

Performativity in an era of mandated change: New Zealand teachers tell it as it is

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Abstract

The premise of performativity is that through established targets, evaluation and accountability mechanisms, governments or organisational leaders can expect effective and often ambitious change within an organisation. However, this article challenges such assumptions, and suggests a different narrative by presenting the findings of a study which investigated the significance of pre-determined change in a mandated new curriculum for New Zealand secondary school teachers. Over a two-year period involving semi-structured interviews with twelve secondary school teachers across three schools, observations of the classroom practice, and document analysis, this research shows that the pressures of a performative environment determined leadership and teacher priorities and ironically, became the barrier for authentic change. As the findings show the teachers adhered to the philosophy of the new curriculum, yet appeared reluctant to change their practice. These teachers' espoused beliefs were incongruent with their practice, and this article offers an insight into this complex context.

Keywords: *Educational change; performativity; resistance; managed professionals*

Introduction

Based on the premise that to be motivated to change, individuals need to perceive it to be of significance to their reality (Hall & Irving, 2010; van den Berg, 2002), this study investigated the significance of pre-determined change in a mandated new curriculum for New Zealand secondary school teachers. As the research proceeded it became evident that the teachers were positioned as “managed professionals” (Codd, 2005; Sachs, 2001), operating in a performative culture in which their effectiveness was determined by their students' achievement in tests and examinations. In this paper it is argued that rather than supporting change such an environment constrained both leaders and teachers. They were unwilling to consider any changes to their practice that could detract from meeting target indicators in their context. Ball (2003, p. 215) maintains that a culture of performativity “requires individual practitioners to organize themselves as a response to targets, indicators and evaluations. To set aside personal beliefs and commitments and live in an existence of calculation”. This appeared to be the case in this study in which the teachers calculated whether the mandated change would support their ability to meet the required targets. While one participating teacher perceived the signalled changes were congruent with her current approach, others suffered the dilemma of being caught between their espoused beliefs, the messages of the changes and those in their context. Despite their “inner conflict” (Ball, 2003, p. 215), the immediate pressures of the performative culture determined their priorities. As one explained:

My idealism is not lost but it has been balanced by pragmatism. It's not about learning to be the best teacher. It's about how to be a teacher in the New Zealand system. I think we do an OK job but it's always a compromise job.

The context

The New Zealand curriculum (NZC) was revised and implemented in all schools during 2008 and 2009 and mandated at the beginning of 2010. Unlike earlier curriculum documents, the NZC includes a section on

effective pedagogy with guidance for teaching and learning processes. This section, titled *Effective Pedagogy* (EP), which was the focus of the study, signals a move to a social constructivist view of learning (Abbiss, 2011; Boyd & Watson, 2006). The driver for this study was the belief based on over 300 observations of secondary teachers' classroom practice and by Education Review Office (ERO) reports that the changes signalled in the revised curriculum could require many teachers to modify their approaches. In the more commonly observed transmission/objectivist model the teacher is seen as the source of knowledge and the students as receptacles of that knowledge. In contrast, constructivists believe that knowledge is complex and uncertain, that it can be learned gradually and that it can be constructed by the learner. For a teacher with an objectivist epistemological view, to change to a constructivist one would therefore require a paradigm shift involving the relinquishing of former beliefs. Teachers would need to believe such a change was of personal significance before investing the considerable time and effort involved in the transformational learning required for such a fundamental shift (van den Berg, 2002). Therefore this study investigated the participants' perception of the significance of the changes based on the understanding that unless it connected with their realities it had little chance of happening (Hall & Irving, 2010; Keys, 2007).

The leadership challenge

There is extensive literature on leading change. Fullan (2007) states succinctly: "Educational change depends on what teachers do and think" (p. 129). Therefore leaders need firstly, an understanding of the change process within teachers, to "unfreeze" current ways of thinking and to create in teachers a motivation to make the changes (Fullan et al., 2005; Patterson & Rolheiser, 2004; Weiner, 2009). This involves disconfirmation of current behaviour and the creation of a sense of urgency to make appropriate changes to address the discrepancy (Schein, 2010). The next stage is to implement the change. During this stage leadership needs to work with staff to clarify goals and expectations (Fullan et al., 2005; Bishop, 2008; van Veen, Slegers & van de Ven, 2005); develop an environment that supports a learning community (Fullan et al., 2005; van Veen et al., 2005); provide adequate and appropriate professional experiences, monitoring and support; and allocate resources including time (Fullan et al., 2005; Coburn, 2003; Bishop, 2008).

