bereaved and the vulnerable after a suicide, managing the wider risk, managing the media, and the impact of social media. Workshops included risk assessment and suicide management, debriefing after a completed suicide, working with the crisis team, professional supervision through the crisis, and self-care: coping with the personal consequences. Recently, a follow-up event focused on suicide within Pacific communities.

School of Counselling, Human Services and Social Work senior lecturer, and programme leader of the Master of Counselling, Dr Margaret Agee says the role of a school counsellor is complex and
The New Zealand Curriculum also emphasises key values and competencies. It states that it is expected that students will learn about their own values and different kinds of values, such as “moral, social, cultural, aesthetic and economic,” and that they will “explore New Zealand cultural values as well as those from other groups and cultures”.

“Schools are about educating the whole person and young people can’t learn if there are significant levels of distress,” says Margaret. “If students bring distress from outside of the school and are depressed or upset, or if things that occur within the school environment distress them, then those matters need to be addressed.”

School counsellors are not only working with young vulnerable people, they are working in complex organisations. While the students are their clients, it is vitally important for counsellors to build relationships with senior management and teaching staff.

“The counselling service is an integral part of the school. It is not an add-on or a back-room operation. The skills and perspectives that school counsellors have to offer complement and support the work that goes on in the classrooms,” she says.

They’re also the vital link between external support agencies, school nurses, international students, disability services and parents. “They straddle education and health. A hugely valuable aspect of their role is that they are the link between mental health and academic achievement.”

Margaret says school counsellors are frontline mental health professionals because they are embedded within the schools and see students every day. Their location within schools means they have the ability to pick up on day-to-day conflicts as well as being easily accessible, unlike some external agencies, which can be difficult to get to.

“There are no gatekeepers. It is difficult for young people to go to counselling outside of school because it takes time and it is difficult to pluck up the courage as it can be shame-laden for adults as well as young people.”

She believes one of the reasons school counsellors have been “overlooked” is because government support structures were cut during the inception of Tomorrow’s Schools in 1988.

Prior to Tomorrow’s Schools, the then Department of Education employed school advisers for different areas of the curriculum. The advisers, who were located in regional offices, were an important link between the schools and the Department of Education. Those who were responsible for guidance advised schools about the appointment of school guidance counsellors and held regular professional development courses.

“There was a lot of support and wisdom and monitoring,” Margaret says. “When Tomorrow’s Schools came in, those advisory and support systems were demolished and I think guidance and counselling fell off the radar. It was then a question of who was monitoring the provision and work of pastoral care, guidance and counselling in schools. Who was ensuring schools maintained their obligations?”

Although the Ministry of Education acknowledges the importance of having school counsellors and provides funding for training, further support is needed, Margaret says. This was later recognised by the Post Primary Teachers’ Association and the New Zealand Association of Counsellors who have been proactive in providing support to school counsellors through national conferences, conducting national surveys, and articles about school guidance counselling published in the New Zealand Journal of Counselling. However, as it stands, there is no external educational authority that oversees the work that counsellors do. There is also no legal requirement for schools to employ a counsellor, although, under the Education Act they are required “to provide good guidance and counselling”.

Two years ago, Sia received an unexpected yet rewarding phone call. “How are you Mrs Sinisa?” a young voice said. It was the 14-year-old girl who was once adamant to end her life. Instead of having suicidal thoughts, she was enjoying her first year of study in a bridging course to gain NCEA accreditation. “I picked her up from her course and we had something to eat. She is in a much safer place now and that is so satisfying.”
Principals, staff and school children record their earthquake stories

BY MARGO WHITE

“It’s grown like topsy,” says Associate Professor Carol Mutch of her research project, in which she is formally recording the experiences of schools after the earthquakes of 2010 and 2011. “I thought I would have gone in, spent three days at a school, done the interviews, typed them up, sent them back to people and moved on. But this is not the reality.”

February 22, 2011, 12.51pm: Carol was in Wellington, as she was working as a Senior Advisor in the Education Review Office (ERO), and splitting her time between Christchurch and the capital. As news of the earthquake came through, she turned on the television, to find television cameras had been parked outside her own office – more precisely, the crumpled remains of the Pyne Gould Corporation building.

She and other ERO staff spent the afternoon in front of the television, as colleagues were rescued one by one over the course of the afternoon and into the evening. They all were – one colleague was the last person to be rescued from the building the following day. Sadly, 18 people lost their lives in that building.

Carol was about to take up her position as an associate professor in the School of Critical Studies in Education, but February 22 put a permanent shift north off the agenda, at least for now. She currently commutes to Auckland each week, while Christchurch remains home as well as the site and subject of her research.

“I knew the Christchurch school community really well, and I was struck by the amazing things that teachers and principals did. They put their school and the children ahead of everything else, ahead of worrying about their own houses, their own families.”

In the wake of the worst peacetime disaster to have affected New Zealand, schools became vital community centres, places of stability. Principals were thrust into a role that nothing in life had prepared them for. “It was not just about the schools being damaged. They had to deal with the physical aspects, but also with the trauma of the children and of becoming centres for disaster response and recovery. So there was a whole range of things they had to deal with,” says Carol. As her research captures, they rose to the challenge, in both practical and inspiring ways.

“It’s really interesting, because we’ve been talking to researchers in Japan, who said that when the big disasters [Japan Earthquake and Tsunami of 2011] happened, they were so used to asking the local department or the regional office what they should do, that some felt they couldn’t cope. The autonomy that New Zealand principals have meant they could make their own decisions, they could say ‘okay, we’re closing the school, we’re doing this.’ They weren’t prepared for it, but the system allowed them to have that autonomy and flexibility. At least they felt they were in control, or as much as they could be.”

It was important to record the school experience, she says, or more precisely, the perspectives of principals, staff and school children. “I thought if we don’t capture these stories they will get lost. As time goes by things will get jumbled. I wanted to preserve it for history, for New Zealand.”

UNESCO were the first to come to the party with a grant that covered half the funding, and The University of Auckland provided the other half. The UN organisation will receive the results of her research, along with case studies and video clips that capture the experiences of people coping with disaster – resources that schools and community groups in similar situations will be able to draw on. Archives New Zealand will also receive a complete record. “So that researchers at some time in the future can go in and will have access to transcripts of children’s stories, or video clips of people talking about the earthquake. As a researcher I see my role as pulling all that together; what can we learn to make our schools more safe, more comfortable, better at dealing with these disasters?”

However, at first the schools didn’t want to know. People had enough on their plate, without getting involved in a research project. Also, many were concerned that inviting children to reflect on the earthquake could prompt them to be re-traumatised. But it’s all in the way you get people to tell their stories, says Carol, noting that her approach should not be confused with some post-trauma interventions and counselling approaches, the benefits of which remain controversial.
“The literature says if you don’t give children regular, frequent ways to engage emotionally with what they have been through, it takes them longer to recover,” Carol says. “It’s called emotional processing; each time that they re-engage in a carefully controlled situation, they gain a bit of distance, which enables them to put more perspective on it and to move on.”

Pulling on her powers of persuasion and drawing on established networks she persuaded five primary schools to participate, from different parts of Christchurch and from different deciles. She has now worked with over 100 people, including principals, teachers, school children and even their families. Despite initial resistance, once people got involved, the more other people wanted to get involved.

“At one of the schools we started with groups of children, but the next day we had whole families coming along, saying, ‘it was so good for them, we want to be part of it – and can we bring our teenage children along too?’ They realised this was a useful thing to be doing, that it was partly cathartic, but something that also allowed them to distance themselves, to see their story as part of a bigger story.”

The recollections of the children, she says, were often startling in their detail. “They could remember what they were doing, such as, ‘in September I was wearing my purple nightie’ or ‘I was about to take a bite of my sandwich’. Really vivid recall.”

Carol employed her teacher skills to prompt people to talk, in a way in which they could be slightly detached from their own narrative. “And we worked in pairs, so there was someone keeping an eye on the children making sure they were okay. And sometimes we did have tears, but it was okay. I could say ‘I know how you feel, our cat ran away too’, so using that skill you have as a teacher you move them on ... and eventually you had them laughing, about the kid who split the chocolate milk all down their front, or the free ice creams from the dairy because the freezer had gone off.”

“You could see even within a conversation, people would move from feeling a bit apprehensive about telling their story, to feeling confident that they had a story worth telling.” But she didn’t hear just the bad news stories either: “A lot of it was what we’ve learned about ourselves, as a family, as a community.”

