Supporting Teacher Confidence and Perceived Competence in Relation to Culturally-Responsive Pedagogy Utilising Communities of Learning Kāhui Ako

Kirsten Stevens

ABSTRACT

This professional inquiry investigates how Community of Learning Kāhui Ako across-community teachers (ACT) can support teacher confidence and perceived competence in relation to their culturally-responsive pedagogy. Communities of Learning Kāhui Ako are explored in terms of defining what makes a community successful and how they can be used as a vehicle for accelerating the achievement of Māori learners. A review of the literature surrounding culturally-responsive pedagogy, its enablers and barriers, as well as evidence that Communities of Learning Kāhui Ako can address this, is examined. A semi-structured interview was used to explore Community of Learning Kāhui Ako ACT perceptions of culturally- responsive pedagogy and successful practice. Findings from this inquiry suggest that the mechanism of Communities of Learning Kāhui Ako though the ACT is having a positive impact on teacher confidence and perceived competence in relation to culturally-responsive pedagogy through the explicit use of Kaupapa Māori principles to support and drive change.

Research Paper

Key words:
communities of learning; culturally-responsive practice; kāhui ako; professional inquiry

INTRODUCTION

As a Community of Learning Kāhui Ako across-community teacher (ACT) and Head of Learning Support in a co-educational secondary school, I'm interested in supporting the development of teacher cultural competency across our Kāhui Ako. I wanted to develop my practice in this area so that it reflects the Kaupapa Māori principles of aroha (love), kānohi kitea (to have a physical presence, be seen or represent), manaakitanga (hospitality, kindness and generosity) and whakawhanaungatanga (relating well to others). The driver for this is the expectation of modelling these principles in my role as a Community of Learning Kāhui Ako ACT while focusing on improving teaching practices, student learning and promoting best practice to meet the shared priority learner achievement challenge. "The number one challenge facing the New Zealand education system is to achieve equity and excellence in student outcomes. Our school system is characterised by increasing diversity of students and persistent disparities in achievement" (Education Review Office Te Tari Aortake Mātauranga [ERO], 2016, p. 5).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The focus of this literature review is on supporting teacher confidence and competence in relation to culturally-responsive pedagogy through participation in Communities of Learning Kāhui Ako. First explains what a successful Community of Learning Kāhui Ako[1] is and how they have been used as a tool for improving student outcomes, then reviewing what role Communities of Learning Kāhui Ako have, specifically to accelerating Māori student achievement. Secondly, this review will focus on culturally-responsive pedagogy, why teachers should engage in the practice, and what the research shares as enablers and barriers to this practice. Finally, this literature review will explore the research supporting teacher confidence and perceived competence in relation to culturally-responsive pedagogy and the evidence for Communities of Learning Kāhui Ako being a tool to facilitate this.

What are Communities of Learning Kāhui Ako and How Can They be Used as a Tool for Improving Student Outcomes?

Communities of Learning Kāhui Ako were established following the introduction of the New Zealand Government's Investing in Educational Success policy in 2014. The purpose of this policy is to

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[1] A Community of Learning Kāhui Ako is a group of education and training providers from early learning, schools, kura, and post-secondary sectors working together to help students achieve their full potential (Ministry of Education, 2019a, para. 1).

raise student achievement by promoting effective collaboration between schools. Hattie (2015), Mette, Nieuwenhuizen and Hvidston (2016) and ERO (2016) have reported that Communities of Learning Kāhui Ako are a tool for shifting teachers' professional ethics, and a driver for leading fundamental change in teachers' work. They provide an opportunity for collaboration, where communities promote and share professional development that is aimed at improving teacher effectiveness and expertise so that it has a positive influence on student progress and achievement, both building knowledge and experience while stimulating improvement and innovation.

What Makes a Successful Community of Learning Kāhui Ako?

Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) have reported on the qualities of successful professional learning communities that promote both teacher and student learning. Firstly, participants were supported to process new understandings and their implications for teaching and secondly, the focus was on analysing the impact of teaching on student learning. Communities of Learning Kāhui Ako utilise ongoing cycles of inquiry based on the Timperley et al. (2007) teacher inquiry and knowledge-building cycle to promote valued student outcomes.

Teachers effectively collaborate within schools, supported by an in-school teacher, and across schools supported by an across-school teacher to identify the barriers to achievement for learners using context-based evidence. Together, an inquiry question is generated to address the identified issue, and teachers move to design and trial evidence-based interventions aimed at solving the identified issue. Evidence is accumulated surrounding the impact of interventions trialled, adaptations to practice can then be refined or discarded based on their effectiveness. Successful interventions are embedded into everyday practice and disseminated across the Community of Learning Kāhui Ako. This challenges participants to shift their focus and modify their practice to improve student outcomes by accepting the collective responsibility for equity and excellence across all schools (ERO, 2016). Communities that are successful in this collaborative inquiry approach are promoting and sharing teacher effectiveness and expertise, essentially devising "performance 'dashboards' to show success in learning and achievement, that build a coalition of the successful" (Hattie, 2015, p. 23).

Linking Communities of Learning Kāhui Ako with Māori Achievement

Aotearoa New Zealand has one of the largest gaps between high and low-achieving learners in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), where Māori are disproportionately represented in the lowest quartile of educational achievement (Ministry of Education, 2011). Shields, Bishop and Mazawi (2005) reported this challenge as being directly associated with the power imbalances in classrooms and schools as a result of ethnic, cultural and language diversity. ERO (2016) explains that the primary purpose of Communities of Learning Kāhui Ako is "to achieve equitable outcomes for those who have been under-served by the system, particularly Māori and Pacific students, this means an unyielding focus on accelerating achievement" (p. 20).

In 2008, the Government introduced Ka Hikitia - Accelerating Success 2013-2017 (Ministry of Education, 2008) in acknowledgement of the historical underservice to Māori in education. This strategy was designed to guide action and make a difference to the education of Māori students over an initial five-year period and beyond. Currently in *Phase Three: Ka Hikitia 2018-2022*, the focus is on "sustained system-wide change, innovative community, iwi and Māori-led models of education provision for Māori students achieving at least on a par with the total population" (Ministry of Education, 2015, para. 1). The link between Ka Hikitia and Communities of Learning Kāhui Ako is equity, providing everyone with what they need to be successful. Collaborative methodologies are often seen as a means of bringing people together in the interests of mutuality and equality (Jones, 2012). Therefore, the evidence-driven effective collaborative inquiry delivered by Communities of Learning Kāhui Ako could form a vehicle for accelerating the success of Māori learners.

Culturally-Responsive Pedagogy

Macfarlane, Macfarlane and Webber (2015), describe culturally-responsive pedagogy as a key part of supporting the success of student's in school; it requires 'cultural consciousness' on the part of educational leaders and teachers. Deficit theories surrounding any individual or group are rejected and there is an understanding that a student's learning and behaviour is strongly influenced by language and culture, where cultural identity can be drawn on to enhance engagement and success. A further definition of this practice has been described by Gay (2010) who defined culturally-responsive pedagogy as "teaching 'to' and through [students'] personal and cultural strengths, their intellectual capabilities … alongside their prior accomplishments" (p. 26) premised on "close interactions among ethnic identity, cultural background and student achievement" (p. 27).

Why do teachers need to engage with culturally-responsive pedagogy?

