Editorial

Welcome to the fourth issue of the *Journal of Initial Teacher Inquiry*. The journal is a celebration of inquiry-based research as undertaken by Initial Teacher Education (ITE) students completing the intensive, one-year Master of Teaching and Learning (MTchgLn) programme at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand. The MTchgLn programme *whakataukī* (proverb) resonates the values and aspirations we hope to instill in our ITE students as they embark on their own lifelong educational journeys: *Ahakoa he iti, he pounamu* – Although it is small, it is greenstone.

The programme broadly emphasises professional inquiry, and aims to nurture the important skills of critical analysis and reflection in regards to our student teachers' practice experiences, with the ultimate objective being to support and improve *ākonga* (learner) achievement. Given that pre-service or beginning teachers often have many questions about various aspects of contemporary education practices, as one of their programme outcomes, they are tasked with exploring an area of practice of interest to them, hence, the overarching theme of this journal being *contemporary teaching and learning issues*. In other words, by using a research-informed approach to inquiry, our student teachers need to conduct a critical literature review of a topic in education, typically an aspect that has puzzled them; implies a dilemma of some kind; poses a problem to be solved etc., one which has emerged from their coursework and practice experiences as beginning teachers.

Although the number of articles (seven) in this volume are fewer than in past issues, several contemporary themes are nonetheless represented. The themes follow on from several of those presented in the previous (2017) volume, themes that were drawn from the Bolstad et al. (2012) report. They are broadly organised as follows:
- Equity, diversity, and inclusivity
- Partnerships and relationships
- The role of new technologies

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity

In the first article, Marshall looks at gender and sexuality as performed in a way that does not accord with the prevailing heterosexual norms of society. Given that gender and childhood sexuality are socially constructed, it stands to reason that students who do not adhere to particular societal norms may run the risk of being excluded from learning environments, thereby negatively affecting these students' self-identity. An awareness and understanding of queer theory places teachers on a positive trajectory to facilitating a more inclusive learning environment. She presents several approaches that teachers can employ to hopefully promote inclusivity in their classrooms.

Similar to many education systems worldwide today, a cornerstone of contemporary education in Aotearoa New Zealand is the incorporation of Indigenous (Māori) knowledge in what is still an environment predominantly oriented in favour of Western knowledge. Swan challenges us on this score, by suggesting that the continued silencing of traditional Māori knowledge is tantamount to epistemic racism, which has at its core, the erosion of certain peoples' capacity to be human. What counts as valid knowledge is something we are encouraged to think upon as we read her article. Her article not only identifies challenges, but also considers aspects of how Indigenous and Western knowledge might be better integrated into the education system.

Partnerships and Relationships

Place-based learning (PBL) has an experiential focus, and links teaching and learning to the communities within which education is situated. Kerrigan presents an account of PBL and successful educational outcomes as being a function of strong partnerships, both within schools, and between schools and the wider community. Authentic, real-world learning experiences are key to the success of PBL. To this end, she identifies possible implications for teachers when incorporating a PBL approach into their teaching practice.

The role of parental involvement on student achievement is widely acknowledged (see, for example, Wilder, 2014). Millar tackles this important topic by looking at two different types of parental involvement applicable to Aotearoa New Zealand, the role of socioeconomic status, the challenges faced by minority and immigrant parents (those who are often left behind), family dynamics, and strategies to improve parental involvement across the board. Her synoptic review helps to put into focus a number of key issues in our contemporary understanding of the role parents play in their children's educational outcomes.

Shaw looks at the importance of school-community partnerships in shaping not only successful student outcomes, but also evolving student needs, the latter extending beyond what is typically associated with what happens in the classroom. A future-focused approach to education equips students with the necessary skills, knowledge, attitudes and values for them to engage in lifelong learning as active citizens of their communities. In addition to the types of school-community partnerships, she also considers possible implications of successful partnerships and several key challenges.

The Role of New Technologies

In a day-and-age of rapid technological progress, the importance of information and communications technology (ICT) integration into the classroom practice of (pre-service) teachers cannot be overstated. Hayes presents an account which examines three aspects of pre-service teachers' self-efficacy in this regard: technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge (TPACK) acquired through ITE; schools and school communities playing an important role in the professional development of teachers, especially in lower socioeconomic communities, and pre-service

teachers must nurture an open-minded willingness to adopt and integrate new technologies into their classroom practice.

Lastly, Moratti gives an applied account, by looking at the effectiveness of video games, simulations, and virtual reality in the Science classroom. Given the rapid advancement in technology in more recent times, schools are increasingly trying to incorporate ICT into their respective curricula (e.g., science education). Although there are numerous benefits from this approach, the literature does not necessarily suggest that the incorporation of ICT has advantages over more traditional teaching methods, but that learning gains are more closely tied to the teacher's pedagogical use of technology.

Teaching as inquiry is an important part of one's teaching practice. This is no different for our student teachers and ITE graduates, who demonstrate in this journal compilation, a high level of engagement with topics that have contemporary relevance to the field of education. All seven articles explore important aspects of teaching practice, and model for us the way in which lifelong learning should guide our journeys as teaching professionals. To each of you we say: *Ngā mihi maioha*.

Mark Millin and Mistilina Sato
Associate Editors

References

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