The aim of the research was to give participating schools an opportunity to record their own school earthquakes stories, so Carol is helping each school develop a product that records the stories in a format of their choosing, such as a book, or DVD or photo essay. “It was important that the schools didn’t see the researchers as collecting data for their own ends, but that it was a genuinely reciprocal process,” says Carol.

One school asked for a video, in which children would be interviewed by other children, so Carol bought a camera and elicited the help of a trainee film producer who trained the pupils on how to interview and produce a small film. The children featured often chose to reenact the day, using the pertinent backdrop. One talked about being on the tennis court, and then running onto the field and getting stuck in liquefaction. Another boy was filmed at the Brighton Beach Pier – he’d been participating in a ‘Face your Fears’ challenge, partly in response to the September earthquake. “So he enacted what happened, wondering why the waves were so big, being thrown on the ground and crawling away,” says Carol. “He ends up saying ‘I never thought this would happen, and I thought when you died your life would flash before your eyes, and I was waiting for that to happen’.”

Another school chose to tell their story as a mosaic in four panels; the story of Kaiapoi, what it was in history, what it was before the earthquakes, what it was after, and what is hoped for its future. The idea came out as one of the children suggested that they make a picture “out of broken bits of our homes”.

But, Carol says, only a small proportion of people have long lasting trauma. “We don’t give children enough credit for being resilient, for being able to normalise their experience, for being able to put some distance and objectivity on what they’ve been through,” says Carol. “We think they’re these fragile, passive little people, but actually, they’ve got great stories to tell, an amazing level of articulateness and descriptive ability, and by sharing their experience, it enriches our experience.”

The worst isn’t necessarily over – in fact, research suggests that following a natural disaster, the third year is likely to be the hardest. “Year one is the heroic year, everyone pulls together. In the second year there’s more bickering, blame and fault. By year three, people are exhausted. It’s the bitter and the hard year.”

Carol points to the work of Rob Gordon, a clinical psychologist with experience supporting the recovery of individuals and families following events such as the 1983 Ash Wednesday bushfires, the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami and the 2009 Victorian bushfires. “He shows that you begin with a normal community, then you have that disaster and you get a period of de-bonding – a lot of social ties get clipped and cut, as people can only deal with the people who are most immediate to them. So in order to get back to a normal functioning community you have to go through re-bonding, and if schools are re-bonding centres for their local communities, you’ve got to let them re-bond for a couple of years, until you’ve got a stable functioning community again.”

Carol says this makes school closures in the Canterbury region very untimely. “They have been seen by the community as another aftershock. When you understand what children have been through: coming to terms with losing their homes, seeing the stress in their parents, but finding school a safe haven to be, where they were loved and cared. To find that is taken away from them. If you understand the patterns of recovery and trauma, this is the completely wrong time to close down schools.”
Professor Alison Jones has been recognised as one of the finest tertiary teachers in New Zealand. She is one of three outstanding University of Auckland teachers to receive a national Sustained Excellence in Tertiary Teaching Award in 2013.

The national Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards were established in 2001 and are managed and administered by Ako Aotearoa – The National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence. The awards for Sustained Excellence in Tertiary Teaching (worth $20,000 each) aim to celebrate and encourage excellence in tertiary teaching and provide an opportunity for teachers to share good practice and inspire peers. Alison, who is on sabbatical in England, says most of her gratitude is toward her students and colleagues who have been her inspiration.

“Good teaching is always based in a relationship, and demands an intense engagement with others. My students have provided the impetus for my research, and the insights that carry it along. They have been my teachers and have become my lasting friends. In the end, ‘good teaching’ is experienced not by the teacher so much as the students, and because it happens in a relationship the students deserve at least half the credit for any teaching award!”

Alison has had outstanding success supervising postgraduate students, especially Māori and Pacific students, and is sought out as a supervisor. Alison particularly enjoys working with Māori research students and colleagues who, she says, lead the way with creative and intelligent thinking about possible educational futures for New Zealand. She provides regular workshops at universities and wānanga throughout New Zealand to support postgraduate students and academics, and estimates she has provided academic support and guidance for more than 250 Māori doctoral and masters students.

In October last year when she was awarded a University of Auckland Teaching Excellence Award for her excellence in postgraduate research supervision, she said that supervising masters and doctoral research keeps her on her intellectual toes.

“Supervising postgraduate research keeps me energised and in contact with new and emerging researchers. I get leverage off my tendency to be rather forthright. I scare some students and stimulate others, and I work well with the stimulated ones. So I have to give the credit to my courageous students.”

Alison began teaching at the University in 1986, and joined Te Puna Wānanga, the School of Māori Education, in 2004. Although Alison is pleased to have received the award, she says her professional life will continue as usual. “I continue with teaching and supervising as usual - and enjoying myself.”

The two other University of Auckland award recipients were Associate Professor Bryony James from the Department of Chemical and Materials Engineering and Associate Professor Cather Simpson, School of Chemical Sciences.

Alison Jones - Citation for Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards 2013

Alison’s teaching, from her early course on feminist theory, to writing workshops for colleagues in New Zealand and across the Pacific, to her current role supervising postgraduate students in the school of Māori education, has been driven by an interest in social justice and in helping students achieve their full potential. Her incorporation of Māori values and practices has been a feature of her students’ engagement and success. A student talks about her as “a model of how one can combine the heart and the mind!”

Alison is enthusiastic, supportive, patient and positive with students. She establishes warm, engaged and productive relationships and many have gone on to become close friends and colleagues. Students are required to engage in critical dialogue and in-class debates – Alison says that she is “positively allergic” to empty political rhetoric unconnected with good evidence and argument. One of her former students praised the “intoxicating intellectual and theoretical experiences” in her classes. Another said “I will be forever grateful I climbed on board her waka because I know already it will be some ride.”
“What is remarkable about a place like Gaza is how resilient, robust, educated, intelligent and motivated people are, despite the incredible challenges that exist there,” says Dr Ritesh Shah, a lecturer in the faculty’s School of Critical Studies in Education who visited the Palestinian region in May this year to evaluate a novel education programme.

By Margo White

He was also struck by how much emphasis the residents of the Gaza Strip placed on their children’s education. “I’ve never been anywhere where I’ve seen education so highly valued,” he says. “Palestinians comprise some of the most highly educated but poverty-stricken people in the world.”

Of course, a shared concern about children’s education has been common to all the conflict-affected areas his research has taken him: “But the kinds and levels of concern and the issues people are grappling with varies from context to context, requiring different types of action and intervention.”

For instance, the educational programme, Eye to the Future II, which was specifically designed to help address the idiosyncratic needs of children in Gaza. This USAID-funded programme, implemented by CARE (an international NGO), targeted children ages nine to 12, involved 2,600 Palestinian children and six community organisations. The programme, which children attended outside normal school hours over six months, had a unique curriculum that blended both academic and psycho-social support.

This was, after all, an environment in which children lived with recurring incursions from across the border, sectarian-based violence, and chronic poverty and unemployment. Moreover, many came from large families (typical in Gaza), and were often raised by siblings or grandparents, particularly if their parents had left Gaza to work in other parts of the Middle East. “Children lack few of the protective networks within their family, community and school to shield them from the constant violence and trauma that surrounds them,” says Ritesh.

Which is why low adult to child ratios were a crucial aspect of the programme – 16 mentors and four project team members worked with groups of 40 children at a time. “The whole logic of the programme was built on three pillars: vital connections, caring adults, and a safe community,” says Ritesh. “And through that they would start to unpack some of the issues of their trauma, and embed it with conflict mitigation skills.”
The programme also provided a safe place for children to go. "If children aren’t in school, they’re often being recruited to work in the tunnels, on the farm or selling items on the street. That’s the thing about Gaza; there aren’t parks, there are no spaces for children to be kids. The sites of these programmes had a playground, facilities, caring adults, and fun activities that allowed kids to be kids."

While the academic component was perhaps most appreciated by parents, and the academic benefits were apparent, Ritesh concluded that the greatest value could be attributed to the psycho-social aspects of the programme.

"So the [academic] tutoring assistance was probably a short-term benefit to children, but I think the long-term impact will be in the learning of coping skills; how to deal with problems, how to deal with conflict, how to deal with some of the family issues or the economic stressors that they [the children] encounter."