With the pressure to implement mandated change it appears that the advice to understand teachers' personal motivation is often overlooked (Gokce, 2010). Crucially it should be accepted by leaders that teachers react in a range of ways when confronted by mandated change. Oreg (2006) suggests that leaders should explore the subjective experiences of teachers during change to reach an understanding of what any perceived resistance may be really about. The possible reasons identified in the literature are many and include: lack of intrinsic motivation to implement changes initiated by someone else and which do not match their own goals for their teaching (Oreg, 2006), lack of a clearly articulated and coherent vision (Fullan, 2007), lack of understanding of the instructional change involved (Lai & Pratt, 2008; Ryan, 2006;), seeing no personal value in the change (Armenakis, Bernerth, Pitts & Walker, 2007; Thoonen, Slegers, Oort, Peetsma & Geijsel, 2011), concern about job security (Kelchtermans, 2009), threat to autonomy and professionalism (Evans, 2010; Neyland, 2010), lack of trust in the leadership (Armenakis et al., 2007) or the organisation and culture of the school (Hargreaves, 1994; Coburn, 2003), or lack of confidence that contextual support will be provided (Assaf, 2008; Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008). Given that motivation is personal and complex, leaders need to understand what is involved (Debowski, 2007).

Ford (1992, p. 3), in his explanation of a "motivational systems theory", describes motivation as "the organised patterning of three psychological functions that serve to direct, energise and regulate goal directed activity: personal goals, emotional arousal process and personal agency beliefs". If we accept Ford's (1992) definition, for teachers to be motivated to make changes to their practice, they must believe that the change will help them reach their personal goals. In other words, they need to be aroused to action, they must believe that

they are capable of making the changes and that their context and their leaders will support them to do so (see also Armenakis, Bernerth, Pitts & Walker, 2007; Leithwood, Steinbach & Jantzi, 2000). In their discussion of social cognitive theory, Wood and Bandura (1989), maintain that an individual's appraisal of their ability to enact the changes will be affected by their perception of their self efficacy, by personal factors (such as their level of self reflection) and by environmental factors. Each of these components act as interacting determinants but will not necessarily be apportioned equal weight. Teachers may for example believe that they have the skills to enact the changes but, in their context, are not able to carry them out (Abrami, Poulsen & Chambers, 2004; Thoonen et al., 2011).

Teachers' evaluative responses will therefore be the precursor to their subsequent behaviour in the change process (Black, 1995). In their appraisal of the change they will evaluate whether it is "significant to their well being" (Lazarus & Folkman 1987, p. 145) asking: "Why change things? How will that work? What is in it for me?" (Terhart, 2013, p. 149).

Framework for the study

As discussed above, a teacher's attitude towards mandated change will be based on their subjective evaluative response to what is suggested, seeking to achieve a balance between their personal goals for their teaching, that of their context and those of the policy (Armenakis et al., 2007). With these theories in mind the key question for this study was:

What is the significance for New Zealand secondary school teachers of signalled changes in a mandated new curriculum?

Sub-questions:

What is the significance of the NZC to their context?

What is the significance of the NZC to their personal goals?

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to understand how teachers perceived the significance of the NZC. A qualitative case study approach was used in order to explore how the contemporary phenomenon of implementation of a new curriculum impacted on teachers' beliefs and practice, why impact change had or had not occurred and was one in which I, as the investigator, had little control over events (Yin, 2003). It provided an opportunity to "unravel the complexities" (Denscombe, 1998, p. 31) of the interconnected relationships within the context and the political and social environment which impacted on it (Stake, 1995). Interviews, observations and document analysis were central methods used within the case study.

