
“They don’t look at me and say you’re a palagi”:**Teaching Across-Habitus**

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Introduction

A central feature of the case study presented is the writers’ shared concerns regarding the educational outcomes of children in New Zealand’s low socio-economic (SES) schools. We, the writers, are Maori and Pakeha/Palagi. We have each worked for most of our teaching careers in New Zealand’s low SES rural and urban schools. We now work in teacher education. Sharing a belief that teachers can make a difference, our research establishes the attitudes and beliefs of three (of the many) successful teachers who teach in low SES schools. Their beliefs and attitudes appear to empower all pupils within their classrooms to reach their potential. By identifying teacher attitudes and beliefs, our hope is that educators may be encouraged to reflect on their own attitudes and beliefs. As a result, education could improve for the children of low SES groups.

Our contention is that some of the New Zealand’s best teachers teach in low SES primary schools. As all children deserve the very best teachers, we believe that it is worthwhile to ascertain the beliefs and attitudes of a selection of these highly successful teachers. The knowledge gained could then inform recruitment into pre-service teacher education, selection within schools, and pre-service/in-service teacher education courses. While we are familiar with overseas research and writing in this field, for instance the work of Haberman (USA) (1995), Scheurich (USA) (1998), Cummins (Canada) (1986) and Sullivan (Australia) (1999), there is no published New Zealand based research which is centred in the primary school. We are cognisant of, and affirm, the ongoing New Zealand secondary school research of the AIMHI project (Hawk & Hill 1996, 1998, 2000).

¹ The case study presented in this paper is part of the larger Kaiako Toa study. This is an ACE funded research project which is examining the beliefs and attitudes which inform highly successful teachers in Auckland’s low decile schools.

The reader is first introduced to the contemporary New Zealand educational context. The case study is contextualised within a system which, in recent years, has been captured, in an ideological structural sense, by neo-liberal reforms. Following this, the actual research process and the parameters of the case study are discussed. After a general introduction to the research findings, four mutual key beliefs and attitudes of the teachers are discussed in greater detail. These findings are supported by, and interspersed with, theoretical insights.

A key position taken in this paper is that a combination of particular beliefs and attitudes enables each teacher to teach effectively 'across-habitus'. Putting the latter term another way, the teachers' pedagogies can be effective when teaching students who do not share their ethnic and/or social class backgrounds.

The contemporary New Zealand educational context

In the past fifteen years, like many other capitalist countries, New Zealand has been undergoing neo-liberal reform. These reforms have been wide-ranging, particularly in policy and economic areas. As a direct result of these reforms, working class and unemployed people in New Zealand have reached a level of poverty previously unknown. There have been financial cutbacks in the provision of all state services. In particular the cutbacks have been in the areas of welfare provision and health services.

The reform process has impacted on the state funded education system. A market model of education has been imposed, and competition between and within schools is now widely prevalent (Codd 1993, Gordon 1997, Lauder et al. 1999, Snook 1993).

At the same time as schools struggle to meet imposed market and financial obligations, teachers' work conditions have deteriorated (Sullivan 1994). Teachers have lost a considerable amount of professional autonomy and have been marginalised as professionals (Capper & Munro 1990, Sullivan 1997). Teachers are more controlled (managerialism), work conditions have deteriorated (proletarianisation) and state-supported public rhetoric demands that teachers be more accountable (Apple 1993, Codd 1999). The introduction of the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (Ministry

of Education 1993) with increased assessment requirements has compounded on teacher work loads.

While all New Zealand teachers have been affected by the reforms in some way, teachers in New Zealand's low SES schools have been particularly affected (Hawk & Hill 1999, Thrupp 1998). The Education Review Office, the inspectorial arm of the state, maintains publicly that teachers in low SES schools are partly, and in some cases largely, to blame for the under-achievement of students within those schools (Office 1996).

This public vilification has, in recent years, severely impacted on teacher recruitment and retention in low SES schools. Students in New Zealand's low SES schools have never achieved the success in school which their counterparts in middle and upper class schools have achieved (Bell & Carpenter 1994). In this respect, the situation in New Zealand mirrors similar research findings from overseas (see for instance Bowles & Gintis 1976, Halsey et al. 1997, Henry et al. 1988). While we are concerned about poor student achievement within low SES schools, it is not our intention to enlarge on existing deficit or structural explanations for the failure of particular groups of children. Undoubtedly the context for teaching is more 'difficult' in low SES schools - in the geographic areas surrounding these schools unemployment is rife, housing can be over-crowded, and there are poor health statistics.