Ritesh has extensive experience researching the role of education in countries with a history of conflict. For his recently completed PhD, undertaken at the Faculty of Education, he looked at the potential and limitations of curriculum reform to broker a sustained “peace dividend” between citizens and the state in a newly independent Timor-Leste.

This year’s visit to Gaza was his second; he first visited the region in 2012 to evaluate the first stage of the project (Eye to the Future), which operated in three communities between 2009-2012.

His evaluation method at both stages of the programme involved a week of fieldwork in which he used the Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology, and which involved collecting people’s perspectives on the impact of the programme, from children, parents, mentors and community leaders.

It was a privilege to hear these stories, he says. “They could be quite personalised, profound, emotional and significant to them. That’s why I think it’s really important to have participatory evaluation techniques, so that you’re not the only one making those decisions about what you should do with those stories, about how you can present them in a way that is useful. And also, reading those stories back and validating them with the people who told them was so rewarding; when people were listening to their own stories, and reflecting on the changes they were discussing, there was a real sense of pride."

Based on such evidence, Ritesh concluded that the programme had helped improve the attitudes and behaviours of children, in a way that could contribute to the creation of a more tolerant society. It is important not to overestimate the transformative power of education in conflict situations, says Ritesh, but it can make a difference. “But education needs to respond to the context in which it exists. So these programmes were seeing education not as education about maths and science, but education about yourself, education about how to deal with the environment you live in. This sort of knowledge is hugely important in a context like Gaza."

The second stage of the programme also helped develop a group of over 100 capable and skillful mentors, who were college-educated young adults who had few other employment opportunities. In his evaluation of the first stage of the project, Ritesh highlighted his concern that little attention had been given to the sustainability of the programme, so it was significant that his evaluation of the second stage suggested that those involved had taken his earlier recommendations on board, and were trying to find ways for the programme to endure beyond its scheduled ending.

“This is where I think I may have contributed. I could see how several of the recommendations that I put in my last report were taken up in this phase of the programme, such as thinking about sustainability at the start, getting community-based organisations to have a forward-thinking view, and tapping into those young adults who have been trained in the first phase of the programme to be facilitators or trainers in the second phase."

His experiences in Gaza have, he says, provided him with a more complex insight into concepts such as ‘resilience’. “We can easily assume that conflict-affected societies are depressed, and lack resilience. But one of the things that has come through to me from my time in Gaza is that people have their own mechanisms of coping, and ensuring that life goes on, despite the kind of gross violations of rights that are in place there. So my responsibility is to present both sides of that picture. And to take that message outside of Gaza as well."

“Doing this kind of work can be rejuvenating,” he adds. “We can sit here in our offices and become quite removed from the world around us; this makes me feel that I am connected.”
Asylum seekers as political currency

New Zealand will settle 150 refugees processed by Australia each year from 2014, under an agreement announced by [then] Prime Ministers Julia Gillard and John Key in April. The refugees will form part of New Zealand’s annual 750-refugee quota, under its commitment to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. Master of Social Work (Professional) student Rachel Bogen and Dr Jay Marlowe, senior lecturer in the Faculty of Education’s School of Counselling, Human Services and Social Work, share their concerns on the implications of such an agreement.

The agreement stipulates that New Zealand will resettle 150 of Australia’s detained asylum seekers, in exchange for the Australian navy monitoring Pacific waters, and the ability to process any mass arrivals to New Zealand in Australia’s processing centres.

As generally defined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a refugee is an individual who is unable to live in/return to their country due to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of religion, race, nationality, political opinion, or membership of a particular social group or political opinion. An asylum seeker is a person seeking refugee status and the particular protections afforded by numerous countries signatory to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. New Zealand and Australia are both signatories.

Historically, New Zealand has been internationally recognised for its practices and legislation regarding the protection of refugees and asylum seekers. Since the introduction of the Refugee Quota System in 1987, New Zealand has accepted up to 750 refugees per year, with a portion of the quota reserved for individuals identified by the UNHCR to be in the Women-at-Risk and Medical/Disabled subcategories, which many other countries will not accept. Over the last decade, more than 7,000 refugees from 55 countries have been resettled in New Zealand. Whilst this commitment is admirable, 750 people are a drop in the bucket on global terms. The most recent UNHCR statistics estimate that there are 34 million people of concern and 10.4 million refugees worldwide. Of these, less than one percent of refugees were resettled last year in countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, with numbers dropping considerably in recent years partly due to increased vigilantism by overseas border agencies.

This “asylum seeker deal” raises three immediate concerns. First, by agreeing to receive 150 of Australia’s detained asylum seekers, the New Zealand government is tacitly accepting Australia’s practice of mandatory detention that has received international condemnation for human rights abuses. Inspections by the UNHCR and Amnesty International have found that these facilities were ill-equipped and overcrowded, with situations of oppressive heat and flooding. Detainees have been told that the wait period could be up to five years. Not only is five years a long time to be in limbo awaiting confirmation (or denial) for formal protection and legal status, but the harsh conditions...
of detention are unnecessary especially considering that more than 85 per cent of asylum seekers are found to be legitimate refugees. Children can also be detained within these facilities (many of whom are unaccompanied minors). Numerous studies show that mandatory detention negatively impacts on people’s mental health (both as a cause and an exacerbating agent) and there are alarmingly high incidents of hunger strikes, self-harming and suicide attempts.

In July, then Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd, announced an “agreement” with Papua New Guinea (PNG) where asylum seekers who come by boat to Australia without a visa will be sent to PNG for processing and, if found to be refugees, will be resettled there. Stories circulated of expanding capacity on a remote PNG island to be able to hold 10,000 asylum seekers in a “tent city” and that the Prime Minister was looking to strike “deals” with other Pacific nations such as Nauru. Australia’s newly elected Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, has other controversial plans to stop asylum seekers from reaching Australia’s shores.

Second, the 150 individuals accepted from Australia will be deducted from New Zealand’s original quota of 750. This would reduce New Zealand’s number of refugee quota places to 600, when there are over 10.4 million refugees globally. New Zealand should look towards increasing the number of refugees accepted for resettlement, not assisting Australia to maintain detention centres that have documented human rights abuses and questionable commitments to the protection of some of the world’s most vulnerable people.

Third, there has never been a mass arrival of asylum seekers to New Zealand. The seas that asylum seekers travel to reach Australia from Indonesia and neighbouring countries are certainly dangerous, but not nearly as distant or treacherous as crossing the Tasman Sea and the open Pacific Ocean. Seeking asylum is not a crime – it is a right. Refugees and asylum seekers are fleeing persecution; they have been forced from their homes out of necessity, not by choice. Only in circumstances of grave danger would someone consider fleeing in a rickety boat on the high seas – if you chose the boat route, you would have no other viable options left. Widespread discourses of “queue jumpers” and “boatloads of terrorists” are unjustifiably used by the media and governments to discriminate and fear-monger, essentially treating vulnerable individuals as criminals (“illegal migrants”) and a danger to society.

If New Zealand is truly seeking a regional solution to the “problem” of asylum seekers, this deal is not the answer. A true regional solution would include upholding international obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention, encouraging other Pacific nations to become signatories to the convention, abolishing mandatory detention, and creating efficient, effective and humane procedures for processing asylum seekers and refugees in all nations across the Pacific.

This opinion was first published in The University of Auckland publication UniNews. It has been edited to include recent Australian Government announcements.

Rachel Bogen’s academic interests lie in understanding the political, economic and social factors underlying the forced movement of people. She has worked as an independently contracted interpreter for Refugees as Survivors New Zealand.

Dr Jay Marlowe’s primary research interest focuses on forced migration and resettlement. He is currently leading a study that focuses on how refugee background communities have responded to the Canterbury earthquakes and was invited into a European Cooperation of Science and Technology action group on disaster bioethics because of this work.

Cheating - a death by a thousand cuts

Cheating is rife in New Zealand. A recent Colmar Brunton survey revealed 52% of participants cheated at high school. Almost 25% cheated in assignments and exams at university.

The “epidemic” of academic dishonesty has already made national headlines several times this year after students were caught cheating in exams and essays.

Senior lecturer Dr Jason Stephens, who is teaching at the faculty while on leave from the University of Connecticut, says teachers can help turn the statistics around by making it a “teachable moment”.

Jason says cheating is already a teachable moment albeit a negative one, but it can be turned into a positive teachable moment if educators stop ignoring misconduct.

