Catering for the learning needs of gifted and talented students in a New Zealand context.

A qualitative research project conducted by Adrian Smith
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Background

Providing for the individual needs of all our students and giving them the capabilities to be the best they can be seems to be mirrored in every school mission statement in the country.

The implementation of gifted and talented programmes in New Zealand ranges from innovative to non-existent. New Zealand students have had outstanding success at the International level in programmes like “Future Problem Solving” and the “Science Olympiads” confirming that there are pockets of best practice occurring within the country. A number of schools run effective gifted and talented programmes with some of them employing specialist teachers. New Zealand teachers have a reputation for providing a degree of differentiation within their programmes. Unfortunately though, there is a lack of consistency in practice nationwide with some schools struggling to provide for the learning needs of their gifted students within the resources and pedagogical knowledge available to them. Professional development resourcing has decreased as the emphasis on numeracy and literacy has increased.

Where schools run gifted and talented programmes, it is not unusual for Māori and Pasifika students to be proportionally under represented when research shows clearly an equal distribution of giftedness throughout cultures and socioeconomic groups. Although the concept of cultural giftedness has been written about in an academic context by a few notable researchers very little has been done to cater for students of Māori and Pasifika origin in a context appropriate to their own values and understandings of giftedness.

There is a developing global concept linking the need of those that are born with gifts and talents with a responsibility to use these for the benefit of humanity and not solely for the betterment of self. This concept ‘fits’ seamlessly with what one element of the New Zealand research which clearly shows Māori see giftedness in an individual as something that must be developed for tangatawhenua.

With so much emphasis placed on minimising the tail of underachievement where Māori and Pasifika are over represented, many have forgotten our responsibility as educators to give all our students, including the gifted the possibility of being the best they can be. By providing culturally differentiated gifted and talented programmes we give opportunities for Māori and Pasifika to become successful not only for themselves but also ‘on behalf’ of their whanau and culture. This will result in more accomplished Māori and Pasifika leaders, which in turn will improve the outcomes of the rest of their cultures.
My research topic has been driven by two aspects of underperformance in New Zealand primary education, both of which I am very interested in. The key questions forming a base for the research are:

1. What models of gifted and talented programmes within primary school programmes, nationally and internationally are proving effective in supporting gifted and talented students and which of these or parts of these need to be shared as examples as workable within the NZ context?

2. How is cultural diversity factored into the effective and equitable implementation of programmes and how can this information be used to customise and promote gifted and talented programmes that cater for Māori and Pasifika students?

I am very aware that most will find the second focus area more contemporary and meaningful. For some, mainstream gifted and talented education is seen as ‘old hat’. I was aware when planning the work that during the research I would be exposed to new methodology and ideas related to mainstream gifted programmes. As such I thought it important where appropriate to share these ideas and concepts with educators in practical terms.

The outcomes of this research will hopefully provide practical guidance in the implementation of equitable and effective gifted and talented programmes for New Zealand primary schools, potentially improving learning outcomes for students.
The Study

Because of the two very distinctly different elements of the research I was very aware that the locations in which the research took place should have a direct relevance to each of these elements. I was also realistically restricted to English speaking environments because of my lack of other languages.

During the early stages of planning the research it became apparent that making connections with overseas schools and educationalists located through internet searches was largely a one way process. Nearly every time an exploratory email was sent by me, it was met with a deathly silence. I quickly realised that by and large, the only way I was to gain an opening was through trustworthy introductions. My search process changed at this stage and instead of trying to contact organisations and schools directly, I did so through my own New Zealand connections. The net was spread wide and as well as including significant names in gifted and talented education in NZ, they also included principal colleagues and family members who had worked in the countries I was interested in visiting. What I did find through this process was that indigenous communities are tight ones and although the connection I was working through may be working in another field, they were more than accommodating in connecting me electronically to those I needed to know.

Another understanding I developed through this process was the importance other pacific indigenous groups see in the work happening in Aotearoa in the improvement of outcomes for Māori. We are seen as a leader in many indigenous areas, including education. Being Māori and doing what I was doing provided almost instant ‘cousin’ status, minimising the time needed to develop trust and openness. This was certainly the case when working with the Hawaiians and First Nations in Vancouver.