Gallavan (2004) reports that teachers and school leaders have a key role to play in creating the environments required for diverse students to find success through understanding, facilitating and appreciating culturally-responsive pedagogy. Milner (2011) stated that educators who see students' culture as an asset have the capability of creating relevant learning contexts that support student achievement and goes beyond the score on a test paper. His work explored a direct link between a teacher's ability to develop culturally relevant pedagogy to an ability to build cultural competence. Milner describes the outcomes of culturally-responsive pedagogy as being where students have a voice and can see their culture in the curriculum and instruction while being encouraged to maintain it. Additional research has expanded on this by exploring what culturally-responsive teachers display in regard to particular knowledge sets, skills and dispositions, where an educator demonstrates responsibility and a sense of agency for the development of learning and all learners: a strong self-awareness and an understanding of themselves as sociocultural beings whilst acknowledging the reciprocal nature of the teaching and learning relationship, and a deep understanding of a students' sociocultural status (Alton-Lee, 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh & Teddy, 2009; Fickel, Abbiss, Brown & Astall, 2018; Gay, 2010; Macfarlane & New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 2007).

What are the Enablers of Culturally-Responsive Practice?

Baskerville's (2009) position is that teachers need to change "pedagogy, performance, consciousness and voice to address difference in the classroom" (p. 461). This difference is reported within the New Zealand context as the disparity that exists between the indigenous Māori and New Zealand European whose culture dominates the education system (Savage, Hindle, Meyer, Hynds & Penetito, 2011). There is agreement across the literature that a teacher's ability to provide high quality teaching has the biggest impact on student achievement (Bishop, 2003; Fickel et al., 2018; Hattie, 2015; Henderson, 2013). So how do we enable teachers to develop capacity in the area of culturally-responsive practice?

Dispositions

Milner (2011), Macfarlane & New Zealand Council for Educational Research (2004) have both taken the position that teachers who believe in culturally-responsive pedagogy or are culturally sensitive, are more likely to work with, foster, support, create

and enable learning opportunities for their diverse learners. Interestingly Mette, Neiuwrvenhuizen and Hividstan (2016) identified that elective and special education teachers are more likely to have a positive view of culturally-responsive pedagogy than their colleagues, due to an ability to adopt a student-centred approach that focuses on an individual's needs rather than being topic centred. Milner (2011) argues that cultural responsiveness involves a state of being or a mindset that permeates that teachers' decision-making and related practices. Timperley et al. (2007) identified a need to explore the evidence that was associated with teachers' capacity to think differently about the students they teach, specifically where there was a need to address inequality. From the evidence explored Timperley et al. (2007) identified the contexts in which professional learning contributed to teachers changing dispositions. This included infrastructure supports, voluntary or compulsory participation, expertise, leadership, time and professional learning goals. Henderson (2013) agreed that teachers' participation in professional development that increases capability alongside professional leadership that is responsive, accountable and centred on teaching and learning, can be the critical difference between success and failure when working towards improved outcomes for Māori learners.

Relationships

There is strong support through the literature for the importance of relationships as being a key enabler of culturally-responsive practice (Baskerville, 2009; Berryman, Ford, Nevin & SooHoo, 2015; Bishop, 2003; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Henderson, 2013; Milner 2011). The work of Bishop and Berryman (2006) and Hynds, Sleeter, Hindle, Savage, Penetito and Meyer (2011) is clear - relationship-based learning provides a foundation on which to build cultural competency with the key to solving the issues facing Māori learners lying in the relationships that are developed between students and teachers in the day-to-day running of a classroom. Bishop and Berryman (2006) focused further on the disposition where creating effective learning relationships between the student and the teacher would have the greatest impact on achievement. They identified themes that contributed to effective learning relationships, including:

> caring for the child as a culturally located human being; having high expectations of the learning and behavioural performance of the child; and having high expectations of their own performance, in terms of planning, class organisation, assessment, and curriculum knowledge. (p. 264)

Henderson (2013) believed that relationship-based learning should include not only the student but also their whānau and iwi, learning with, from and about each other. Hynds et al. (2011) and Bishop's (2003) research speaks about making an effort to build links between schools and the indigenous Māori community as a tool to extend an educator's cultural knowledge and understanding, reporting the benefits to Māori learners when teachers persist with learning how to develop culturally-responsive relationships with them and their whānau.