Participants

Twelve teachers with a range of teaching experience from two years to 26 years participated in this study. An advisory group and ERO reports (ERO, 2010) were consulted to identify the schools that were accustomed to innovation and to invite them to participate. It was expected that within such schools, teachers would be prepared to share their experiences and provide the opportunity to learn about teachers' appraisal of change (Patton, 2002). Four teachers from each of three schools which fitted this criterion agreed to take part in the study (see Table 1).

Data Collection

Initial interview

In the initial interviews teachers were asked about themselves, about their teaching careers, about their beliefs about effective teaching and their response to the NZC.

Table 1. Details of participants

Name (pseudonyms)	Teaching experience	Gender	School	Role
Jill	7 years	F	Kauri High School Decile 8	Social sciences teacher
Joseph	7 years	M	Kauri High School	Physical education teacher
Mary	2 years	F	Kauri High School	Mathematics teacher
Nina	6 years	F	Kauri High School	Physical education teacher
Christopher	9 years	M	Kawakawa College Decile 10	Science teacher
Edward	8 years	M	Kawakawa College	Social sciences teacher Head of department
Ruth	15 years	F	Kawakawa College	Science teacher.
Susan	4 years	F	Kawakawa College	English teacher
Amy	11 years	F	Totara College Decile 5	Mathematics teacher Assistant head of department
James	26 years	M	Totara College	Accounting teacher Head of department
Jennifer	24 years	F	Totara College	English teacher Deputy principal
Michael	26 years	M	Totara College	Mathematics teacher Deputy principal

Observations

All participants were observed teaching several times over the two years of the implementation. The purpose of these observations was to further develop an understanding of their beliefs by observing their “theory in action” (Argyris & Schon, 1987) which they may have been reluctant or unable to explain in the interview (Patton, 2002). Observation further added to an understanding of the complexity of teaching and of the context in which the teacher was operating (Patton, 2002).

Post observation interview

The data collected from the observations provided guidance for the follow-up interview and contributed to the building of a complete picture of the lesson. In the follow-up interview, the teacher had the opportunity to read the observer’s script and to explain his/her actions and provide the context.

Documents

The strategic plans and the annual plans from each school were examined to further develop the picture of the context in which the teachers worked. In addition, newspaper clippings that helped to expand the understanding of issues in the external environment were collected over the course of the study.

Data analysis

At the initial stage of the process all data was carefully read many times followed by data reduction at a basic level (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). This involved allocating categories to segments, highlighting chunks of text, and applying descriptive codes in the margin (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The next step moved from merely labelling to linking the data to an idea and from there to other data pertaining to that idea (Richards & Morse, 2007). This was an iterative process and ongoing throughout the study from the beginning of the data collection.

Findings

In their interviews each participant in the study maintained that they supported the effective pedagogy as expressed in the NZC. However, while a positive attitude is important it is not, on its own, enough to motivate individuals to make changes (Ford, 1992). In the study, the participants' espoused support for the signalled changes was not, in itself, sufficient to motivate them to engage fully with the implementation of the signalled changes.

Observed practice

The teachers' observed practice did not neatly fit within either a transmission theory of teaching and learning (Brooks & Brooks, 1993) or elements of the effective pedagogy described in the revised curriculum (MOE, 2007, p. 34) based on constructivist epistemological beliefs. A person may hold a set of personal epistemological beliefs that are part of a wider world view (Hofer, 2004). This was evident in the lessons observed, with elements of both objectivist and constructivist epistemological beliefs appearing to be demonstrated in many of them. To capture the complexity of the range of observed teaching (Boulton-Lewis, Smith, McCrindle, Burnett & Campbell, 2001) the following categories were adapted to describe the interpretation of the participants' approaches to teaching and learning.

Monitored development of content and skills

In the observed classes four teachers appeared to be carefully checking that the students absorbed the required knowledge with the focus on their achieving a "correct" understanding through selected activities. Teachers presented the information and used strategies to motivate the students, used materials and asked them to do practical activities. As the students worked, the teachers monitored their progress towards reaching the level of skill and understanding required to meet an assessment. Efforts were made to increase engagement through activities to "stimulate the curiosity of students" but not to "use or apply what they learned in new contexts" (MOE, 2007, p. 34). While in these classes students did "work in groups and have conversations with other people", they did not have "ownership of the learning" (MOE, 2007, p. 34). Instead, the activities were designed to shape the learning to fit the imminent assessment. The atmosphere in these classes was one of compliance, with little evidence of active learning, thus reflecting a transmission model. This approach did not seek to encourage knowledge construction or critical reflection. Instead, it focused on ensuring an understanding of the prescribed content (Magrini, 2010).