My greatest concern before leaving New Zealand was that I would find nothing of real significance! I was aware, largely because of previous travels, that in New Zealand we often are on the cutting edge when it comes to identifying, implementing and promoting best practise educational priorities. Although I was aware of significant work being done for mainstream gifted students overseas I felt that my concerns may be particularly relevant when I was focusing on the culturally differentiated gifted and talented aspect of the research. Early in my travels I realised that the concept of school based culturally differentiated gifted programmes was largely a new concept within the cultures I was visiting. As a consequence, I had to change both my expectations and focus. Instead of solely identifying and analysing culturally differentiated gifted programmes, I became focused also on understanding indigenous concepts of giftedness and the process of culturally differentiating curriculum for all. Although this seems like a significant shift it was a necessary one with the results of the research still having practical relevance to the New Zealand context and the specifics of my research topic.
My research took place in a number of ways. It included participation in two conferences: an indigenous educators’ conference in Hawaii (The Power of the Indigenous: native Success in Education and in Life) and the World Gifted and Talented conference in Kentucky, USA. I spent time observing and interacting in schools in Hawaii within the United States, and British Columbia and Nunavut in Canada. In addition to this I had the opportunities to interview key people who have made some major practical changes in practise in Hawaii, Nunavut and New Zealand. During these interviews I focused on a set of key questions linked to the research area I was looking at. In addition to this I asked supplementary questions where further explanation was required to truly understand motivation, processes and outcomes of the programmes being discussed. In Vancouver and Nunavut I was given the opportunity to interview people who represented culture more than specifically education. From these I gained a better understanding of the place of culture in more than an education context, and importantly the story of their cultures, in relation to country and education to this point. My stay in China was based at ‘WAB’, The Western Academy of Beijing. During my time there as well as presenting my research findings to date I was given the opportunity to interview people who had responsibility for curriculum for gifted students and knew both the Chinese and international parents concepts of giftedness and what they wanted for their children.

The conclusions I draw and the recommendations I make later in this report are largely opinions and thoughts drawn from more than one place or person and are a consequence of reflective thought using many sources as their base. In saying this, some truly inspirational people I have been exposed to as a consequence to this research have had more of an impact on my thinking than others.
Literature Review

Part one – Effective models of gifted and talented programmes.

The most pertinent research report I have read relating to this topic was written and published for the Ministry of Education by Riley and Moltzen (2010). The purpose of the research was to consider how well the objectives of each gifted and talented initiative from a range of participating schools had been achieved, how the initiative contributed to improved outcomes for gifted and talented learners or their teachers, and how planning to continue to meet the learners’ needs after 2008 had been considered. It begins by outlining the results of recent research in New Zealand, and then contextualises this within the broader international field of gifted and talented education. The report is an excellent summary of the determinants of success for gifted and talented programmes. It also clarifies the variables that may affect the success of these programmes and ultimately the possibility it has to fulfil individual students’ full potential. Importantly the research was commissioned as a way to provide a critical, research-driven analysis of the appropriateness or effectiveness of programmes within the cultural, social, and educational climate of this country.

Of real practical value for educators in this piece of work in my mind are the indicators used to both evaluate and form a practical base on which new programmes can be based on.

The indicators of quality in provisions for gifted and talented students have been outlined by Maker (1993) as follows:

- **Appropriate**: differentiated provisions match to individual differences in gifted and talented students.
- **Articulated**: long-term, monitored, and comprehensive planning.
- **Clear**: clarity of all interrelated elements of the programme which is regularly and openly communicated and shared with stakeholders.
- **Consistent**: reflects philosophy of programme context (e.g. school) and demonstrates interrelationships amongst programme components.
- **Comprehensive**: utilises a continuum of approaches which will meet cognitive, affective, physical, social, emotional, and cultural needs.
- **Responsive**: flexibility of programme based upon ongoing evaluation.
- **Unique**: driven by uniqueness of individual gifted and talented students and fitted to his or her needs.
- **Valid**: based upon theory and research-driven models, strategies, and so on, and continually evaluated for effectiveness.
Riley et al. (2004) also highlighted an important quality indicator as the cultural appropriateness and relevance of all aspects of gifted and talented programmes. Other important indicators, particularly for determining the quality of the TDIs, are outlined in the core principles advocated by the Ministry of Education (2002). These principles align well with Maker’s (1993) quality indicators, but also highlight other indicators to consider, namely the need for inclusive and bicultural provisions for New Zealand’s gifted and talented students. Pulling together the quality indicators alongside the core principles results in the following set of benchmarks for evaluating the effectiveness of gifted and talented programmes in New Zealand:

- **Appropriate, Unique, and Consistent**: Schools should aim to provide all learners with an education matched to their individual learning needs.
- **Inclusive**: Gifted and talented learners are found in every group within society.
- **Bicultural**: Māori perspectives and values must be embodied in all aspects of the education of gifted learners.
- **Articulated, Comprehensive, and Responsive**: The school environment is a powerful catalyst for the demonstration and development of talent.
- **Inclusive, Clear, and Unique**: Parents, caregivers, and whanau should be given opportunities to be involved in decision-making regarding their children’s education.
- **Valid**: Programmes for gifted and talented students should be based upon sound practice, taking into account research and literature in the field.
- **Appropriate and Comprehensive**: Gifted and talented students should be offered a curriculum rich in-depth and breadth, and at a pace commensurate with their abilities.
- **Unique, Comprehensive, and Appropriate**: Schools should aim to meet the specific social and emotional needs of gifted and talented learners.
- **Appropriate and Valid**: Provision for gifted and talented students should be supported by ongoing high-quality teacher education.

These quality indicators of effective programmes tend to be general and academic in nature. Although designed to measure the effectiveness of programmes they could equally be used as a base to design programmes from. There is an implicit directive that self-managing schools develop practical programmes linked to their own contexts, needs and resourcing. The practical support to do this in New Zealand schools, through the process of professional development has been limited, and largely driven by individual educators having an interest in this field of education. There is a link to this and the inconsistency of availability and quality of programmes available to students nationwide.
Creative aspects of giftedness.

Although in these indicators there is reference to programmes that are appropriate to the school and its students I feel the need to add to the list in specific terms, the concept of creativity as a form of giftedness, and the need to include the concept in any quality indicator of effective programmes. The concept of a creative curriculum is developing momentum in recent years. Sir Ken Robinson (2013) defines creativity as ‘Having ideas that have value’. There is a clear alignment between this and the understanding that within our changing world economies using creativity as a base utilise its people’s best resource. The ‘products’ that these students will potentially create could be far more valuable than that of our farmers and forests. Since there are obvious links between a creative curriculum and that of an economy capitalising on creative thinking, there is an increasing amount of talk about both the need to identify our creative thinkers and teach a creative curriculum. Sir Ken Robinson (2006) makes a very strong case for this concept in his published material and on Ted Talks online. He makes the point that children are educated not into creativity, but rather out of it through an education system that does not promote risk taking, and where the creative subjects are given the same credibility as ‘the most useful subjects for work’. He talks about the need to radically reassess our collective view of intelligence to tie in with where the world is going. Ken Robinson instead defines intelligence as diverse, dynamic and distinct. Joseph Renzulli (2013), whose presentation I was lucky enough to attend during the World Gifted and Talented conference in Kentucky, describes the concept of creatively gifted programme as “where a premium is placed on the development of original material and products that are purposefully designed to have an impact on one or more target audiences.” He describes the curriculum as “Learning situations that are designed to promote creative-productive giftedness that emphasize the use and application of information (content) and thinking processes in an integrated, inductive, and real-problem-oriented manner.” He goes on to describe that within a creative curriculum, how the student’s role changes from a learner of process and content to a first-hand inquirer and how this is different to that of lesson-learning giftedness that tends to emphasise deductive learning; structured training in the development of thinking processes; and the acquisition, storage, and retrieval of information.

Sally Reis (2013), when talking about the link between those children classified as gifted and those who are creative thinkers makes it very clear that the two are not always the same. Although the definition of giftedness changes within the education sector, there is an agreed understanding that it is composed of between 5% and 10% of the population of all students. Sally Reis makes it clear that there is no greater degree of creativity in the top 5% than there is in the top 20% of students. This has serious implications in the design of curriculum and the composition of gifted programmes. The consequence of this is that creative productive work needs to be available to a wide band of students.
There is a developing understanding of the links between creativity and giftedness that needs to be understood by educators.
Part two – Culturally differentiation of gifted and talented programmes.

Introduction - The New Zealand situation

NZ Research

Although one of the Government’s core principles of gifted education in Aotearoa/New Zealand is that, "Māori perspectives and values must be embodied in all aspects of definition, identification and provision for gifted and talented learners." (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 3) research (Riley, Bevan-Brown, Bicknell, Carroll-Lind & Kearney, 2004) shows clearly that this is not happening in many NZ schools.