“Most students are cheating, or they see it going on with their peers, so that is a teachable moment in itself because students are learning from their own or others’ misconduct. Whether the school takes it up and makes it a positive teachable moment is a second matter.”

He believes the education system puts too much pressure on teachers to reach targets and achieve high test scores that some teachers react by ignoring cheating because it’s too difficult to deal with.

“It’s rational ignorance. They would prefer to turn their head than do something about it because they are already under stress to keep test scores up. People are quick to turn their back and ignore it – that is understandable but it is not acceptable.”

He says teachers need to promote academic integrity to raise awareness that cheating is socially and morally wrong. “I think of cheating as a death by a thousand cuts,” Jason says.

Jason has created an Achieving with Integrity project, which aims to provide teachers with tools to turn cheating into a positive “teachable moment”. He says it focuses on involving students, as they are the conduit to the culture of cheating and plagiarism.

Jason is currently recruiting secondary teachers in New Zealand to integrate an integrity-based programme in their classrooms. The project is already underway in the US. He hopes it will become part of the curriculum for all schools in New Zealand. If you are interested in learning more about this project email: jm.stephens@auckland.ac.nz
Winning with waste

Adrienne Palwankar is immaculately groomed in her black and green business attire. In one hand is a smartphone; in the other are teaching resources balancing on her forearm. But Adrienne is certainly not one to be judged by her cover.

The 23-year-old admits she enjoys getting her hands dirty and can often be found sorting through rubbish, especially at schools.

Adrienne is a Waste Minimisation Advisor at Auckland Council where she helps educate children, and teachers, on reducing waste in schools. “I love it,” she says. “Actually seeing the amount of waste you create enables you to get a better understanding of its environmental impact. It’s about hands-on, experiential learning.”

In 2011, as part of her BSc Honours in Geography at The University of Auckland, she studied the relationship between children, nature and environmental awareness. That study further developed her passion for a career in environment and education so she went on to do a Graduate Diploma in Teaching (Primary) at the Faculty of Education, which she completed last year.

Teaching and caring for the environment are in Adrienne’s blood - she comes from a family of teachers who have always been advocates of recycling and composting, and she has had several part-time tutoring jobs during the past five years.

“It was in my third year of study that I saw the link between education and the environment, and that it could be a career path for me,” Adrienne says. “I did the Graduate Diploma in Teaching with the intention of doing environmental education.”

In her role at the Council, Adrienne is involved in three different environmental education programmes:

• The Waste Minimisation Outreach programme, which provides teachers with various curriculum-based resources and facilitator support.

• The Waste Minimisation Learning Centre at the Waitakere Transfer Station, which offers free classroom sessions and tours of the transfer station.

• The WasteWise Schools programme, which is a two-year facilitated programme that promotes best waste minimisation practices in schools.

She says a typical day can involve lots of variety from teaching students at the learning centre to assisting teachers with support and resources, and teaching at her WasteWise school.

“I feel really blessed to be doing things I am so passionate about. It’s a perfect fit.”

For more information on these programmes email: wastewise@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz
Stepping into Nicole Jones and Anna James’ classroom is a little different from the norm. Victorian clothing hangs in a free-standing wooden wardrobe, typewriters sit on the desks and pens are replaced with quills.

Nicole and Anna are educators at MOTAT – The Museum of Transport and Technology in Auckland.

About two and a half years ago, the colleagues - who both studied teaching at the Faculty of Education - chose a career outside the school environment and haven’t looked back.

As educators, Nicole and Anna create programmes and manage school visits, which include teaching students about transport and technology in the ‘olden days’ in their themed classrooms and providing educational tours of the museum. They also help prepare resource kits for teachers to use in their own classrooms. On any given day, the educators can work with up to 300 students ranging from primary to high school age.

Nicole completed a Bachelor of Arts and went on to complete a Graduate Diploma in Teaching (Secondary) in 2010 with the intention of teaching outside of a school environment. She was already working at MOTAT in the events team while studying and considers herself “lucky” to have been promoted to educator where she combines the skills and knowledge of her two qualifications every day.

“I knew I didn’t really want to be solely in a classroom environment but I knew I was good with kids so the GradDip was the next logical step after my Arts degree,” Nicole says.

Anna, on the other hand, spent four years teaching at a primary school in Auckland before moving to MOTAT. Although she enjoyed her previous role, she felt like a change of environment.

Anna says she didn’t realise there was the potential for teachers to branch out beyond the school environment until she stumbled across the educator position advertised on the internet.

She says the skills and knowledge she gained as a teacher has helped tremendously in her current role. “If I hadn’t been a teacher I don’t think I’d be good at my job now. Having been a teacher, I know what teachers want, and I try to make the day as easy for them as I can. Plus I understand the curriculum,” Anna says.

For more information on school visits to MOTAT see: www.motat.org.nz/educate/school-visits
**CLeaR Fellow**

Margot Bowes has been selected as the first Faculty of Education Centre for Learning and Research in Higher Education (CLeaR) Fellow. Margot will work over the next 18 months with six other fellows from other University of Auckland faculties to research and disseminate new teaching strategies around the theme ‘Rethinking the classroom: Interactive teaching and learning’.

“It’s a wonderful opportunity for me to work with other such dedicated academics from the other six faculties,” Margot says. “I am looking forward to showcasing some of the outstanding interactive teaching that my colleagues are already doing in the Faculty of Education, and with the other CLeaR Fellows exploring possibilities for ‘rethinking the classroom’ across the University. The staff at CLeaR have given me a very warm welcome and along with the other Fellows, we are very positive about researching the creative learning affordances of digital technology and interactive teaching at The University of Auckland.”

**Major international education conference to be held at The University of Auckland**

The Faculty of Education has won the bid to host the ISATT conference in 2015. The International Study Association on Teachers and Teaching (ISATT) aims to “promote, present, discuss and disseminate research on teachers and teaching in order to gain more insight into these aspects of education, add to knowledge, and enhance the quality of education through improved teaching and forms of professional development at all levels of education”. From a field of three, the University won the bid to host the 2015 ISATT conference (13-17 July) by a very strong majority (52 votes, South Africa 28, and China 10).

**Teacher receives literacy award**

Jess Robinson believes educators have a responsibility to continue their own academic learning journey. That’s one of the reasons why she has chosen to study a Postgraduate Diploma in Education, specialising in Literacy Education. Jess has been awarded this year’s Faculty of Education Pearson Literacy Education Scholarship as recognition of her commitment to improving students’ literacy outcomes. The scholarship supports literacy teachers enrolled in the Postgraduate Diploma in Education - Literacy Education specialisation and is a unique partnership between the Faculty of Education and Pearson, one of the world’s leading education publishers.

Jess says her postgraduate study will enable her to be better equipped to make an impact on children’s literacy learning at a deeper level. She says this chapter of her academic journey is about gaining a deeper understanding of literacy theory to complement what she already knows at a practical level in the classroom.

Since starting her teaching career nine years ago, the mother of two has always been passionate about, and involved in, children’s literacy. She currently works as a Resource Teacher of Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) with a Cluster 6 Central West Auckland team. In her role, she works across several schools in the designated cluster to provide support for teachers, students and their families in primary, intermediate and high schools that have high learning needs in literacy.

**Faculty teachers awarded for excellence**

In 2013, six Faculty of Education teaching staff have been awarded for their excellence in teaching and supervision. The annual Faculty of Education Teaching Excellence Awards acknowledge tertiary educators within the faculty for their exceptional work in the fields of education, professional practice, social work, human services and counselling. This year, 26 lecturers were nominated and 12 submitted a portfolio for the award.

Teaching Quality Coordinator Dr Catherine Rawlinson said a common theme of ‘the value of time’ was evident in each recipient’s portfolio. “Each valued the time they spent with their students. They took the time to know students and create an environment responsive to the students’ needs,” Catherine said. “And the students truly and genuinely valued the time they had with their lecturers.”

