Editorial

Kia ora tātou

It has long been recognized that our education systems serve some learners better than others. Those who have not been well-served include students from minority ethnic, linguistic and religious groups; students from low socio-economic backgrounds, and students who are disabled or experience difficulties associated with learning and behaviour. New Zealand, along with many countries around the world, is working hard to reduce the disparity and disadvantage experienced by these learners and at least, since the introduction of the policy Special Education 2000 in 1996, there has been a focus on the creation of inclusive education systems. These are systems of education where all students belong and participate, where all students are valued and can learn, and where teachers feel confident and competent to meet the needs of all learners. It is a system where the personal and social circumstances of students are not barriers to their educational achievement.

However, despite the concerted effort of policy makers, parents, teachers and other educational professionals, inclusive equitable education remains elusive with current data demonstrating less-favorable education and social outcomes for students from some minority groups (e.g. Education Counts, 2014). Some would argue that there are strong forces present within our education systems that act to exclude and marginalise certain students (Slee, 2011). These include (but are not limited to) social factors such as bullying and lack of access to friendship groups, curriculum factors such as lack of access to appropriate and engaging curriculum, and factors associated with teacher confidence and competence. In this edition of Kairaranga, each of the papers address one or more of these important factors. In the first article, Lynda Knight-de Blois and Jenny Poskitt present findings from a study that sought the views of junior secondary school students of Pasifcic heritage about what enhanced their learning. Four themes were identified: engaging teacher behaviour, lessons that stimulated learning, positive student-centred relationships, and teachers respecting student culture. In the second article, Loreto Mattioni, Vanessa Green, Flaviu Hodis and Tegan Lynch report on a study that investigated teachers’ and senior school management perceptions of cyberbullying. Most respondents in their study understood what behaviours constituted cyberbullying, however many were unlikely to identify social exclusion as a component of it. The third article by Jane Taylor and Michael Townsend presents a literature review that examines the reasons why friendship is so important to the well-being of children. Recommendations for educator practice are made. Next Anastasia Miliffe explores the concept of child well-being, reporting on a study that explored the well-being views of primary school-aged children. The fifth article in this edition, written by Steve McNeil, explores dyscalculia and highlights some assessment tools for use with students who experience difficulties in mathematics. Teacher competence and confidence in relation to teaching children with high functioning autism is the focus in the following article by Debbie Williams, and the edition concludes with an article by Thecla Kudakwashe Moffat, Binky Laureta and Lata Rana which discusses the challenges of inclusive education in early childhood education and presents ideas on how early childhood teachers can promote equity and social justice in their settings.

We hope that readers enjoy this edition.
Thank you to all our contributors.

Nga mihi nui

Alison Kearney (for Kairaranga editing team)

Kairaranga

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