Bevan-Brown (2005) argues that this is not because New Zealand educators are opposed to embodying Māori perspectives and values in gifted education. Instead she states that it is because they are unsure how to practically provide for these students in their schools. Bevan Brown writes about cultural differentiated gifted programmes through ‘five lenses’:

- In what areas is giftedness recognized?
- How is each area of giftedness perceived and demonstrated?
- What priority is given to each area of giftedness?
- What are culturally appropriate and effective ways of identifying gifted students?
- How can gifted students be provided for in a culturally appropriate way?

These form the essence of this part of the research.

Jill Bevan- Brown’s research has led us to an understanding that giftedness within the Māori cultural context can be defined in a number of ways. The first and probably the most obvious to many, is ‘cultural giftedness’. Students who are considered exceptional in Māori arts, crafts, music, historic and cultural knowledge and traditions, whakapapa and te reo fall under this description. Examples would be such people as Cliff Whiting (Carver), Tuini Ngawai (waiata composer) and Patricia Grace (author).

The second and less obvious aspect of cultural giftedness has been defined as exceptionality in culturally valued qualities. Qualities that have been identified so far include awhinatanga and whakaritenga mahi (helping and serving others), maia (courage and bravery), manaakitanga (hospitality), wairuatanga (spirituality), whanaungatanga (familiness), aroha-ki-te-tangata and tutohutanga (love for, caring and sensitivity to others), pukumahi and pukeke (industriousness and determination) (Bevan- Brown, 1993; Jenkins, 2002)
Beven-Brown (2005, p.151), states ‘For Māori, providing for students who are gifted in culturally valued quantities is just as important as providing for students who have exceptional skills and abilities’.

When defining the concept of creativity in a Māori context she clarifies that creativity for a Māori student may be very different to that of other cultures and the relevance will be dependent on culture, economic status and life circumstances.

A major difference between Māori and non-Māori giftedness arises in the concept of ownership and responsibility. In a European context there is an almost unwritten assumption that a gift or talent belongs to the person who possesses it. Beven-Brown's research demonstrates that Māori see this very differently, and there is a belief that:

1. Giftedness can occur either in an individual or a group. In the case of group giftedness, it is the work they do together that produces the outstanding performance. The word kotahitanga describes a group acting in unity and this needs to be nurtured in an educational context.

2. Māori can have a group ownership of giftedness. The ownership can belong to the whanau, with a belief that gifts are passed down through the generations and are often restricted to cultural skills such as performance. The other form happens when an individual is chosen as suitable as a representative of whanau and the giftedness is promoted through the hard work and support of the family. Sir Apirana Ngata of Ngāti Porou is an example of this. My discussions with Marcus Akuhata Brown who is himself a gifted individual from the same area on this subject, make it clear that there is slightly more to the identification processes. Macus talks of komatua and kuia identifying the future ‘path’ of young children, setting expectation and supporting the process of growth and success.

3. Because Māori see giftedness as something that is cooperatively owned there is an expectation that they provide ‘service’ for their people and help where they can. This ties in seamlessly with the Joseph Renzulli’s concept that all gifted students have a social responsibility to use their skills for the good of all.

There has been some excellent research done in New Zealand on the links between culturally responsive environment for Māori and successful achievement outcomes. The literature, mainly focusing on mainstream Māori can easily be referenced against the learning needs of gifted Māori. Principally the research shows where a learner’s culture is seen to be valued, self-esteem is advanced and students develop a sense of empowerment and become productive members of
their classrooms. The four essential ingredients Bevan-Brown (2005, p.153), refers to as the essential ingredients of a culturally responsive environment are;

1. ‘Teachers who value and support cultural diversity in general and Māori culture in particular’.
2. ‘Programs that incorporate cultural content including cultural knowledge, skills, practices, experiences, customs and traditions’.
3. ‘Programs that incorporate cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and dispositions should be incorporated’.
4. ‘Teaching and assessment that utilises culturally preferred ways of learning’.