The Faculty of Education Teaching Excellence Awards recipients for 2013 are:

- **Sustained Excellence in Teaching**
  Dr Adrienne Sansom – School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
- **Excellence in Professional Practice**
  Debora Lee – School of Learning, Development and Professional Practice
- **Excellence in Postgraduate Research Supervision**
  Associate Professor Elizabeth Rata – School of Critical Studies in Education
- **Early Career Excellence in Teaching**
  Gail Ledger – School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
  Dr Jay Marlowe – School of Counselling, Human Services and Social Work
  Maria Cooper – School of Learning, Development and Professional Practice

**News in brief**

**Left to right:** Dr Jay Marlowe (and son), Debora Lee, Gail Ledger, Associate Professor Elizabeth Rata, Dr Adrienne Sansom, Maria Cooper, Dean of Education Professor Graeme Aitken.
Professor John Morgan says he is not an “educational futurologist”.

Yet at his inaugural lecture held in June, he directed the minds of his audience toward the future while exploring the possible implications for education in the wake of the financial crisis.

“Schooling the Crisis: Education in the aftermath of the financial crash” focused on the global financial crisis, its impact on education and the unlikely return to “normality”.

“My primary goal is to understand, in the coming years, how new educational practices may emerge to deal with the contradictory situation of a capitalism that is no longer able to deliver on the promises that it makes young people,” John says.

Similar to the aftermath of the financial crisis in the mid-70s, John believes educational shifts will take place as the model of capitalist schooling crumbles. "Rather than a return to normal we are experiencing a new normal."*

In his presentation, John highlighted the important choices that need to be made about how we educate and prepare people for an uncertain future. He then explored the role that educators may play in those developments.

“The longer the crisis goes on, the more the argument that schooling is a preparation for the ‘world of work’, and that students should work hard, get their qualifications, wait for the economy to pick up and delay the moment when they start consuming and get their feet on the bottom rung of the housing ladder. It will seem like a cruel joke played on the younger generation.”*

John says the long term implications are difficult to predict. However, he says, a lot will depend on the level of trust that individuals have in the institutions that promise returns on deferred gratification. He says governments could face a “legitimation crisis” as the financial crash morphs into a political and social crisis.

Teachers could find themselves relaying different messages about what it means to live a good life and it is possible that new aims and practices in education will emerge, he says.

John says schooling and the economy are closely related, and educators should be open to the possibility of alternatives to the current capitalist version of schooling.

Professor John Morgan joined The University of Auckland in 2012, having previously worked at the University of Bristol and Institute of Education (London). He has worked as a teacher, teacher educator, and educational researcher with an interest in curriculum change. He specialises in geographical and environmental education, and recently published Teaching Geography as if the Planet Matters (Routledge). His current research is concerned with how schools are being re-imagined in the light of economic and cultural change.
School-based research makes a difference

Now in its third year, the Woolf Fisher Lead Teacher Masters Scholarships continue to offer teachers the opportunity to conduct research at masters level in their schools. Teachers learn how to use evidence from their schools to design more effective teaching programmes and drive change within their schools, which will have major benefits for their students and future students.

This year four teachers were selected for the Scholarship. They are still writing up their theses for submission but we caught up with them to discover more about their research.

Aven Saleh
Year 5/6 Teacher
Randwick Park School

Profiling mathematics teaching and learning in a low decile school

As a student, Aven Saleh struggled with mathematics. Although she understood the value of number crunching, she found it complicated and boring. She believes her teachers made maths appear more difficult than what it really is.

So now that Aven is a teacher, she wants to make sure her students at Randwick Park School don’t struggle like she did.

For the past four years, Aven has focused on increasing student achievement in mathematics, particularly Year 5-6 students, by creating hands-on learning activities.

As part of her masters research this year, she is analysing student patterns and trends from data compiled during the last 3-4 years against the existing literature to identify where strategies can be implemented to increase student and school achievement.

“The main focus of my research is to profile the patterns of mathematics development at Randwick Park School to see if there are detectable patterns of underachievement where development plateaus and, if so, what is the nature of that plateau,” Aven says.

“My passion and motivation is to help the new generation with something I struggled with when I was young. Mathematics can open up many opportunities in life so I don’t want students to struggle with maths when I can do something about it. My job as a teacher is to bridge that gap of where students are at to where students need to be, so this research is one step in accomplishing that goal.”

Aven says she has dedicated her thesis to her newborn daughter, her husband and mother.

“It’s a goal for my daughter to look ahead and think, mum did this research for me, I could do something like this too.”

Jonathan Ramsay
Associate Principal
Oranga Primary School

Teacher Learning Communities as a way to effect change in teaching practice/s that will have positive outcomes on student achievement

Oranga Primary School Associate Principal Jonathan Ramsay has carried a particular interest from his earlier masters research with him for six years as his career progressed from classroom teacher to leadership.

Jonathan has already completed a Master of Education where he developed a keen interest in the concept of formative assessment with students and teachers, in particular the Teacher Learning Communities model produced by Dylan Wiliam.

Teacher Learning Communities are groups of teachers who formatively assess their teaching practices and discuss new and innovative ways of developing professionally to ultimately enhance student achievement.

In 2010, Jonathan presented the Teacher Learning Communities model to Oranga Primary School’s Board of Trustees who have been endorsing it for the past two and a half years.

Jonathan is now conducting an in-depth analysis to identify specific changes in teaching practices that may have arisen from the professional development and whether any change is seen in student achievement during the implementation.

“I want to know if what we have been doing in teachers’ professional development has had an affect on teaching practice. And has that had an affect on student achievement,” Jonathan says.

Using a mixed methods approach, Jonathan is analysing anonymous data collected from Teacher Learning Communities meetings such as diary records, and student achievement data around writing. He will then interview four teachers about their experience of Teacher Learning Communities to gain a deeper understanding of the data.
Jonathan says the data collected to date has already indicated that teachers have had a high level of fidelity to the professional development from its implementation.

“Right from the beginning there was a high level of fidelity towards professional development. I was expecting it to be not as effective at the beginning, and something that became more effective. So it’s not what I expected to find but it’s a great outcome.”

“Teacher Learning Communities have been shown internationally to be successful across all schools. So I believe it can work successfully in New Zealand in any school.”

Sue Smith
Year 5 Team Leader
Red Beach School

Students speak about “Student Speak”: Students’ perceptions of formative e-assessment results

Red Beach School has been the home of Sue Smith’s teaching career for almost 14 years. The mother of two began as a teacher aide in 1999 and moved into a teaching role after completing a Bachelor of Education eight years ago.

Now the decile 9 school is home to her masters thesis where she is examining Year 5’s perceptions of an online tool used to assess their achievement and progress.

During the past two years, Sue has developed a particular interest in children self-regulating their learning. As the Year 5 team leader, she was involved in the introduction of the e-asTTle tool to her year group as a way of carrying out formative assessments.

e-asTTle is an online test designed to show students’ strengths and weakness in learning areas. After a test is completed, the tool produces a detailed report for the students with correct and incorrect results, scores and grades.

“We use it because we see it as a potentially powerful tool in the toolbox of formative assessment practice,” Sue says. “It provides specific curriculum feedback and the opportunity to encourage children to be more self-regulated in their learning.”

Sue is now analysing students’ perceptions of their e-asTTle reports.

“I want to find out how relationships, reading ability and self-efficacy might relate to the way students react, respond to and use their reports.”

Sue has taken a sequential mixed methods approach to her research, using a student questionnaire followed by interviews with a cross section of students to elaborate on their answers.

With regard to her initial findings, Sue says, “It looks as if relationships may be the strongest factor but there’s still more data to be collected and analysed.”

“What I can say is that students have a pre-occupation with the grades. We were using it as a formative assessment tool, which gives feedback on what needs to be worked on, but the students are most interested in what their score is.”

Catherine Biggs
Senior Teacher of the Junior School
Churchill Park School

An exploration of how the effective characteristics of Professional Learning Communities are operationalised in a primary school setting

For the past five years, Churchill Park School teacher Catherine Biggs has been involved in Professional Learning Communities where groups of teachers collaboratively discuss student data and investigate issues to help improve student learning and achievement.

Although the practical component of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) has been successful, Catherine wants to know what theoretically makes them effective.

“I wanted to know the theory to support the practical aspect of PLCs,” Catherine says. “It’s very topical in education at the moment - doing things collaboratively and working out ways of how to improve, and that is what we as teachers are here to do.”

As part of her masters, Catherine will analyse anonymous transcripts from two different PLCs to identify how the characteristics of effectiveness are operationalised. She is also using a questionnaire to investigate what teachers’ perceptions are around the purpose and nature of PLCs followed by in-depth interviews with two teachers to “probe and clarify” further.