Notwithstanding this context, our belief is that teachers can always make a difference. Regarding 'ability', our contention, like that of Lauder & Hughes (1990) is that in low SES areas the student range of 'abilities' covers the same range as that of high SES areas.

Students and habitus

The majority of students in New Zealand's low SES schools are of Maori or Pasifika origin. In recent decades there have been political and public moves to encourage Pacific Island and Maori people to train as teachers. While Maori and Pasifika teachers have increased in number, they are still too few. We have concerns regarding this issue as we believe that all school students have an unquestionable right, at

regular stages of their education, to work with teachers who share their own ethnicity, culture and habitus, and who can be role-models.

The theories of Bourdieu (1977, see also Harker 1990) and Freire (1972) have partially informed the development of initiatives which politicise for a match of habitus between student and teacher. New Zealand examples are Maori initiatives which include Te Kohanga Reo (language nests for early childhood) (Tangaere 1996) and Kura Kaupapa Maori (primary and secondary schools in which children are immersed in Maori language, knowledge and customs) (Jenkins & Ka'ai 1994, Smith 1997, Smith 1992). Limited research is available regarding the effectiveness or otherwise of these programmes. Many Maori initiatives are undoubtedly taking children to their academic potential.

Another recent example of habitus match, which also uses Bourdieu and Freire in its analysis, is the case study research which was undertaken in Takiwa School. In Takiwa, during the mid 1990s, an 'alternative' school emerged within a state school (Carpenter 2000). Known as the 'Kiwi' unit, the unit is informed by Playcentre philosophy and attracts mainly Pakeha children of an alternative section of a rural community. The teachers share the background and values, or the habitus, of the children taught in the unit.

An integral factor in the success of all of these systems, whether Maori or 'alternative', is that the teachers mirror the language, values, dispositions and protocols of the children - there is, as a consequence, a match of habitus. Albeit a model which many aspire to emulate, Kura Kaupapa Maori attract only 10% of the Maori student population, and the Kiwi initiative in Takiwa School is a designer initiative which has not been replicated. Most Maori and 'alternative' children attend mainstream state schools. They, like the children of Pasifika descent, are statistically more likely to be taught in a low SES school by a teacher from another culture and another social class. By default, most of these teachers are Pakeha and most are middle class.

A match of student-teacher habitus can have positive effects on school achievement, as Kura Kaupapa Maori, the Kiwi initiative in Takiwa School, and mainstream schooling for Pakeha middle-class children each demonstrate. The position taken in this paper however is that it is possible to teach effectively across-habitus and across socio-economic groups. Positive effects in school achievement can also be achieved by teachers who do not share a similar habitus to the students.

We believe that what teachers actually do, how teachers behave and how teachers teach, impacts on educational success for all children. Attitudes and beliefs underpin all teacher actions; hence our desire to seek these out.

This case study and the selected teachers.

Selecting the three teachers

The selection of the teachers was by their professional peers. The three teachers were first nominated, confidentially, by academics (lecturers and school advisers) employed by Auckland College of Education (ACE). When the teacher's principal agreed that the nominated person was a highly successful teacher within her/his school, then a formal invitation was extended to the teacher to be involved in the project.

The three selected teachers are all Pakeha/Palagi women. Their pseudonyms are Catherine, Eve and Bev. Eve and Bev are aged between 45 and 55 and have been teaching for approximately 20 years. Catherine has been teaching for three years. Eve and Bev teach 5 - 6 year olds, and Catherine teaches 10 year olds. All work in schools where the majority of the students are of Maori or Pasifika origin. In fundamental terms, the teachers are white and middle class, and the huge majority of the students are brown and working class. Consequently the teachers, and the majority of students, work 'across habitus':

The habitus, as a system of dispositions to a certain practice, is an objective basis for regular modes of behaviour, and thus for the regularity of modes of practice, and if practices can be predicted ... this is because the effect of the

habitus is that agents who are equipped with it will behave in a certain way in certain circumstances (Bourdieu 1990: 77).