Facilitated development of understanding

Six teachers facilitated the students' learning by supporting them towards an understanding by working with them, asking probing questions and providing activities that required deeper thinking, but again did not work towards knowledge construction or critical reflection. As in monitored development of content, in these classes the learning outcomes were non-negotiable limiting the possibility of student's pursuing goals for learning other than those determined by the teacher. However, the students were actively involved in deepening their understanding often through group work. This approach to teaching met to some extent: "Students learn as they engage in shared activities and conversations with other people" (MOE, 2007, p. 34).

Facilitated knowledge building

In this category teachers provided stimulus to develop their students' conceptual understanding and their world view through a range of strategies (Boulton-Lewis et al., 2001). One teacher was observed teaching both junior and senior classes in this category and another in her junior classes only. In these classes the students were "knowledge building" (Bereiter, 2002, p. 68) inquiring into a topic through activities which result in a gradual development of ideas (Scardamalia, 2002).

This approach meets the criteria for the EP of the NZC:

Curricular activities rely heavily on primary sources of data. Students are viewed as thinkers with emerging theories about the world. Teachers mediate the environment for students (MOE, 2007, p. 34).

The challenge of mandated change

The dominance of the national assessment system, National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) was apparent in the observed lessons. As noted above, with two exceptions teachers worked from a fixed curriculum which in senior classes appeared to be the requirements of the NCEA standards. In junior classes the curriculum as outlined in departmental schemes was designed to lay the basis for working towards future success in NCEA. In Year 10 (junior) classes for example, the learning was based on meeting the requirements of a modified version of a level 1 achievement standard. One participant acknowledged this: "Even Year 9s are getting ready for NCEA, it can be a pressure".

Instead of providing feedback and feed forward for teachers and students on learning, formative assessment was narrowed to steer students towards the summative assessment of the achievement standard criteria:

Change to STIs, not STDs or it will be a not achieved in the assessment. (Nina)

When you get to assessment make sure you remember little things like the lip. (Mary)

These are the sort of questions you can expect in the assessment. (Christopher)

In these classes the NCEA assessment criteria determined the outcomes for the learning, limiting the extent to which the students could be genuinely constructing their own knowledge and that they could "over time develop their creativity, their ability to think critically about information and ideas and their meta-cognitive ability" (MOE, 2007, p. 34).

Teachers expressed their frustration:

As a senior teacher I feel that we are sometimes graded on our classes' pass rates for NCEA and what I need to do to get kids to get 22 credits is teach them to jump through hoops and get them to write a formulaic essay. Sometimes I want to throw away the essay structure and ask what they really think... (Susan)

On the one hand we want everyone to be really innovative and creative and visual and all the sort of things, but the restrictions for seniors are just so ... yeah black and white. (Mary)

NCEA is becoming more intense. There are more internals: each takes four weeks and therefore more pressure to cover the work. (Christopher)

Discussion

Each teacher had reservations about the implementation of a constructivist approach, for a range of reasons linked to the demands of a performative culture. From the findings in this study the barriers to the significance of the

signalled changes in the NZC for the participating teachers were mixed messages, the competitive environment and NCEA. The teachers appeared to be the recipients of mixed messages about the goals for education in the political environment and within their contexts. These messages created ambiguous and confusing dilemmas for teachers, compromising any change to teaching practices (Yates & Holt, 2009). In particular, the tension between the aims of the NZC and the external pressure of accountability policies and standardised assessments created an environment in which achievement in NCEA assessment was perceived by the teachers in the study to be of greater significance than the vision of the NZC. This appeared to create what Ball (2003, p. 121) calls “values schizophrenia” when “commitment, judgement and authenticity are sacrificed for impression and performance”. The dilemma was expressed by a participant:

For this to be the dominant pedagogy I think it will be finding the time to prepare – and it’s still outcomes based – you have got that tension and the way, worry a bit, the Minister starts talking about league tables, and I think gee if you are going to go down that track – I think it’s about how to marry the two um, use this form of pedagogy with getting the results I worry about that. Do I think the benefit will equal the effort?