“This will help identify the enablers or barriers to it being effective,” says Catherine. “I will also interview the principal and deputy principal for background knowledge of why it was set up, and how it began, to put it in context.”

Catherine first got a taste for research three years ago after completing her honours degree. She says the experience prepared her for masters research.

“I got a feel for what research is like and that motivated me to apply for this scholarship to do my masters thesis. My principal completed her Master of Educational Leadership and the deputy principal has completed a masters too, so they both see the value in research. They are excited the research outcome will relate to the whole school.”

In 2010 the Woolf Fisher Trust and The University of Auckland launched a $1.25 million scholarship fund (over five years) to enable school teachers in Auckland and Northland to obtain masters thesis degrees. The Woolf Fisher Lead Teacher Masters Scholarships provide funding for release from teaching to complete a year’s study at masters level in school-based research and development methods at the Woolf Fisher Research Centre in the Faculty of Education.

To learn more about the Woolf Fisher Lead Teacher Masters Scholarships and to find out about research undertaken by past scholarship recipients, visit www.education.auckland.ac.nz/wfrc
Inspiring educator and entrepreneur Sophie Tauwehe Tamati (Tauwehe) has described her participation in Auckland’s TEDx 2013 in August this year as “an exhilarating and life changing experience”.

The Faculty of Education senior lecturer in Te Puna Wānanga, the School of Maori Education, gave a moving and at times emotional presentation to a packed Aotea Centre auditorium about her passion for Te Reo and how she conceived the concept that underpins the Hika app technology.

Launched in July 2012, the Hika LITE language learning app for iOS and Android devices, that translates cultural phrases (kīanga) and songs (waiata) from English into te reo Māori, has more than 7,000 logical language combinations in English and Māori.

Launched on February 28 this year at the Faculty of Education, the Hika EXPLORER app, which is designed for the education sector, has over 50,000 logical language combinations in English and Māori.

Tauwehe used her TEDx talk to describe her creation of Hika and to encourage all New Zealanders to use te reo Māori.

The former primary school principal at Te Kura o Waikaremoana spoke of how the annual school gala tug-of-war event between the ‘School Team’ of staff and senior students and the ‘Parents Team’ had come to represent the fight to save te reo Māori.

In her TEDx talk, Sophie used the school tug-of-war scenario to illustrate the enormous odds stacked against the survival of te reo Māori. She compared the ‘Parents Team of dads’ to the large numbers of people who speak English in Aotearoa New Zealand and the ‘School Team’ to the far fewer numbers of te reo Māori speakers.

“The tug-of-war would always start with the ‘Parents Team of dads’ looking the likely winners, but then there would be a “nek minute moment” when more children, teachers, aunts, uncles, older siblings and even grandparents would grab the school end of the rope and help pull.”

Against the odds the School Team won the tug-of-war every year.

Now Tauwehe compares that “nek minute moment” to the growth of Te Reo through Hika. Interest in the app is high with more than 125,000 users and during Tauwehe’s TEDx talk, which was streamed live via the internet, Hika received 40,000 hits.

“The ‘nek minute moment’ is happening, all New Zealanders are helping, we’re all pulling together and in doing that, it’s uniting us.”

A typically modest Tauwehe was full of praise for all her fellow speakers at the TEDx Event saying, “They were fairly ordinary people with extraordinary ideas and their unique mix of passion, hard work and commitment had all the hall marks of great and gifted people.”

For more information on Hika visit hikagroup.com
Critical reflection on te reo Māori teaching practice

Lecturer Pānia Papa says the only way “our young ones” will learn proper te reo Māori is if their teachers are proficient and educated themselves.

That’s why, for the first time in the Faculty of Education’s history, Te Puna Wānanga, the School of Māori Education, is offering a postgraduate course taught entirely in te reo Māori.

Māori Language Teachers: Teaching Te Reo Māori (EDPROFM 702 Special Topic) commenced in April and has had one of the highest enrolments of Māori students in postgraduate courses at the faculty this year.

Pānia, who teaches the course, says it is a “two-pronged attack” for Māori language teachers to become more proficient in te reo Māori while developing skills to help teach the language to others.

She says there is a need to increase the quality of Māori language taught in schools, as it is important for future generations to keep the language alive. “It’s our language so it’s important for anyone teaching it to have excellent proficiency, just like they would with English.”

Pania says the course not only focuses on the language, but Māori customs too. “Students flourish in the atmosphere of the course because with Māori language comes Māori customs and the cultural perspectives. As a class we eat together and we start and finish with karakia (prayer), so the basic cultural practices are upheld.”

EDPROFM 702 Special Topic: Māori Language Teachers: Teaching Te Reo Māori will be offered again in Semester One, 2014.
For more information visit www.tepuna.auckland.ac.nz

Starpath: Improving educational outcomes

The Government’s latest initiatives targeted at children who are falling behind in education are a strong and positive push to break through a national travesty of Māori students under-achieving, says Starpath director Professor Liz McKinley.

Starpath, a partnership between The University of Auckland and the Government, features strongly in the $27 million investment in education initiatives aimed at priority children through the Building on Success, and the Achievement 2013 and Starpath initiatives.

The Building on Success initiative is a programme for principals and teachers to improve their teaching practice to increase achievement of Māori students. The initiative builds on the successes and strengths of previous and existing programmes including Starpath, Te Kotahitanga, He Kākano and Secondary Literacy and Numeracy to achieve greater system-wide shifts for Māori students in secondary schools. The Ministry of Education announced up to 100 schools would participate in the programme.

Liz says the initiative will help create high quality, integrated and tailored professional learning programmes for schools that will be evidence-based.

Starpath will also receive a portion of $3.15 million over two years to expand its work around improving student achievement and increasing students’ chances of gaining university entrance to Year 9 and 10 students. Currently, the project’s emphasis has been on Year 11 - 13 students.

Liz says expanding the project to focus more on younger students will enable the students to better prepare for the transition to tertiary education. She says tracking student progress more closely at Years 9 and 10 may also provide an opportunity to find ways to track the learning progress of students who fall between National Standards and NCEA.

“If we can start looking at and advising students about pathways earlier then we are not just the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. Instead, the students can think about and plan ahead for their futures,” Liz says.

About Starpath:
Starpath was established in 2005 to determine evidence-based ways of improving education results for Māori, Pacific and students at low-mid decile schools. Between 2005 and 2010, Starpath conducted extensive research and implemented strategies for improving student performance in five pilot schools. In 2012 the project was expanded to a further 34 secondary schools in Auckland and Northland.
In the absence of an oracle, it’s impossible to predict exactly how technology might transform the classroom, how it will change students’ learning experiences and what skills teachers will need for these new environments.

These issues are a topic of hot debate in educational circles but if there is any consensus, it’s that the twenty-first century classroom is the site of radical and rapid shift, and teachers will need to be prepared.

The need for teachers to be prepared was highlighted last year when the Education and Science Committee reported on its inquiry into 21st Century Learning Environments and Digital Literacy. As the report noted, a number of submissions expressed concern that teachers weren’t adequately prepared for digitally equipped classrooms, and many recommended graduate teachers be tested for their proficiency in Information Communication Technology (ICT). “We believe that these skills will become more important in teaching and learning, in all aspects of the economy and society,” said the report.

Its findings were of little surprise to Steve Leichtweis, who recently took up the post as manager of the Centre for the Creative Application of Technology in Education (CreATE) at the Faculty of Education. “Every Education faculty in the country is struggling with this,” he says, going on to note that contrary to popular perception young students aren’t always the digital natives we might have been led to believe they are. “That’s an unfortunate term that came out of the middle of last decade – that somehow, through some osmotic process students could figure out how to use technology effectively as a teacher.”

In reality, everybody uses technology for their own needs such as texting or browsing the internet or playing a video game – which does little to prepare a student on how to use technology to, say, make a science experiment more dynamic or a physical education lesson more visible.

But how do teacher educators find the time to teach student teachers how to use technology in the classroom on top of the curriculum they are already required to get through? How do teacher educators, many of whom were trained as teachers a couple of decades ago, find time within the demands of their heavy schedule to develop their own ICT skills?

“Would you shoehorn in another course in order to develop ICT proficiency?” asks Steve. “I don’t think that will happen. I think the only way is to subtly integrate the use of ICT in the classroom in a way that the students have to engage.”