In Delpit's (1997) terms the teachers are involved in the education of 'other people's children'. There is thus a potential within the classrooms of these teachers for a 'culture of power' to operate. The codes within the classrooms, in all likelihood, reflect Pakeha 'rules' and this situation has the potential to disempower children. In the terminology of Cummins (1986), the students originate from 'dominated' societal groups, they can be 'empowered' or 'disabled' as a direct result of their interactions with educators in schools. Sullivan (1999) also addresses these issues; she describes the choices of teachers as having 'power over' children, or giving 'power to' children.

This theoretical background indicates an underlying tension which all three teachers, and others in similar situations, knowingly or unknowingly face.

Research Process

The research methods were qualitative and involved a series of fifteen semi-structured interviews, with subsequent triangulation of findings with participants. Ethics approval was gained through ACE. The nominated teachers each had an extended interview. Also interviewed were a group of people who had some knowledge of the teacher's practice. One of the group was the school principal. The other three were nominated by the teacher and comprised: a teaching colleague, a Board of Trustees (BOT) member and a person from the community who had at least one child enrolled in the school. All names, including school names, were given pseudonyms. These three groups, each centring on a highly successful teacher, form the basis of the case study.

Key attributes

Four sets of common beliefs and attitudes emerged from the interview data. These are, in summary: a belief in children taking responsibility for their own learning, a personal and public passion for learning, a belief in the importance of establishing a

strong sense of connectedness with children and their worlds, and dispositions which enable effective 'across habitus' teaching.

The following sections clarify and expand on each of the four sets. Interspersed with empirical findings from the interviews are theoretical and research based insights.

1) Highly successful teachers have a strong belief in children taking responsibility for their own learning

The beliefs of the teachers are underpinned by a valuing of the importance of empowerment for children. They consciously plan for children to have power over their own learning. Integral to this is a belief that children should be self-managers, and that children should see themselves as 'successful' both in and beyond the school context. The ability of teachers to 'empower', or to 'facilitate motivation in student learning' (Sullivan & King 1998:27) has been the focus of much recent literature (see for instance Banks 1996, Corson 1998, Cummins 1986, Freire 1972, Scheurich 1998, Sullivan & King 1998, Sullivan 1999).

One way of enabling student empowerment is to teach social skills so that children can enjoy co-operative activities, take turns at being leaders, and be a participant in decision making (Sullivan & King 1998). Catherine talks about allowing the children to have control and choice whereby they can opt into learning experiences. She says that this *acknowledges that different people are good at different things and we can all learn from each other.*

The teachers believe that it is necessary to engage children in a variety of activities, and for children to have fun while learning. Risk taking, variety and fun are seen as components which can encourage children to become self-managers. In a sense, a safe routined environment within classrooms allows risk taking on the part of learners. Risk taking, in turn, can lead to independence. Bev states *it's okay to take risks ... they've got to be able to take risks because if they don't they'll just stay the same.* This endorses Haberman's (1995:780) view that learning cannot take place 'in a classroom where mistakes are not allowed'.

Consistency, praise and setting high standards are seen as integral aspects of empowering children to be self-managers. Eve says that she uses praise and tells the children when they have done really well, but she also tells them that they can do more: *if you create in the children that, yes, you are pleased with them and make them believe that they can do more, they will do more.* As Catherine notes *I really try to push them on.* This commitment to extending learners is reinforced by Eve:

If you keep telling them they're fantastic and give them beautiful stickers, they're not going to do that little bit extra for you tomorrow ... you've got to keep raising those standards and keep pushing for them (Eve).

All of the teachers passionately believe that their students can succeed at school, and they have high aspirations for their students beyond school. As Bev's principal so aptly put it *I imagine she has got a belief that children have a right no matter where they are to invest in the best education they can possibly get.* In answer to a question regarding whether she thought there were some children who could not be taught, Bev answered *No! Absolutely not. I would be offended (at such a thought).* Bev says that in her experience all children blossom: *You never give up ... if you set the right conditions for them they will learn.* In his description of the HiPass model of schooling, Scheurich states that the successful educators are:

... simply unwilling to accept the widespread negative assumptions about the children in their schools, and they were unwilling to accept any other course of action than one that would lead to the highest levels of academic success. They knew that their children were just as capable as any other children - they just had to create a school that would prove this (Scheurich 1998:454).