What are the Barriers to Culturally-Responsive Practice?

Fickel et al. (2018) reported that previous research has highlighted the ways in which schools and teachers contribute to the perpetuation of educational inequality, embedded in unexamined beliefs about students' backgrounds, capabilities and motivation to learn. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) highlighted the association of an educator's deficit theorising and low expectations as being associated with negative outcomes for indigenous or minoritised students. For the New Zealand context, Henderson (2013) gave a number of barriers to developing cultural competency: these include an educator's disconnection with the Māori world and a lack of cross-cultural skills; viewing education through a mono-cultural lens, where an educator is unmotivated to engage in cross-cultural practice and is ignorant of the effect this has; the question of equity or equality - the idea that everyone should be treated the same regardless of their cultural identity; and arrogance where an educator is aware of best practice but chooses not to engage in the journey to cross-cultural competence. The final barrier was fear; stepping outside of one's own culture is often viewed as being risky by an educator. Bishop and Berryman (2006) placed teachers into three discourses. Two of those discourses they viewed as having a negative impact on Māori education achievement: those who described Māori achievement in deficit terms seeking blame with the student's home or through the structures and systems within a school, and those who took the disposition of lack of agency, where the teacher felt that the challenges facing Māori students were outside of their circle of influence and therefore not their responsibility to address.

How Do We Address Teacher Confidence and Perceived Competence in Relation to Culturally-Responsive Pedagogy?

There is wide acknowledgement across the research (e.g. Hynds et al., 2011) that educators need to learn to teach students whose culture and language is different from their own, however there is little research on effective programmes that address this.

Middleton (2002) encourages teacher educators to consider three critical questions when facilitating increases in diversity awareness and cultural competence: "Where they are", "Who they are," and "What they believe." Berryman et al. (2015) identified that, in the first instance, educators need to be prepared to listen and learn before a transformative praxis can be achieved, "It is with people when we make the world a more equitable space ... through social actions such as mahi tahi (working together as one) and kotahitanga (unity of purpose)" (p 41). Henderson (2013) asked the question, "How do we empower teachers to practice in a culturally-responsive way that provides for, and allow, Māori to achieve as Māori?" She went on to suggest that providing teachers with a learning experience that empowers them to begin, or move forward with, a journey of cross-cultural teaching and learning, develops capacity, reduces fear, and enables the professional capacity to work as culturally aware and competent educators:

> … recognising that knowledge alone is not enough to create change, we know that if the heart is authentically engaged, and a sense of social justice exists within a teacher's cognisance, we are likely to achieve a shift in teacher positioning. (Henderson, 2013, p.13)

An example of a learning experience was explored though Baskerville's (2009) research. This was a reflection on her own full immersion experience of the Māori world as a pākehā woman. The experience provided her with the "insight into what questions to ask, the confidence to ask those questions, and the insight and courage to trial these newly gained culturally-responsive practices" (p. 467). This is an example of immersing oneself in "real-life experiences which allow heart-level engagement in cultural richness which creates connectedness and understanding at a deeper level than can be obtained from books and readings" (p. 13) as described by Henderson (2013). Fickel et al. (2018) identified community-based learning experiences as supporting teachers to develop the culturally-responsive repertoire required to be effective in the bicultural context of New Zealand. The purpose of this research was to reframe teacher education in the pursuit of more equitable outcomes for students and was embedded in working collaboratively with the local Māori community to develop a preservice teacher programme that used the "principles of kaupapa Māori to ensure that Māori cultural values, pedagogies, and epistemologies inform all aspects of the curriculum and support Māori educational aspirations" (p. 285). They reflected that this form of engagement provided the expertise that was "essential

in creating the learning opportunities needed for preservice teachers to develop into culturally-responsive teachers" (p. 293). Middleton's (2002) work with preservice teachers explored "attaining, maintaining, adapting or creating ideologies for increased commitment toward diversity" (p. 343). A framework of themes that allow for facilitating positive multicultural experiences like those suggested by Henderson include:

1. Level of awareness and assessment capabilities.

2. The circumstances by which they are approached.

3. The authenticity of the speaker and the situation, and

4. The accountability of being held responsible for multicultural practices.

Each theme is interconnected, delineated with descriptors, and supported at its roots by the constructs of safety, respect and empowerment (p. 351).