Which is what the Faculty of Education has endeavored to do, with the development of six large interactive and digitally rich classrooms. These classrooms got into swing at the beginning of the year and are learning environments in which students sit in moveable hexagonal pods rather than in rows of seats, where there are five to eight LED screen televisions, each of them 40” or larger, installed around the room and each of the rooms is furnished with 30 Apple iPads.

“It is project-based learning in large classrooms, where students work in collaborative teams on common projects, and the technology is subtly infused into the classroom,” says Steve. “The students have to get to grips with the technology to achieve the learning outcomes, but it’s so subtle that they don’t realise that they are learning how to use technology in different ways.”

To help the classrooms work as they were supposed to, the faculty boosted its infrastructure so that students could connect...
in unison, at the speed to which they had become accustomed. Also, as staff adjusted to the new spaces, the faculty provided technological support so that when things went wrong – as technology often can – there was someone on hand to help. CreATE staff also helped teachers become familiar with the new technology, such as iPads, and to identify ways of using it to enhance their own pedagogy.

Warren Patterson, who project managed the support systems and professional development around using the classrooms explains that everyone is on their own learning curve. While a number of staff had already been using technology in their own way, the use of technology in the faculty was fragmented; the development of these classrooms has acted as a kind of catalyst and has resulted in a massive shift. “What we’ve got now is a huge amount of interest, excitement and I think energy around how do we do this, and why we should do this,” says Warren. “People are asking themselves, ‘what does this mean for my teaching? What can I do that is going to be useful and meaningful and different?’ It’s prompted a lot of questioning. That’s the exciting bit.”

It’s worth noting that the large classrooms were initially conceived in response to economic imperatives. Dean of Education, Professor Graeme Aitken explains: “We needed to change our teaching model, so that we were teaching larger groups of students. We needed a more efficient teaching model. But I knew that we couldn’t have a more efficient teaching model while compromising on the effectiveness of our teaching – the Faculty of Education is supposed to be modeling high quality teaching and learning.

“So the key element was to retain an interactive approach to teaching, with larger groups of people. This was based on research-informed evidence. That people learn more effectively when they interact with others around new ideas, when they can engage in discussion and feedback and comment. So we had to think about how we could adopt a really strong teaching model in an environment where we have to increase class size from 25 to 30 up to 70.”

But at the same time it was becoming increasingly apparent that the faculty needed to better prepare its graduates for the contemporary classroom. “It would be fair to say that we were doing a barely adequate job of preparing teachers in the use of digital technology,” says Graeme. “We knew that tinkering around with tacked-on modules of ICT training, which was the old model, or loosely integrating ICT requirements in assignments, was ad hoc and patchy. So these rooms were set up to enable students to participate in a different way of teaching and learning.”

In short, technology could help promote an interactive style of teaching, buttress the shift to larger classrooms, and get staff and students used to using technology in the classroom. But how would it work? What would the classroom look like? For inspiration, faculty staff looked to the University’s Business School. “So we could see a model operating, where interaction was happening around digital technologies. So it wasn’t just an intellectual idea, but something we could see and be replicating and doing it every bit as well,” says Graeme.

The Business School had slightly different priorities from the Faculty of Education; it wanted its students to get used to working in teams, as they would be obliged to in most business environments. “So they were motivated by having students sitting together around a round table, working on problems and issues that were real. It wasn’t motivated by technology, but by interaction and team-based learning. I thought that was really interesting for education, because teachers don’t choose their teams either, they don’t choose their students, or their department colleagues, so I thought that was an interesting corollary. Because we do have to work with teams,” says Graeme.

These are early days, and the faculty is conducting surveys to gauge how students and staff have adjusted to the new classroom model. The technology is changing so rapidly that it’s difficult to predict exactly what ICT skills a teacher will need for a twenty-first century classroom. As Warren reminds us: “There are three things we know about technology: It will get smaller, faster, cheaper.” He points out that the devices that students arrive with on campus are not the consumer toys of a few years ago, but computational devices with myriad functions. Also, the number of students arriving with such devices has doubled in two years, from 47% to 93%. In many instances they arrive bearing three of them – smart phones, iPads, laptops and so on. “They’ve got these devices, and they want to use them.”

And such technologies have opened up a window into teaching and learning: “I’ve always been interesting in the effect of video in learning,” says Warren. “If you can capture your own behavior and then see it, you have a massive insight that you’ve never had before. I used to coach soccer and used to video boys kicking a ball, because they couldn’t see what I could as a coach. The same condition exists in the classroom. Our behaviours, the way we interact in learning situations – we can capture it in video, stop, analyse it, unpick it and go from there. There’s the portability of it, and the immediacy of it.”

Technology is allowing for a more mobile and interactive style of teaching. It is also breaking down boundaries between the teacher and the students; students no longer depend exclusively on the lecturer for information, but learn from other students and from online resources.

This changes the role of the teacher, or the teacher educator. “It tips your teaching over, from the delivery of knowledge and information to students, to thinking about how you can use the time to engage students with that knowledge and information,” says Graeme. “That’s quite a change.”

“My lecturing in the University over the last ten years has been typically preparing PowerPoint presentations and making sure I had the content to talk to students in an interesting and engaging way. But it’s me talking to them. So my pedagogy was ‘how can I give an exciting 50 minutes and communicate to them something that is worth learning and getting excited about?’ I think these rooms change that completely. You can’t go into one of these team-based learning rooms and spend the whole hour telling them stuff. So what it tips it into is ‘how can I get the information to the students, so that the time in the room can be spent exploring it, engaging with it, using it?’ I think that’s a big ask for people, it’s a big change.”

The trick – or the balance being sought – is to harness ICT to enhance interactive learning, but in a way that it doesn’t get in the way of it. “A good interactive classroom is one in which the technology is not driving the learning,” says Steve. “The technology is infused into the learning and adding to what could happen with paper and pen. And creating additional possibilities that you might not have thought about. It’s not about the ICT, it’s about the learning, and the incidental interactions that technology is allowing.”
Associate Professor Elizabeth Rata has won an award for a paper on teaching and knowledge. Her article *The Politics of Knowledge in Education* won the 2012 *British Educational Research Journal* paper of the year. In this opinion, she argues that students are shortchanged by an emphasis on teaching skills rather than content.

What has happened to knowledge? Why has our national curriculum been hollowed out of content knowledge? Why is it all about skills, competencies, and values? Sebastian Faulks in his novel *A Week in December* puts it bluntly. His character, Gabriel the lawyer, says that we have chosen to know less. Gabriel tells of his own luck in being educated “at a time when teachers still thought children could handle knowledge”. He describes how, first, teachers withheld knowledge, then the next generation of teachers didn’t have the knowledge to withhold. Many in education have worried about how to teach, and rightly so, but in doing so, we have taken our eyes off what to teach.

Academic knowledge is what makes us intelligent. The practice in doubting, criticising, and judging that such knowledge demands is also essential for a democratic citizenry. We cannot be democratic unless each generation learns how to be so. But academic knowledge is neither easy nor instant. It needs teachers who are knowledgeable in the subjects they teach and knowledgeable in how to teach that content. Children come to school to learn what they don’t already know and what cannot be learned from experience. This doesn’t mean that experience isn’t relevant but we go to school to learn a different kind of knowledge from the knowledge of everyday experience.

Academic knowledge gives us something that everyday knowledge does not. It teaches us ways of thinking about the world that we cannot learn from experience. I can’t know a metaphor in the same way as I know how to cook a meal but the study of literature teaches me that here is a wonderful way to put unusual ideas today to reveal deeper meanings, often in startling, even shocking ways. Who can ever think of greed in the same way again after reading Shakespeare’s evocation of greed as the “golden leprosy”? Such powerful knowledge builds our intellectual architecture so that we can make moral judgements based on reason.

Academic knowledge enables us to think the unthinkable, to know what we don’t and never will experience. It enables us to become more human by being connected to the knowledge that has already been created and to the possibilities that lie ahead. The sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, describes the 20-year-old mathematician who has 20 centuries of mathematics in his mind. Acquiring that knowledge, and for each of us there are different amounts and different contents, cannot occur without working for it.

What has caused the loss of confidence in education to teach academic knowledge and limit us to the confines of culture? The turn against so-called ‘Western knowledge’ led to the misguided belief that the knowledge developed in the disciplines, knowledge which belongs to us all, is somehow the same as cultural or everyday knowledge. Another reason is the notion that knowledge is a process. That it is not content. This ‘Knowledge Age’ or ‘21st Century/Future Learning’ approach is gaining ground because it offers an exciting digital utopianism. Dispense with the teacher, bring out the iPad, let’s co-inquire together. But pupils don’t know what they don’t know. You can’t look it up on Google when you don’t know what you are looking for. You can’t recognise it when you see it, and you can’t judge it if you do find it.