Ladson-Billings (1994) endorses this sentiment as she describes the attributes of American teachers who, like our three teachers, teach those of a different culture. Ladson-Billings' teachers practise 'culturally relevant methods'. She says that these teachers can be identified by:

... the way they see themselves and others ... They believe that all of their children can succeed rather than that failure is inevitable for some ... Rather than expecting students to demonstrate prior knowledge and skills they help students develop that knowledge by building bridges and scaffolding for learning (Ladson-Billings 1994:25).

In order for children to succeed, the teachers believe that the children need to have both someone who believes in them and a safe non-judgmental, non-competitive environment. Scheurich (1998:455) describes successful schools/classrooms as those which focus on community more than competitive individualism. Bev and Catherine discuss classroom environments in the following quotations:

I just think that children have to feel really comfortable with what you expect of them and not feel threatened ... you just start from where they're at, no matter where they're at, with making no judgments whatsoever, and they will learn (Bev).

I'm not really into competitiveness although that's part of the essential skills these days ... I think competitiveness, I use it more in terms of 'can I better myself?' I'm competing with myself more ... I think that type of competitiveness is good, it's pushing yourself (Catherine).

Bev, Eve and Catherine demonstrate that they are fiercely committed to enacting, rather than merely articulating, the achievement of high levels of success with all their children. Scheurich (1998:461) discovered similar traits in his case study of successful schools.

Eve's principal says Eve is dedicated to the school, she *works 100% all the time. She's go, go, go.* Eve's colleague notes she *fights tooth and nail for the best for her class.* The BOT member endorses the previous statements: *she has a passion for teaching, more than a need to survive.*

In expressing their beliefs about learning Catherine, Eve and Bev have developed what Duffy (1999) terms 'a sense of alignment'. According to Duffy, this is where

teachers' personal beliefs and values come into line with their professional desires for the children they teach.

In brief, the beliefs and attitudes of these teachers are underpinned by a commitment to the empowerment of learners. They each articulate strong beliefs regarding high expectations of children, and the enabling of children to self manage or take control of their own learning. The latter is perhaps predicated on the fact that the teachers each, in their own right, are passionate about themselves as learners.

2) Highly successful teachers have a personal and public passion for learning

Haberman (1995) places strong emphasis on the importance of 'star' teachers being seen as learners by their students. The three teachers each endorse various aspects of Haberman's contentions:

Stars interest their children in learning by modeling their own interest in learning. At various and numerous times, stars read books, write stories, compose pictures, build things, conduct experiments, and engage in the full range of learning behaviours in the presence of their students. Their children see their teacher as a lifelong student of subjects and pursuits; an individual with enthusiasm and passion for learning things in great depth ... It takes a teacher who is him or herself a learner to develop learners (Haberman 1995: 33-34).

The three teachers all have a passion for learning. This passion is personal in that it encompasses professional learning (as in aspects of staff development), but it is not exclusive to professional learning. It is public because these teachers are able to communicate their passion for learning and the gaining of new knowledge to their pupils and their colleagues. These teachers often initiate and/or support professional development within their schools.

Learning associated with formal teacher professional development plays an important and ongoing part in the competence demonstrated by these teachers. The most

beneficial professional development they describe is when it is experienced alongside other teachers. This encompasses the benefits of group learning, talking to learn, having time to reflect, having fun while learning, and building on what is already known (Butler 1992).

The chairperson of the BOT in Eve's school says of her: *(Eve) has the ability to learn, so that the cycle is continuous.* Eve speaks in particular of the impact which attending a Teaching English as a second or other Language (TESOL) course had on her teaching, and of how she persuaded four people from her school to enrol in the same course:

To help all this I decided about five years ago to do a Diploma in TESOL ... just to give me a wider insight into helping these children with their second language, and it was brilliant. So I think that was why I was so supportive of (another teacher within her school also doing the course) because I really understood that this was the way, or I believe it's the way, we've got to go to give these children a fair opportunity.

... I think it (the TESOL course) definitely improved my teaching ability with the second year ... and (taught me) not to take so much for granted and to break things down into much smaller steps.