The identification of giftedness within Māori seems more complex than in mainstream giftedness. Bevan-Brown (2005) maintains that when a culturally responsive environment is in place, the gifted students will rise to the top. The literature makes it clear that most schools struggle to identify their gifted and talented Māori learners. In research focusing on identification of gifted Māori, Scobie-Jennings (2012) concluded that the identification of Māori students who are gifted and talented was an area that the majority of sample schools lacked confidence in. The research also indicated that although some schools have definitions and identification practices which are culturally responsive, their practices are not resulting in the formal identification of the numbers of gifted and talented Māori students that are suggested by the literature.

Scobie–Jennings (2012) also indicates that culturally responsive environments are the most appropriate way of generating effective identification practices, but in order to create these, teachers need to have the knowledge and expertise required. In her conclusions Scobie-Jennings (2012, p. 84), states ‘The most common barrier or challenge was related to the lack of teacher expertise and knowledge about Māori conceptions of giftedness and talent.’ This finding is consistent with the findings reported in the literature (Education Review Office, 2008; Riley et al., 2004).
Research Setting, Findings and Analysis

Hawaii

My timing of the Hawaiian leg of the research could not have been better. The day after arriving I took part in ‘The Power of the Indigenous: Native Success in Education and Life’ conference in Honolulu. There were representatives and speakers from a range of indigenous communities from around the pacific including New Zealand and mainland USA. The conference was followed up with visits to two charter schools in the Honolulu area. The core driver of the conference, and the person with her finger of indigenous education in the Hawaiian Islands was respected educator Dr Ku Kahakalau. I was lucky enough to spend time with her over those two days.

The speakers rarely touched on the concept of giftedness and instead spoke from the context of educators of successful indigenous students. The common messages were;

- The need to embed indigenous values into education systems.
- The importance of ‘relationship’ when dealing with needs of indigenous students.
- The value of authentic action research in a social context with students.
- New curriculum must be congruent with culture.
- The importance of indigenous students knowing self as a precursor to success.
- Students need to develop a positive concept of self as learners.
- The need to promote leadership through academic rigour, using language and culture in the process.
- Encourage critical thinking through the use of language.
- Develop culturally responsive teachers.
- The importance of ‘place’ in the curriculum for indigenous students (Place based education which includes values, history, conflict and resolution related to place)
- Honour indigenous knowledge.
- Current education systems lack a curriculum that engages students with many failing.

Much of this rings a resonance when identifying the needs of mainstream Māori and Polynesian students in a New Zealand educational context. I would argue that it is especially relevant when contemplating teaching and learning processes for culturally differentiated gifted programmes.

As part of the conference I had the opportunity of observing two charter schools in action over a day and both were at secondary level. Leaders in the charter school movement in Hawaii are very clear in their reasoning for establishing these alternative schools. The American curriculum provides little opportunity for educationalists to link teaching and learning to the different content and process needs of indigenous students. Teaching and assessment methods are linked to a
constrictive curriculum that lacks relevance for the needs of these students. As a consequence, in mainstream schools there are disproportionate numbers of indigenous students who drop out, without fulfilling their capabilities. The charter school system allows far more flexibility in linking curriculum to culture and need as there is an exemption from teaching set US curriculum. Unfortunately these schools have to ‘play the system’ to gain formal qualifications for their students by being creative in their approach to assessment and in the submission of the results into the mainstream qualification system. Charter schools in the USA receive significantly less resourcing per pupil than those working within the normal public system and are expected to be responsible for the provision, maintenance and staffing of their schools.

At Halau Ku Mana Public Charter School we were officially welcomed by an amazingly confident, articulate and engaged group of students. They were able to clearly define the benefits of being taught within a school where Hawaiian culture and values were the key drivers of its structure, culture and curriculum. They demonstrated this through their involvement in and respect for cultural practise, their understanding of curriculum content and the importance of this to them as native Hawaiians. A large part of the curriculum could be classified as culturally authentic. This included involvement in language, performance arts, gardening, sailing and celestial navigation.

When I asked what opportunities the school gave to those students who were seen as gifted, it was obvious that within this schools context they see this need being fulfilled by those more able students naturally rising to top and then having the opportunity of showing leadership to others.
When I visited the second school, Halau Lokahi Charter School they were involved in a cultural performance arts display at the Lay Day (May Day) in Honolulu. These students too were strong in their cultural connection.