Knowledge is actual content as the philosopher, Karl Popper, reminded us. We need to learn it from those who know the content. Good teachers are knowledgeable teachers. When we remember this we will value them again. However it is a status that must be earned. A teacher who says ‘I co-inquire with my students’, ‘I learn from them’, ‘we construct knowledge together’ does not deserve that status. If we are to value teachers again, we must first value what it is that teachers have (or should have). This is the academic knowledge found in school subjects that most parents don’t have at home.

Academic subjects should be taught at school to all students. It is misguided to believe that ‘dumbed down’ knowledge or using technology can compensate for the hard graft of knowing what you didn’t know. To deny children academic knowledge is to deny to the very children who need the knowledge the most the means by which they can succeed in life. Worst still is the return to the belief that some children can’t handle knowledge. If this was the case, then why have national education systems? All children deserve the chance to know more than what their culture and community can teach them. It is true that some will go further than others but all must have the opportunity. Let’s bring back content knowledge into our schools, before, as Gabriel the lawyer reminds us, there is no knowledge left to teach.

### Let’s bring knowledge back into schools

Associate Professor Elizabeth Rata has won an award for a paper on teaching and knowledge. Her article *The Politics of Knowledge in Education* won the 2012 *British Educational Research Journal* paper of the year. In this opinion, she argues that students are shortchanged by an emphasis on teaching skills rather than content.
Doing Educational Research (2nd ed.)
The second edition of Doing Educational Research keeps the many features that made it such a successful book when it was first released in 2005. The research process is broken down into manageable steps with easy-to-understand explanations and concrete examples. It is designed to support educators at all levels to feel confident that they can undertake sound and ethical research. It is a popular text in research methods courses in New Zealand and widely used internationally. A new final chapter extends and updates many of the ideas introduced in the first ten chapters. It covers recent approaches to quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research, and updates information on research and technology, research ethics, cultural approaches and evaluation.

Language Teachers and Teaching: Global Perspectives, Local Initiatives
The inception of this book (part of the Routledge Research in Education Series) derives from the editors’ concerted conversations on the current issues and debates in the field of teacher education, particularly in relation to applied linguistics and second or foreign language teaching. The book gathers contributions from a range of global experts in teacher education to address the topic of language teacher education. It shows how teacher education involves the agency of teachers, which forms part of their identity, and which they take on when integrating into the teaching community of practice. In addition, the volume explores the teachers’ situated practice—the dynamic negotiation of classroom situations, socialisation into the professional teaching culture, and “on the ground experimentation” with pedagogical skills/techniques.

Examining Sport Histories: Power, Paradigms, and Reflexivity
This book explores the ways in which postmodern and poststructural approaches can enrich the study of the sporting past. Throughout the chapters, the group of internationally respected authors draw from their own vast experiences within the study of sport history to collectively promote postmodernism and poststructuralism as forms of social theory that can guide the future of sport historical research. The book demonstrates how sport studies scholars might be more adventurous in their thinking, research, and writing.

Social Work: Contexts and Practice (Third Edition)
This Australasian social work text is a comprehensive introduction to the field of social work. Now in its third edition, it continues to speak to both Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, addressing common trans-Tasman concerns while at the same time responding to the unique experiences of social work within each country. There is a vibrant interplay of trans-Tasman perspectives and practices while at the same time recognising the relevance of your own national and cultural environment. The book includes contributions from Associate Professors Christa Fouche, Liz Beddoe and Michael O’Brien from the School of Counselling, Human Services and Social Work.

South Sudanese Diaspora in Australia and New Zealand: Reconciling the Past with the Present
Since 1996, approximately 30,000 South Sudanese people have immigrated to Australia and New Zealand via humanitarian pathways. This text offers insight into these associated communities’ resettlement experiences and provides a broader sociological context in which the South Sudanese diaspora can be seen within global migration studies. The text’s strength is its close relationship to the work of culturally and disciplinarily diverse scholars bringing contemporary research on South Sudanese resettlement together in one book. This collection provides: contemporary research that critically examines the experiences of South Sudanese settlement and its associated successes, concerns and challenges; social, theoretical, historical and policy implications associated with resettlement; and an informed and reflective focus on substantive resettlement issues such as education, health, housing, Australian and customary law, employment, integration and discrimination.

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Engaging with Human Rights

Sharon Ryan is a third-year Bachelor of Social Work student and one of only three students in The University of Auckland selected to attend the U21 Undergraduate Summer School, held this year at the University of Connecticut, USA. Focused on the theme of Human Rights, it offered the opportunity to think critically about the place of human rights in the 21st century. The experience has caused Sharon to reflect on the social work profession and its relationship with social justice:

I had a fantastic time at U21’s Summer School in Connecticut. It was really motivating to work alongside other international students with similar interests. The most illuminating aspect was that it caused me to reflect on the extent to which I, and the Social Work professional, is fulfilling our claim to be agents of social change.

A rose is a rose is a rose. So then a social worker, is a social worker, is a… agent of social change? It does not take much searching to find social workers who have made some significant contributions to social causes. However, so too have lawyers, politicians, doctors, even receptionists (Betty Williams). This leaves me to question not whether we can claim this title exclusively, but whether we can claim it at all. It does not matter what we call ourselves, our actions — or lack thereof — is what will define us. What I learnt from this Summer School is that we [social work professionals] are not doing enough to live up to our claim as agents of social change. In particular it seems we have neglected the significance of Human Rights in our work.

Social workers have a dual focus of empowerment and social justice. Human Rights can assist us in realising these foci in practice. By providing nationally and/or internationally recognised principles, which demand state intervention on various issues, Human Rights categorise injustices and establish measurable goals to work towards. Thus they provide us with legal, political and philosophical foundations on which we can advocate for social justice.

Human Rights are highly controversial. Despite the extent to which the United Nations may uphold Human Rights as the path forward, these alone are generally not enough to elicit change from government, nor the general public, who often require legal, economic or medical incentives. Social workers therefore need a stronger, more comprehensive and assertive skill set.

Human Rights must be one of many tools we use to achieve social change. This Summer School solidified the importance of implementing this tool in a multidisciplinary way. We need to understand the knowledge possessed by the legal, economic and medical disciplines so that we may incorporate our knowledge (clients’ realities) into debates as well as draw on their knowledge in our work. Too often social workers lack understanding of economics and shy away from it. This has left us banging on the back door, trying to respond to neo-liberal and austerity based policies rather than setting our own agenda. Multidisciplinary knowledge will enable us to contest or support policies in an informed manner and understand the full ramifications of policies. A policy that advocates for cheaper housing and includes a population health or economic cost benefit analysis will hold more weight than one that simply advocates for housing from a Human Rights perspective.

This Universitas 21 Summer School confirmed my frustration and dissatisfaction with social workers’ claim to be agents of social change. It reinforced to me that social workers need to be working much more consistently, and at a broader level, to create the social change our clients need and that Human Rights provides a useful approach for this work. The experience also left me wanting to know more about the advances and discourses within the international social work community as well as how social workers are teaming up with legal, economic and medical professionals to create necessary change.
Student receives golden support

Seventeen students have been selected as the first recipients of the Mahé Drysdale Sports Support Fund including Faculty of Education student Penny Kirkwood, who is studying towards a Graduate Diploma in Teaching (Early Childhood Education). Penny is also a staff member at The University of Auckland, working as the Clinical Trial Coordinator at the School of Medical Sciences.

The fund is in its inaugural year and is named after 2012 Olympic gold medallist and University of Auckland Alumnus, Mahé Drysdale. It provides financial support for athletes that are currently studying at The University of Auckland and have been selected to represent New Zealand.

Penny was the only female athlete to qualify and be selected to represent New Zealand at the 2013 The North Face Ultra-trail du Mont-Blanc, held in the last week of August, where runners covered 168km running through the Alps, across France, Italy and Switzerland. The ultra marathon is considered the most difficult foot race in Europe. It was Penny’s second time at the event, having also competed in the 2012 UTMB.
Behind every successful student is a great teacher, and great teachers never stop learning.

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