Well I think my learning style is really important, to look at the learning style. A lot of these Polynesian children are kinaesthetic learners, they are not a 'sit-there, listen and write' (kind of learner). They learn best by doing I came out with lots of 'hands-on' ways the children can do these activities and I like - in the junior classes - a more developmental type of programme (Eve).

Catherine shares Eve's passion for learning. She speaks of how she was aware of her inadequacies when she was a beginning teacher and how she learned with the support of other teachers. She describes how she became the Information Technology co-ordinator within her school:

... I've been thrust into the role of IT co-ordinator for the school so I'm 'technology girl'. I think I got thrust into that because I could format a disk or something really simple like that, so now we have a network of 25 computers

and a server and all this sort of technical stuff that I'm responsible for. I've had to learn so much about that, you're learning all the time.

So it is up to me to make sure that I learn from what other people are showing me and telling me ... as a school we are very supportive of each other in different strengths. 'I know about this, let me show you' (Catherine).

Catherine describes the incorporation of content from the Information Link professional development programme into her classroom programmes. As part of her self-managing reading programme with older children, groups work at different stages and activities. Some children had also been out into the community to interview; others had gone to the library and had sent off faxes requesting information.

Catherine sees learning as a challenge, and as something essential that her class sees her being involved in:

This learning curve has been so steep. I'd hate to feel that I was sitting somewhere and not learning. I expect to learn everyday and I really put myself in that position in front of the kids ... I don't mind making a fool of myself occasionally. I read too, and I often make mistakes. I usually have three or four kids with a copy of the book that I'm reading and it doesn't bother me if I make mistakes. I just re-read, and go on, and just model strategies that I expect them to use. It's just modelling being a learner I think is important. I'll say to them we're going to do this, I haven't tried it before so we'll see if it works and if not then we'll think about why not and do it again. So you're not an expert on things (Catherine).

Bev's teaching colleague says that Bev is very interested in different learning styles. Bev recalls her childhood and how her own parents encouraged literacy from a very young age. She remembers being taken to the library from when she was two years old. Her family had a tradition of sitting in the lounge on a Friday evening, each person reading a pile of books:

My father used to sit in the lounge and read, (it didn't) matter if all our friends were there or who, and he would read aloud whatever it was. That kind of

thing was a tradition in our family and I think that's where I get my learning philosophy from (Bev).

In summary, Eve, Bev and Catherine are all excited by learning and others are aware of their passion. We suggest that this attitude to learning is an integral part of what makes them highly successful teachers.

(Teachers) have got to want to learn like children have to want to learn ... learning and trialing new things interests ... me, I think in some ways I get bored sometimes with things the same way and I think, right, there must be a better way of doing this (Eve).

Eve's principal states:

(Eve's) looking for learning. They talk about the principal as the 'head learner', well she's the 'super learner'. She's very willing to share all her ideas with other people. She's a very good communicator.

As well as being passionate about learning, the ability of the three teachers to communicate, and to work cooperatively with people is very apparent within their classrooms.

3) Highly successful teachers establish a strong sense of connectedness with children and their worlds

Strong loving relationships with children are a feature of the professional lives of these teachers. We suggest that this connectedness goes beyond the established institutional spaces. Ultimately the teachers create structures that enable strong links between schools, and the children's' worlds.

The three teachers are each very loyal to their schools. Belonging to the same school for a long period is important to each of them. They believe that long term tenure is one way to get to know the community better: ...

whether you live in it or not you do become part of the community ... (the children) start to ... form a relationship with you and then they start to trust

you (Bev). This leads to .. connecting, knowing the children and their background and that's really important (Eve).

As Catherine states: I just think by knowing them better they feel cared for and if they like you and feel that you care about them, then they try and work hard for you.

The group members affirmed that the teachers consistently build and sustain a positive and powerful understanding of the children they teach. This requires caring, and loving, of the children. Scheurich describes lovingness as 'not some action or interaction ..., this lovingness is always there. It is pervasive, it inhabits everything they do or say' (Scheurich 1998:464). These teachers achieve understanding through the loving environments that they are able to create for children.