On the big island of Hawaii I found two examples of homogeneous gifted and talented programmes that were having an impact on achievement;

Nā Pua No'eau was instigated by Dr David Sing and The University of Hawai‘i in 1989. It started as a research facility but later practical programmes were developed with outreach centres opening on three islands in 1993. David is still the director working out of Hilo. In the Hawaiian Language “Nā Pua” (the flower) refers to the children of Hawai‘i. ”No'eau" refers to the talents offered by the children as they develop self-discovery. Nā Pua No'eau has been successful in developing a model of working with students through community issues and topics. It utilises its research on optimising learning of Hawaiian students in the context of leadership, raising aspirations and higher achievement. Programmes include Super Enrichment Saturdays, Summer Institute, a Pathways Project and a Hawaiian Leadership programme. Programmes include activities that enhance Hawaiian history, culture, values, and language.

It has successfully integrated the university resources (faculty and facilities) to bridge a greater appreciation of higher learning and education as a vehicle for community development. The result is that the students from the communities they have served “believe” in themselves and “believe” that higher education is a viable way to improve the conditions of their family and their community.

Eligibility and participation is restricted to students (preschool to university) of Hawaiian ancestry. Student participation is significant and in 2012 peaked at around 2250 and made up 10% of all native Hawaiian university graduates, previously reaching 14%. It relies on a process of nomination, including from families and individuals, but eligibility varies from programme to programme. The significant increases in native Hawaiian university graduates in Hawaii can be partly attributed to this programme.
I was really impressed in what has been achieved through this programme. After talking at length with David, the reasons for its success become obvious. A great concept based on a strong research base has grown and developed over time. It has been well supported by the education community, the university and the state. The contents of the programmes are authentic and are culturally responsive and there is a clear mentoring factor where families are involved in understanding what is achievable.

The second was Dr Darleen Martin’s programme for engaging indigenous children in discovering self, their heritage and their capabilities through archaeology. Darleen has a formidable gifted and talented education background including working with David at Nā Pua No’eau, principally on the concept of defining giftedness from a native Hawaiian’s perspective. Her research clearly defined native Hawaiian giftedness as being utilitarian and inclusive rather than exclusive. They have a belief that everyone is gifted and the questions focused upon are, ‘in what?’ and ‘how can the gift be nurtured?’ The construct from the Hawaiian point of view is dynamic in nature as in each generation it evolves and culture does not stay the same. There is a belief that gifts are not pre-determined but do have a genetic element, often missing generations. Importantly there is a Hawaiian belief that spirituality, not in a religious context but more so in a community and environmental one, has an important part to play.

Responsibility for the identification and development of giftedness in children first belongs to the family and can be later shared with the school. Elders will keep a careful eye on new-borns or toddlers. When one is recognised it is nurtured and developed without putting out the fire.

The programme that Darleen runs links closely with these criteria and importantly with a broader education philosophy linked closely to culture. Principally it involves ‘putting back the stones’ of historical pre European sites. Students of all ages alongside interested adults and experts, including archaeologists and topographers, work together to firstly map and then recreate the footprint of these sites. This first part of ‘project based learning’ sets a foundation for further work, giving it relevance and making it powerful for gifted learners.
Students take part from all over the Island, with some from the other side, camping. Many of the schools taking part are charter schools. Identification of the students involved is the responsibility of schools and relies largely on interest, commitment and a positive attitude. There needs to be a sustained interest and commitment from all parties. Many non-charter schools do not take part as they struggle to commit the time necessary to make their inclusion worthwhile, citing state curriculum expectations as the reason for not being involved.

Darleen made some very powerful conclusions at the end of our time together that continue to resonate. They are;

- We have a responsibility as educators to connect our talented students with things and other people. Networking should not be limited to adults.
- We can talk about the responsibility gifted students must shoulder for others but firstly they should have a happy life.
- Giftedness does not diminish when students leave school. What happens to gifted students over the longer term is important. Sustained interest by all those people around these students is important.

Darleen quoted an elder who simplified the concept of fulfilling gifted students capabilities.

“Aloha - Life-breath
Kakou - All of us together
Ho’omana - Make divine”
Canada – British Columbia

In North Vancouver I was hosted by Marcia Garries, District Administrator: North Vancouver Learning Services and was able to spend time in both the administration section of North Vancouver Learning Services and in homogeneous classrooms of gifted and talented students. I was also given opportunities to talk to Brad Baker who leads indigenous education in the district. Brad was able to connect me to representatives of the Squamish Nation, the tribe that represents the North Vancouver area and I spent some time talking to them in more general terms about education, the outcomes for indigenous students and the concept of being Squamish in the North Vancouver community.