In the followings section the possible reasons for their perception are discussed.

Messages from the political environment

The government’s educational focus is “on building a world-leading education system that equips all New Zealanders with the knowledge, skills and values to be successful citizens in the 21st century”. (MOE, 2014, p. 4). The vision in the NZC document (MOE, 2007, p. 8) reflects this focus. For example: “Our vision is for young people who will be creative, energetic, and enterprising”.

However, this vision is undermined by media attention given to the call by the MOE for greater educational accountability, suggesting that it will be not be the vision of the NZC but NCEA achievement which is used as a means to evaluate teachers. The Ministry advisory paper (MOE, 2011, p. 13) to the Minister of Education states:

It is also important that providers feel themselves accountable for continually improving learning and student achievement. Developments in both the schooling and tertiary sectors have been seeking to do this through making greater use of existing accountability requirements to assess performance, support improvement and address sustained non performance.

The teachers in this study expressed concern about how their performance would be measured, suspecting that NCEA achievement would play an important part. Subsequently, the pressure of NCEA assessments prevented a whole-hearted engagement with the pedagogy of the NZC. The findings in this study suggest that when teachers do feel this pressure, their default position is teacher-centred pedagogy having a lack of faith that student-centred teaching is effective to meet the pre-determined targets. Edward stated: “I still think in some ways the quickest way of getting through stuff is the transmission theory”.

The Treasury Secretary, Gabriel Makhlouf’s comment contributed to this concern. He promoted greater accountability for teachers and suggested ways to assess teacher quality which linked to those of a business model: a mix of class appraisal by peers and principals, feedback from the clients (students and parents), and data on student progress (Hartfelt, 2012). He justified the Treasury’s interest in this topic because it was important to the New Zealand economy stating that “high quality teachers produce better-performing students who go into the workforce and make a significant contribution to economic growth. Education is the third largest area of government expenditure, and we need to get the best results from this investment” (Makhlouf, 2012, p. 1). This view reduces education to a commodity with the narrow aim of preparing students for the job market (Ball, 2003; Codd, 2005) in which the teacher is merely a technician (Neyland, 2010). Benade (2011, p. 8) refers to it as an

example of Human Capital Theory, “the notion that capital investment in education leads to enhanced skills and knowledge for the state.”

The Prime Minister’s speech in March, 2012 added to a focus the unambiguous targets of a performative culture:

The Minister of Education has set a target of 85 per cent of 18-year-olds having NCEA level 2 or equivalent in five years. The current figure is around 68 per cent, so achieving the target will be very tough (Key, 2012).

In Wylie’s (2013) survey of secondary schools only 39% of principals expressed confidence that their school would meet that target. Teachers’ accountability for measurable outcomes is therefore contractually placed in a long line which stretches through their principal to the MOE (Sachs, 2001). Ultimately a large number of teachers could feel they will be blamed if this challenging target is not met, ignoring any of the socio-economic issues that may have impacted on student achievement (Thrupp, 2007). These impressions were stated by participants. For example:

The school does see it as important, yeah, got to keep our percentages up there. As a teacher of seniors I feel that we are sometimes graded on our classes’ pass rates for NCEA. (Susan)

NCEA Assessment acts as a carrot and stick. It’s bad pedagogy and we are being appraised on it. (Christopher)

Messages from their context

The implication that the teachers consider the achievement of NCEA results to be a significant pressure in their contexts suggests that they also receive mixed messages about the goals of teaching and learning from leadership and colleagues in their school and from the community. This was evident in each context the participating teachers worked in. While the goals of the NZC and their schools’ mission statements state the aim of teaching and learning is to prepare the students for their future lives in a holistic way, from the comments of the participating teachers, the clearly understood goal in their contexts was achievement in NCEA. Each school mission statement suggests a broad and holistic education.

However, the actual focus in each context seems clear from the strategic plans. For example, the goals for professional learning in each school’s strategic plan are vague (see Table 2).