The principles or values of Kaupapa Māori have emerged through the research (e.g. Berryman et al., 2015; Bishop, 2012; Fickel et al., 2018; Henderson, 2013) as a potential way of engaging teachers through professional development embedded in these ideals. Bishop (2012) raised the idea of a Kaupapa Māori-based professional development approach that is centred in learning conversations where teachers work to co-construct ways to ensure that they can "realise their aspirations for sustainable, improved educational achievement levels for Māori students" (pp. 47–48). Henderson (2013) conveyed the idea that if those supporting culturally-responsive practice should work through the values of ako (learning and teaching), manaakitanga (kindness) and aroha (compassion) stating, "We must ensure we do everything to understand [teacher] risks and hurts, to gently support and challenge, and most of all, to walk alongside them when it gets tough" (p. 14).

Where is the Evidence that Communities of Learning Kāhui Ako can Address this?

Communities of Learning Kāhui Ako provide a mechanism for teacher collaboration; there is wide support from the literature for the benefits of teacher collaboration in relation to diverse student outcomes (e.g. Berryman et al., 2015; Education Review Office Te Tari Aortake Mātauranga, 2016; Hattie, 2015; Mette et al., 2016; Timperley et al., 2007). Timperley et al. (2007) reported on the

professional learning communities that exist within schools but acknowledged the potential importance of communities that exist outside of school impacting positively on teachers' confidence, problem-solving skills, professional ability and identity. However, they were only able to find one study that provided the specific detail required for the Best Evidence Synthesis[2]. Hynds et al. (2011) also commented on the research for teacher professional development programmes as being disappointingly thin. Communities of Learning Kāhui Ako demonstrate the characteristics outlined by Timperley et al. (2007) as promoting professional learning by putting "focus on opportunities to process new understandings and their implications for teaching, the introduction of new perspectives and challenging problematic beliefs, and an unrelenting focus on the impact of teaching on student learning" (p. 205).

METHODOLOGY

This inquiry is limited to Community of Learning Kāhui Ako ACT working in the area of supporting teacher confidence and perceived competence in relation to culturally-responsive pedagogy from within one Ministry of Education defined geographical region. This inquiry elicited Community of Learning Kāhui Ako ACT perceptions, ideas and attitudes towards supporting teacher confidence and perceived competence in relation to culturally-responsive pedagogy. The research design was qualitative with the semi-structured interview as defined by Menter, Elliot, Hulme, Lewin and Lowden (2011) as the data collection tool. Semi-structured interviews are "arguably the most common form of interviewing in social and education research" (Menter et al., 2011, p 133). This allowed me to have a focused number of topics with associated questions or probes.

The topics covered included;

1. Defining culturally-responsive practice.

2. Identifying where the role of ACT could positively impact on teacher perceived confidence and competence in relation to culturally-responsive pedagogy.

3. Identifying practices that enable and act as barriers for ACT to positively impact on teacher perceived confidence and competence in relation to culturally-responsive pedagogy.

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[2] "The New Zealand Ministry of Education's best evidence synthesis iterations draw together, explain and illustrate through vignettes and case studies bodies of evidence about what works to improve education outcomes, and what can make a bigger difference for the education of all our children and young people" (Ministry of Education, 2019, para 2).

4. Identifying examples of successful ACT practice where there was an impact on teacher perceived confidence and competence in relation to culturally-responsive pedagogy.