Community members, many of whom are parents of children who have been taught by the teachers, speak very positively of the teachers' relationships with their children:

(re Catherine) Being just a person out there ... she exerts love, she exerts caring, she exudes enthusiasm, she exudes that this is just her life...She believes that every child is a unique human being ...that nurturing that some of them may need, that guidance that they all need and providing them with a safe non-hostile environment ... if they're not comfortable ... they can reach out to her and say help me please (community member).

Catherine describes the atmosphere within her classroom:

They (the students) come in, they hang around inside. They talk to you and they put on some music. They're at a good age for just hanging around with. I just feel that by knowing them better they feel cared for and they like you and feel you care about them. Then they try and work hard for you (Catherine).

For Eve the responsibility of teaching sometimes seems close to the role of being a parent. She speaks of assuming the parent role in nurturing and supporting younger and needier children:

A little bit of me still wants to be a mother to these children because they need a motherly hand during the day...They need just general understanding and someone who will give them a cuddle and listen to them sort out their lunch and if they haven't got one and turn their clothes round the right way in the morning, all those motherly things come out of me, doing up their shoe laces and telling them to wash their faces. And I think I like that (Eve).

Bev's community person describes Bev's 'nurturing role':

(re Bev) There is a little boy, everyday she holds his hand and walks him down the road and waits there with him until his taxi comes. Its those little things, you don't have to go down there - he knows where to go... (community member, discussing a special need child in Bev's class).

Catherine's community member describes the 'extra distance' Catherine goes, and the impact that this has on her child:

(re Catherine) ... just little things like her maths, like Marama's got little funny home made badges which I know (Catherine has made) at home in her own time, in her own space. All those little things ... they add up to a parent as well... little personal things. Then a letter towards the end of the year to Marama, and I know that Marama is not the only student who got one of those. She (Catherine) is very special, she's a sparkle (community member).

As these teachers work with very young children, the break between home and school make the teacher's nurturing role crucial. Pere (1988:15) stresses the importance of the total development of the individual within the context of family or whanau. In this context the teachers act as caring family members who establish a whanau (family) ethos within the classroom. This lovingness is described by Scheurich (1998:464) as a source of endless energy; it enables teachers to always do more for the children.

Bev's colleague speaks of Bev's determination to establish her class learning environment. In particular, the colleague speaks highly of the way in which Bev works with the previously mentioned special needs child:

(re Bev) She doesn't give up. She's got a special need child in there...she was always ready to reach out and shift David, re-direct him until he is not invisible in class ... nobody imitated David. They sat, and she explained that David needed to learn and other children helped. She created a very much caring atmosphere so other children helped model her behaviour too. She provides, she gets the children motivated and working away (colleague).

Pere (1988:17) states '(T)he extended family is the group that supports the individual through a crisis or anything else of consequence'. Bev, by her behaviour, demonstrates a parallel support to that of David's extended family.

Catherine's community member describes the caring environment Catherine creates as something special she is able to provide, both in and out of her classroom:

(re Catherine) I just watched her at camp... I didn't mean to be watching her...but suddenly I was just spellbound by, once again, her calmness...and that little aura she's got that she doesn't know that she's got. I'll never forget it ... the place was just chaos, pre-dinner, pre-shower, you know the phase and there was Catherine in one of the main sitting rooms sitting in the back with the guitar. She knew what would happen. Within 10 minutes... suddenly she must have had 50 children all singing quietly with guitar (community member).

Catherine described the importance of being connected with her students and their families as 'huge'. She relates an experience she had with a difficult student during her first year of teaching:

He (the student) would come and say 'can I be in your class next year?' ... so I sort of made a special effort to say can I have him back because he was quite difficult for his (new) teacher. And now ... I can say 'I remember two years ago when you did such and such and I thought that was great'. We had a relationship. We knew each other (Catherine).

The teachers create particular environments within their classrooms. An example of this was provided when Eve described her husband's visits to the classroom. While it

is interesting to see that Eve's family visits her classroom (thus Eve shares parts of her personal life with her class), also interesting is the student perceptions of her palagi husband:

My husband often pops in during the day and one child said one day when he was going out, 'is that your husband Miss?' 'Yes.' 'He's palagi (white).. So they don't see me as palagi. He's the palagi. I thought it was nice, I'm one of them, they don't look at me and say you're a palagi. You're our teacher, you're one of us (Eve).