Table 2: School strategic plans

	Action	Expected outcome
Totara College	Robust support for the implementation of the NZC	Annual department reports
Kauri High School	Continued implementation of the NZC	Increased use of e-learning
Kawakawa College	Continued implementation of the NZC	Increased use of e- learning

On the other hand, the goals for NCEA results state clear expectations with measurable outcomes as evidenced from the excerpts below:

- Totara College: Increased numbers of students gaining Endorsed with Merit and Excellence in NCEA. The goal for each of the next three years is to improve each of the figures by 5 students per year.

- Kauri High School: A 75% Level 2 NCEA pass rate and a 60% level 3 NCEA pass rate. Level 1 continues to improve by 5%.
- Kawakawa College: Maintaining an achievement profile at or above the level of other decile 10 co-ed schools. (School strategic plans)

These goals appear to confirm Slowley's (2013) suggestion that school leadership is more affected by external expectations than to the learning needs of the students. The conflicting messages constitute what Tyack and Cuban (1995) refer to as the unexamined beliefs about what school is really about.

The professional learning provided in each context added to the impression that the leadership was not fully committed to change. The ingredients for effective professional learning described earlier include: leadership that works with staff to clarify goals and expectations and actively supports teachers' efforts to change; norms that support collegiality and experimentation; effective professional learning which provides teachers with opportunities to discuss and negotiate the meaning of the new learning and its implications for practice; followed-up assistance that continues long enough for new behaviours to be incorporated into ongoing practice and formal and informal methods for monitoring the process and used to help overcome obstacles; engaging their theories of practice (Fullan, 2007; Piggot-Irvine, 2006; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007; Webster-Wright, 2009). The degree of congruence between teachers' existing beliefs and those promoted by the professional learning needs to be understood. If this does not happen, teachers' new practice is likely to be layered on top of previous practice, and not replace it (Timperley et al., 2007). Bereiter (2002) refers to this layering as reductionism as appeared to be the case in the 'facilitated development of understanding' category of observed lessons. In those classes the teacher facilitated the students' learning asking probing questions and provided activities but did not work towards knowledge construction or critical reflection. It appeared that their theory of learning had not been examined.

From the interviews, observations of the environment and examination of school documentation the interpretation of the professional learning offered in each context was as shown in Table 3. As can be seen, while there were elements of what the literature suggests as effective professional learning, some key aspects appeared to be missing in each context.

Impact of the competitive environment

Another barrier to the implementation of the change is the competitive environment in which all secondary schools in New Zealand operate and for which NCEA results could be considered a 'selling point'. The Tomorrow's Schools reforms of 1989 shifted the school system to one with elements of a quasi-market system, in which competition between schools became the key driver for educational quality, with parents and children as consumers (Court & O'Neill, 2011).

This model had impacted on the participants in the study. All worked in areas where parents had the choice of a range of schools. Participants at each school stated they felt the pressure to ensure students achieved well in the NCEA assessments, with Jill in Kauri High School maintaining that it was common practice in her context for all learning in each year group to be linked to NCEA, and Susan in Kawakawa College stating that she felt in her context NCEA results were important to the school leadership and to the community.

The participants in this study appeared to believe that their school's NCEA achievement rates became the criterion by which the schools' and the teachers' effectiveness were judged by their communities. James, for example, believed the good work that teachers do is rarely acknowledged and that they can be judged as inadequate by the public when league tables are published. James's perception is described by Codd (2005, p. 201) as a