The questions designed from these topics were relatively broad and flexible to allow for the key topics to be covered. This also allowed the participants to add what they felt was relevant without restriction during the interview. As this inquiry centres around improving outcomes for Māori, the semi-structured interview enabled me to utilise tikanga values and practices with participants, specifically aroha (love), kānohi kitea (to have a physical presence, be seen or represent), manaakitanga (hospitality, kindness and generosity) and whakawhanaungatanga (relating well to others).

I interviewed four Teaching Council New Zealand Mātau fully registered teachers, each identifying as pākeha. Participants had met the national criteria for appointment to the position of Community of Learning Kāhui Ako across community teachers (ACT) working as such within the designated Ministry of Education region. Participants were experienced teachers, with each having accumulated between thirteen to twenty years teaching experience across most levels of the New Zealand curriculum. Each participant was either actively working towards or had completed postgraduate qualifications. Two participants were working within the secondary sector and two within the primary sector. Using contact information publicly available through the Education Counts Communities of Learning Kāhui Ako website, an email invitation was sent to lead-school principals throughout the region seeking permission to invite their ACT to voluntarily participate in a semi-structured interview specifically addressing culturally-responsive pedagogy. Community of Learning Kāhui Ako ACT, with permission, made contact to request the inquiry information before giving informed consent to participate. Participants completed the interview at a mutually agreed location with interviews lasting no longer than thirty minutes. Interviews were digitally voice-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Ethical Considerations

A critical reflection of a university code of ethical conduct enabled me to reflect critically about the ethical considerations associated with my inquiry. The university Human Ethics Committee (2019) deemed that this inquiry met the criteria for 'low risk'. The research adhered to the universal principles and the Treaty of Waitangi obligations and principles.

RESULTS

Throughout the semi-structured interview, participants were asked to make comments on a number of topics related to the focus of the inquiry. These results explore the themes generated from their responses to the topic questions.

Defining Culturally-responsive Practice

There was consensus across participants that culturally-responsive practice started with relationships and effective communication, knowing individuals and understanding their learning needs, and being able to offer students authentic culturally-appropriate learning opportunities that are embedded in day-to-day practice.

> For me, culturally-responsive practice is ensuring everybody's needs are met. In terms of ensuring Māori students, their way of learning is different from Pākehā and ensuring that they're hearing their language, their culture, their traditions, their stories are part of our teaching programme on a daily basis. Really, it should be embedded in every classroom, in every kura and in every teacher's way of life really. (Participant 4)

Participants shared that the primary reason teachers should engage in culturally-responsive practice was to increase priority student engagement and achievement in education, identifying that teacher practice needs to reflect an acknowledgement of student identity. One participant went onto explain that this was, *"Because it shows our students that we value them as individuals. We don't want schools to be seen as a whole series of little round holes and we only want little round pegs to go in our little round holes"* (Participant 2). Participants highlighted that within their contexts there was a need for teacher practice to change, addressing priority learner achievement though embedding best practice and addressing equity and equality:

> 120 years of doing the same thing is not improving practice, so I think it starts at schools and primary schools and secondary schools to say, "Hey, this is you and that is okay." And instead of teaching the way we've always done it we need to do it differently. And the fact that Māori were tangata whenua, we have done everything to suit us Europeans, because I'm European, things need to change. (Participant 4)

Enablers and Barriers to Teacher Perceived Confidence and Competence in Relation to Culturally-Responsive Pedagogy.

Enablers

All participants identified effective working relationships within their work as being a key enabler as a Community of Learning Kāhui Ako ACT in promoting culturally-responsive practice, *"You can achieve a lot in culturally-responsive practice by concentrating on the relationships that you have with other people and making them personal and not something that happens through a medium of letters and emails"* (Participant 3). Key features of effective relationships were identified by participants as face-to-face interaction planted in kaupapa Māori practice.