Haberman (1995) maintains that successful teachers of children in poverty create an extended family within their classrooms. These teachers create a caring world that extends beyond their classrooms. There is a sense of relatedness by others to this world. While the teachers in this study undoubtedly do this, their acceptance extends to parents and the community also:

(re Bev) Every parent would wait with me to comment on how they were so happy with the way she works with their child, that she was really caring ... She is a wonderful person. It was just the way we saw her with our child, the way our child was coming home ... she would be someone I would never forget ... I feel really connected to her in some ways just because of what she has done with my children (community member).

In summary the teachers care and they show they care. To do this it is inevitable that they share and give some of their personal selves to the students, the relationship is not one-way. Scheurich describes such classroom environments as being ones that children want to go to every day: 'they are environments within which they feel treasured, valued and loved' (Scheurich 1998: 463).

4) Highly successful teachers have dispositions which enable them to teach effectively 'across habitus'

Although Pakeha (or Palagi), and of a different ethnic background to the majority of their students, each of the teachers demonstrates a high regard and respect for the communities and cultures to which the children belong. Group interviews established

that the teachers, and their work, have considerable respect from the diverse people within their communities.

Dewey wrote 'the individual who is to be educated is a social individual ... If we eliminate the social factor from the child we are left only with an abstraction.' (Dworkin 1959:22). We contend that the social factor is especially important where the teacher and the students do not share the same cultural capital.

The interviewees said that the children's respective cultures and social environments are publicly recognised and valued by the teachers. As a tangible example of affirming cultural process Eve and the principal advocated, alongside Samoan staff, for there to be a Samoan Bilingual unit within their school. At a particular stage of the planning, the Palagi professionals chose to leave a meeting which comprised mainly Samoan people. Eve describes what happened after the meeting:

(The Samoan teacher) said after we left, the meeting really opened up, and all the parents talked a lot. But while we were in the meeting only a few parents spoke and the others were very quiet and reserved. The minute we left the meeting the discussion started.

Eve recognised that there is a place for her in supporting the Samoan community. She also recognised, having voiced her support, that the time became right to exit. By exiting, she, as a majority person with power, vested the power to those who would ultimately belong in the unit. We suggest that part of the reason why a Samoan unit was ultimately set up in the school was that professionals like Eve were sensitive to different processes, to different ways of achieving goals. The two professionals were prepared, in a very public way, to share power within the school.

Eve's parent, a speaker of English as a second language, speaks of school meetings with Eve and how Eve mixes well across cultures:

(Eve's) not the type that goes against other races ... with the kids there ... she treats them all the same. When we had a cup of tea, with the parents get together cup of tea and it's more like, we just talked away and just laugh and

joke away, they even bring up other things ... We just get on well and mix and mingle which is really good (Eve's parent, a Cook Island woman).

Eve's BOT member, who himself comes from an ethnic minority group, is emphatic that the cultural background of the teacher or a cultural match with the students does not matter as long as education and learning is happening.

The issue of working 'across habitus' appears to be unproblematic for all of the three teachers. The teachers share a common attitude regarding the importance of valuing the sociocultural values of their children. Catherine states that she did not think teachers needed to be of the same culture as their children, *as long as you are really aware of the kid's culture and give things a go outside your own culture, then kids see that as an acceptance. ... They are just very responsive to things that relate to their own culture.* However she is adamant that implementation of children's culture into the school is a *'planned process ... we're very conscious of it. It doesn't happen by accident.*

The teachers' schools are not populated by just one cultural/ethnic group. Any emphasis on one particular culture has the potential to alienate upwards to twenty others. The danger is that Pakeha culture, the culture of the teacher and the education system subsumes all others:

... (providing) schooling for everyone's children that reflects liberal, middle-class values and aspirations is to ensure the maintenance of the status quo, to ensure that power, the culture of power, remains in the hands of those who already have it. Some children come to school with more accoutrements of the culture of power already in place - 'cultural capital' -, as some critical theorists refer to it - some with less (Delpit 1997:585).

Scheurich (1998) maintains that schools/classrooms do not need to be self-consciously or explicitly culturocentric. It is enough, generally, to highly value the racial culture

and first language of each child, and to believe that all children can achieve at the highest academic levels.