Table 3. Professional learning in each context

Practice	Citation	Totara College	Kauri High School	Kawakawa College
Leadership that works with staff to clarify goals and expectations and actively supports teachers' efforts to change	Bishop, 2008; Coburn, 2003; Fullan et al., 2005; van Veen et al., 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior managers in the study not committed to the change Head of departments expected to lead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To some extent – goals not clear but directives given and resourcing for integrated studies Time allowance for learning groups Participants unsure of leadership understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Common goals not clear Support for ongoing PD and time provided for learning groups
Professional learning that is ongoing and collaborative	Bishop, 2008; Robinson & Lai, 2000; Timperley et al., 2007	Dependent on departments	In learning groups	In learning groups
Ongoing monitoring, support and feedback	Brown & Sprangler, 2006; Timperley et al., 2007	No	No	No
Opportunities for knowledge creation	Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Webster-Wright, 2009	Dependent on the departments	Potentially possible in learning groups	Potentially possible in learning groups
Learners actively and interactively engaged	Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Webster-Wright, 2009	Individually but not necessarily interactively	Within learning groups	Within learning groups
Extended time to learn	Bishop, 2008; Coburn, 2003; Fullan, 2007; Piggot-Irvine, 2006; Timperley et al., 2007; Webster-Wright, 2009; Fullan et al., 2005	No	40 minutes per week	Sometimes
External expertise	Timperley et al., 2007; Fullan, 2001	No	No	On one occasion
Prevailing discourses challenged	Bishop, 2008; Timperley et al., 2007; Lutzenberg et al., 2011; van den Berg, 2002	No	No	No
Coherence	Coburn, 2003; Fullan & Quinn, 2012; Drath et al., 2008; Lutzenberg et al., 2011; Spillane et al., 2002	No	No	No

reflection of a culture of performativity in which “good practice is defined by a set of pre-defined skills or competencies, with little or no acknowledgement of the moral dimensions of teaching”.

The impact of NCEA

As already discussed, the pressure teachers in the study felt to achieve positive NCEA results was a significant barrier that prevented the changes being of significance to them. While the move from norm-referenced to outcomes-based assessment in 2012 involved significant change for teachers, over time there was either increased support for it (Hipkins, 2013) or a weary acceptance (Locke & Goodwyn, 2004). However, it has come at significant cost which militates against the signalled changes. Each of the costs is discussed in the following sections.

NCEA impact on curriculum

In 2001, Locke argued that the achievement criteria matrix would become the ‘de facto’ curriculum and therefore would have “a powerful influence in shaping the way a subject is constructed in classrooms” (p. 104). His fears have been realised. In her reports from the NZCER National Survey of Secondary Schools, Hipkins (2013) stated that 48% of teachers and 47% of principals believed NCEA was now driving the curriculum even at junior year levels. This appeared to be occurring in this study where the assessments appeared to be the curriculum and where year 10 students were being assessed against a version of level 1 NCEA achievement standards. There was anxiety that juniors were not receiving sufficient grounding in their subject for future senior assessment, and the purpose for the learning in 12 out of 14 classes was to pass the assessment. Broadfoot (2003, p. 202) refers to the “stranglehold of assessment’s pervasive influence” which results in schools, instead of offering rich content, narrowing a curriculum to one which is designed to meet the requirements of the assessment and in which students see learning simply as amassing credits (Locke, 2008). In this study the surveillance regime affected teachers. Christopher appeared to be suffering from “values schizophrenia” (Ball, 2003, p. 121), torn between conforming to the expectation of his environment and his sense of what was important. His comment in an interview “I like to squeeze it in. If something is important screw the assessment. It’s what they take away that is important” suggested that he viewed his attempts to contextualise his teaching as almost as an act of defiance. James also struggled: his stated preference was to give the students more responsibility for their learning. He did attempt to work in that way with juniors while managing to comply with the common test regime by setting aside a direct teaching spell to prepare the students. As Ball (2003, p. 222) expresses it, he was “playing the game”.

The narrow focus stifles the curiosity of students, limits teachers’ and students’ creativity, and devalues the professional judgment of teachers (Ball, 2003; Sachs, 2001). Inner conflict was evident: Susan, James and Christopher for example felt that while they had the freedom to experiment with the pedagogy of the NZC with junior classes, the senior classes were a different matter. Christopher was concerned about his job security: “I am anxious, concerned. My job is important. I get stressed about how my students do. I have to be very resilient. I am personally happy at the end if, in retrospect, we have met the deadlines”.