> I think it is to see what is happening and be *able to steer teachers in the right direction for support or to see what it looks like. I think opening doors really because I think as Europeans and teachers we've done the silo really well. Like I worry about what I do. Whereas the whole kaupapa Māori principle is we are whānau. We all do it together and we support each other, and we use our strengths to support others who don't have those … I think we need to be explicit in our teaching practice to ensure that we are meeting our obligations.* (Participant 4)

Teacher mindset, expertise and access to expertise were also seen as enablers to culturally-responsive practice by participants.

Barriers

Participant responses included themes of isolation from the Māori world, limited access to expertise, unexamined belief systems and current dispositions as being barriers to culturally-responsive practice as a Community of Learning Kāhui Ako ACT.

> I think it's been such a monocultural area for such a very long time that people haven't really had to think outside of what it is that they do. I don't think it's a deliberate choice. I don't think it's a malicious choice. I think it's just based on habits that have been built up over a long time. (Participant 2)

> Because we've always done it doesn't mean it's right, but for some people that change you will never get … Whereas, for me, my daughter is Māori, so, for me, it is to make sure that she has the same opportunities as everybody else, but why should she change who she is and why should she miss out on certain bits

because some people don't see that 150 years ago everything that her ancestors had was changed. That's okay for some people because it doesn't affect them at all. I think unless you have that impact of probably an injustice that has been served, you don't see anything wrong and therefore there is no need for change. (Participant 4)

Identifying the Role of ACT in Impacting Teacher Perceived Confidence and Competence in Relation to Culturally-Responsive Pedagogy.

The primary aspect identified was the Community of Learning Kāhui Ako ACTs ability to access best practice across the Community of Learning Kāhui Ako; in turn, making connections across the community and having the ability to share this expertise with others. This was seen as authentic and real professional development because teachers within the community could see these strategies working in practice within their geographical context. Examples given by participants shared the idea of breaking down school isolation by making connections through the promotion of best practice in context.

> So, if one school's doing something really well, there's no way anyone else knows about it. This is quite a good driver to be able to share that information for a Kāhui Ako perspective. (Participant 1)

> I still believe in positive reinforcement as a big first step. I think where people are getting it right, no matter where they are on that continuum, actually being able to recognise what that is, being able to frame it, name it and report on it. (Participant 2)

There was a general belief from all participants that they had the ability to effect change.

> We have the ability to be part of the change. I'm not sure it can just be the change, but I think to be part of it because it still has to be led by schools, but we can support that and we can be in the background to support that when it's going well or move more into the foreground where people need support to make it go well. (Participant 2)

Examples of Successful ACT Practice Impacting Confidence and Confidence in Relation to Culturally-Responsive Pedagogy.

All participants were able to identify examples of successful practice as a Community of Learning

Kāhui Ako ACT. This ranged from engaging external expertise to support culturally-responsive practice within the Community of Learning Kāhui Ako to working with a school to identify existing exemplary practice. Participants response to knowing what impact that had on perceived confidence and competence was centred on the relationships they had within kura. Participants said that they had an impact when they received a positive response from the teachers they were working alongside in small group or individual settings. *"I think because the teacher's response is always a positive one. It's either, "Oh, I've never thought about it like that," or, "It's nice when people notice what it is that you do"* (Participant 2). In examples of practice that involved large group settings participants were uncertain of their impact or were yet to see the impact.

> *I just don't believe it's happened yet. I think it was a good initial starting point in our journey as a Kāhui Ako, but maybe it might be something to re-look at again but opening it up a bit wider to more people and I'm sure he'd be more than happy to come down and do it again or do something a bit differently.* (Participant 1)

DISCUSSION

This inquiry has analysed the responses of Community of Learning Kāhui Ako ACT working to support teacher confidence and perceived competence in relation to culturally-responsive pedagogy within the region. The Community of Learning Kāhui Ako ACT interviewed responded with varying levels of confidence to defining culturally-responsive pedagogy and why teachers should engage in this practice with all participants demonstrating through their responses varying degrees of 'cultural consciousness' as explained by Macfarlane, Macfarlane and Webber (2015).