We believe that the ability to work in an overtly non-racist, culturally affirming way is an essential trait for highly successful pedagogy in low SES schools. This requires a deep understanding of the 'other', and also a recognition that we each are the 'other' in various contexts:

If we really have to be black, gay and have been poor or give up all our wealth in order to really know how blacks, gays and the poor experience the world, or at least to teach them adequately, then effective teaching of virtually anybody, anywhere, is rendered very, very difficult... A better alternative is ... to carry one's own sociocultural and intellectual baggage (as one must) and at the same time to attempt as far as possible to understand what it means to be the other when coming to the educational exchange (Harris 1994: 104-105).

We contend that more than understanding of the 'other' is necessary. The school domain is one of the few places in public life where students can learn the language of the powerful wider community. Teachers can provide a window to this power base. Endorsing Delpit's (1997) assertions, we suggest that the role of the teacher in this learning process is significant. Students need to be taught particular codes to participate fully and successfully in mainstream life. Codes are rules:

The rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power... If you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier (Delpit 1997:583).

The teacher's expert knowledge is important in this process. Thus, for the students of these teachers, being taught appropriate manners to utilise when with Pakeha people is a useful code to know. Other useful codes are how to interact in the classroom, how to approach the teacher, and how to ask questions in a suitable manner. Customs

surrounding food preparation and eating, correct pronunciation, and the acceptable use of slang/colloquialisms are also useful knowledge to have. However, the way these codes are taught is important - they are not a better way of living or being, they are simply a different way. Knowing that different way will be useful in particular circumstances.

By teaching codes, the teachers can enable a shift from what Wood (1992) describes as an external locus to an internal locus of control - in effect, a shift to knowing about a different set of rules, rules where students take responsibility for their own learning. The teacher's beliefs and philosophical approaches are integral in this process.

Discussion and Conclusion

Some of the beliefs and attitudes which make a teacher's work successful in a low SES school are identified above. While generalisations should not be made from three groups of interviews which involve fifteen people, we suggest that this case study gives an indication of what is required for highly successful practice in New Zealand's low SES schools. We suggest that a combination of beliefs and attitudes is necessary, it is the package which brings success, not just one component.

These highly successful teachers, Bev, Catherine and Eve, each see their role as being the empowerer of children's learning, rather than the holder and giver of knowledge (Freire 1972). They all believe that children should be encouraged to be independent risk takers as far as their own learning is concerned; they believe that mistakes which are made in a safe, positive environment lead to learning. The teachers are consequently able to tap into the interests and emotions of children that give children voice, and they are able to provide the momentum for learning itself. The teachers all emphasise the importance of structure and routine within their classrooms, and place considerable importance on having high expectations of, and aspirations for, all students.

Catherine, Bev and Eve are lifelong learners. Learning excites them and they are able to communicate this passion to their students and colleagues. Formal Professional

Development is integral to this learning; their involvement in the continual upgrading of their professional expertise is essential to their success. The teachers model learning, and a belief in the power of learning is central to how they describe themselves and their practice. Theory continually informs this practice. In our view the teachers' conscious process of renewed learning helps bring them closer to understanding how their own pupils' learning experiences are constructed.

The teachers have a strong sense of connectedness with the students and their families. This loving attitude towards others is sensed by the children and their communities, and a strong sense of trust is established.

Simultaneously, these educators attempt to understand the cultural and social forms through which their students define themselves. The school domain is recognised by them as a site of political and social formation in which they play a crucial role. The teachers have a well articulated framework for understanding the class, cultural and learning dimensions which inform classroom life. The teachers work very effectively 'across-habitus', and the students respond by achieving in a similar context.

We suggest that the particular skills required to teach successfully in a low SES school mean that much more is asked and expected of these teachers. These demands are on the spaces teachers create, the relationships they enter into, and the power they choose to share. We know from our work in education that there are many highly successful teachers working in SES 1-3 schools. It is possible to teach effectively across-habitus and across socio-economic groups - these three teachers, and others, demonstrate this daily. The school day with these teachers is significant in the lives of the children encompassed by this case study. This is mainly attributable to the combination of beliefs and attitudes which inform the teachers' practice.

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