Other teachers explained their dilemma:

We are so time bound with particular assessments that we can’t just sort of explore something that is interesting that will use some of the, sort of the vision stuff that you would get from the curriculum – yeah it’s like covering the assessments rather than following a learning path with something. (Susan)

Even Y9 getting ready for NCEA. It can be a pressure. It would be possible [NZC] but here is always that pressure for covering would have to come off and I don’t think that teachers want to. (Amy)

NCEA impact on relevance

The EP section of NZC describes the relevance of new learning in the following way:

Students learn most effectively when they understand what they are learning, *why they are learning it, and how they will be able to use their new learning.* (MOE, 2007, p. 34, emphasis added)

The relevance as described above was not observed in 12 of the 14 classes. Instead, the students were told that the relevance of their learning was to prepare for NCEA or for a common assessment. One observed year 11 class were researching contraception, a highly relevant topic for them. However, there was no link made to their lives. Instead the students were reminded how to use their information for the upcoming assessment. Ruth included real life, often amusing or startling stories about metals and non-metals to make the learning memorable. She did not, however, invite the students to consider how they may use this learning in their lives. The purpose for the learning, she told them, was to prepare for the assessment.

Relevance to the students' everyday life was not mentioned in the interviews with the other teachers. On the contrary, one made it clear that she made links to NCEA for the learning in all her classes, even with the year 9 students. Learning in these classes was narrowed to meet defined targets. As Neyland (2010, 19) expresses it, "the flame that ought to fire education – fuelled by curiosity and wonder about the world has been dampened down". Students as well as teachers were caught in a contract to meet government requirements.

Conclusion

The study discussed in this paper was based on the premise that a teacher's attitude towards the change will be determined by their evaluation of its significance to their reality.

While the policy of the NZC was mandated change, it ultimately demanded a local interpretation (Ball, 2003; Benade, 2009). The findings suggest that in their context leaders and teachers felt unable to consider any change that might detract from the drive to reach the required and unambiguous outcomes of a performative culture. Instead of considering the changes of the EP the teachers appeared to be straitjacketed into approaches that had enabled them to be judged as effective. Despite the participants espousing support for the approaches in the NZC, in interviews only Jill was observed consistently enacting them. It appeared that Jill had taken an active role in shaping her work within the restrictions of her context. Other teachers were experiencing the "inner conflict, inauthenticity and resistance" referred to by Ball (2003) and a sense of "corrosion of education self-identity" (Neyland 2010, p. 30), torn between their judgement of good practice and the demands of their workplace (Ball, 2003). As discussed earlier, motivation firstly depends on discrepancy production and discrepancy reduction (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Any feeling of dissonance that could be resolved by the proposed changes was not apparent in the study. Therefore, the teachers were not motivated to consider a change in their approach to teaching. Instead motivation of the school leaders and the teachers appeared to be underpinned by a "theory of control" (Neyland 2010, p. 45), which maintained the focus on the designated measurable outcomes and which locked teachers into behaviour that had allowed them to be met.

Successful change requires an alignment of all parts of the system, in which "all the interacting parts form a complex and unified whole that has specific purpose" (Kim, 1999, p. 2). In a school with an aligned focus working towards a change there would be a clear vision of what the change involved, leadership at all levels would initiate and support it and there would be a realistic time allowance for the teachers (Hargreaves, 2005). In each context there was no evidence of shared mindset for the changes in the NZC. There was however an aligned focus within the schools and the wider educational environment on a system that privileged external regulation system and political ends (Sachs, 2001). As a result, teachers' perception was that their effectiveness as a teacher and their school's success was measured by their students' achievement in the

external assessment system. Their reality was a performative environment in which the changes of the NZC were not of sufficient significance for teachers to be motivated to fully engage with them.

While success in NCEA is perceived to be the significant educational goal it is not realistic to expect teachers to change their approach to teaching from one that they consider will achieve the goal. Courage would be required of school leaders to inspire in their staff and their community that changes will not only improve student achievement and personal development but also enable them to succeed in the NCEA assessment. This suggests that school leaders and staff, in partnership with their community, should clarify their goals for teaching and learning. Fullan (2004) refers to this as establishing a moral purpose; what the leadership and the staff really believe is the goal of education and examining the extent to which their current practice works toward accomplishing it. If subsequently the school community believes the signalled changes to be appropriate to meet the established educational goal they may need to explicitly – even ruthlessly – confront the elements of a performative environment that may prevent them from being embedded into practice.

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