Participant responses surrounding identifying barriers to culturally-responsive pedagogy supported previous literature with themes falling into the two discourses. These discourses described by Bishop and Berryman (2006) are those who described Māori achievement in deficit terms seeking blame with the students home or through the structures and systems within a school, and those who took the disposition of lack of agency, where the teacher felt that the challenges facing Māori students were outside of their circle of influence and therefore not their responsibility to address. Overwhelmingly, all participants had a positive disposition for culturally-responsive pedagogy and a belief in their ability to effect change in

practice across the Community of Learning Kāhui Ako regardless of their personal expertise, a finding similar to that of previous literature where both Milner (2011) and Macfarlane (2004) took the position that teachers who believe in culturally-responsive pedagogy or are culturally sensitive are more likely to work with, foster, support, create and enable learning opportunities for their diverse learners. Furthermore, the principles or values of Kaupapa Māori that emerged throughout the literature (Berryman et al., 2015; Bishop, 2012; Fickel et al., 2018 and Henderson, 2013) as a potential way of engaging teachers through professional development featured heavily in the studied participant responses.

In particular there was strong support though the literature for the importance of relationships as being a key enabler of culturally-responsive practice (Baskerville, 2009; Berryman, Ford, Nevin & SooHoo, 2015; Bishop, 2003; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Henderson, 2013; Milner 2011). The findings from this inquiry corroborated this, with an overwhelming consensus from participants reporting relationships as being the key enabler to promoting culturally-responsive pedagogy. It was through the participants perceived success of these relationships that Community of Learning Kāhui Ako ACT felt they could measure their impact on teacher perceived confidence and competence, a finding that embodies "it is with people when we make the world a more equitable space ... through social actions such as mahi tahi (working together as one) and kotahitanga (unity of purpose)" (Berryman et al., 2015, p. 41). The impact of Community of Learning Kāhui Ako ACT though facilitating large group professional development with an expert on the topic of culturally-responsive pedagogy was less clear perhaps due to a lack in the depth of relationships held.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

Communities of Learning Kāhui Ako provide a mechanism for teacher collaboration: there is wide support from the literature for the benefits of teacher collaboration in relation to diverse student outcomes (Berryman et al., 2015; Education Review Office Te Tari Aortake Mātauranga, 2016; Hattie, 2015; Timperley et al., 2007; Mette et al., 2016). The findings from this inquiry, although limited suggest that the mechanism of Communities of Learning Kāhui Ako through the across-community teacher is having a positive impact on teacher confidence and perceived competence in relation to culturally-responsive pedagogy through the explicit use of Kaupapa Māori principles to support and drive change. This evidence suggests that Communities

of Learning Kāhui Ako could be a powerful vehicle for accelerating the success of Māori learners within this regional context. With this inquiry's limitations of small size and single region, questions remain: would these findings be replicated nationally and how would the perspectives of those working in the Community of Learning Kāhui Ako leadership role or Community of Learning Kāhui Ako within community role shape any future findings, would they see teacher confidence and competence with culturally-responsive pedagogy differently and could this be a measurable skill? Timperley et al. (2007) acknowledged the potential importance of communities that exist outside of school, however they were only able to find one study that provided the specific details required for the Best Evidence Synthesis. Although contributing to this subject area I would argue that this professional inquiry has just scratched the surface and further research is required to fully understand the impacts of Communities of Learning Kāhui Ako on improving teacher effectiveness and expertise so that it has a positive influence on Māori student progress and accelerated achievement.

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AUTHOR PROFILE

Kirsten Stevens

Kirsten Stevens is the Head of Learning Support at Mountainview High School and an Across Community Teacher for the Timaru North Community of Learning Kāhui Ako. She has a particular interest in culturally-responsive pedagogy, communities of practice and learning support. She is passionate about working alongside others to bring out the best in their learners.

Email: stevensk@mountainview.school.nz