My first impressions of the facilities available to students in this school district were good. Schools were set in beautiful locations and resourced well. Administration services akin to our old education board provided substantial services for the 16000 students they are responsible for, including an amazing art gallery for students to visit. Importantly, although schools have a degree of autonomy, in regard to special education of which gifted education is part of, much of the administration processes and curriculum are developed by the North Vancouver Learning Services. As such, schools do little in regard to the identification of gifted students or in the design of programmes. Instead students are tested comprehensively by territory based tests.

This part of Canada realises the importance of programmes for gifted students and are providing high quality programmes with well trained teachers. All students I interacted with in the withdrawal programmes were engaged and could articulate the benefits of the programme they had been part of. In North Vancouver, like New Zealand there are moves toward an enquiry based curriculum in mainstream classrooms. There is also far more differentiated curriculum based on the social and emotional aspects of curriculum.
Within the district only 600 of the 16000 students were aboriginal. Even with the small percentage, there was an underrepresentation of First Nations students in the programmes. None were evident in the classes I visited. After talking to those in charge of implementing gifted programmes, they were quick to acknowledge a cultural bias in identification processes and curriculum within the programmes. There was an argument from a non-aboriginal administrator that parents did not want any separation in regard to curriculum. Brad made it clear that from his point of view the degree of cultural responsiveness in this part of Canada when compared to New Zealand was poor. He struggled with the fact that cultural talents within schools were seldom recognised and questioned the concept of what achievement was, highlighting the cultural difference in the concept.

After talking to educational representatives from the Squamish Nation the reasons for the lack of representation of First Nations students in these programmes was made clearer still. Many families suffered under colonisation and lacked a cultural identity. Consequences were similar to what happens in many colonised countries with higher rates of alcoholism, drug use, truancy and poorer rates of school achievement. So far, no adequate resourcing had been allocated to this particular tribe, to make the necessary social and educational change. With no treaty such as ours there was a lack of a base to negotiate a response for past wrongs. Some other tribes had obtained reasonable amounts of compensation but the Squamish had received nothing.
Canada – Nunavut

Nunavut is the largest, northernmost and newest territory of Canada. It was separated officially from the Northwest Territories on April 1, 1999. Inuit, once known as Eskimo are the indigenous people and form 84% of the population. Inuktitut, the language of the Inuit is the first language of 70% of the population. This is a vast territory with most people living within only ten isolated communities only accessible by air when the sea is frozen. Being Arctic the land is barren with nothing growing more than millimetres out of the ground over much of the territory.

The formation of a new territory with the majority of the population Inuit has produced a very unusual set of circumstances that has provided opportunities to design curriculum relevant to the majority of its students. This linked to a robust group of open and commited educators and a well resourced government has formed a unique educational environment. Although suffering from the effects of colonisation the Inuit are working towards the realisation of self determination and in the longer term devolution and self reliance.

In Nunavut, I visited two Inuit towns. The first was Rankin Inlet on the shores of Hudson Bay and the second and which is the capital of this territory Iqaluit, on the shores of Frobisher Bay on Baffin Island. I had the opportunities to talk with government policy makers, curriculum designers, Inuit parents, principals and teachers. It was a facinating experience and so different to anything I had experienced previously. In Rankin Inlet, a town with a population of around 2500 I was hosted by Alan Everand, a long time Nunavut educator and Grace Maine, currently a special needs teacher who had worked within a range of Inuit communities in Nunavut. Both had an intimate knowledge of how things work in the north. Through them I gained access to an elementary school, an intermediate and a trade school for young adults. The intermediate school was Simon Alaittuq School led by its long time principal Bev Hill. The second was Leo Ussak Elementary School where I spent time with the special needs education teacher, Grace Maine. During my visit to the trade school I was able to talk to a group of Inuit teachers who were able to explain the inuit concept of giftedness and how it is managed within the culture. Unfortunately return visits to
schools were thwarted by a spring storm where huge amounts of snow closed them down for two days, a fairly common occurrence.

I arrived in Nunavut’s capital Iqaluit, a town consisting of 7000 inhabitants to be met by and her husband Cameron who acted as our guides and mentors. Both had a long career in education in the Canadian Arctic and Cathy, then the executive director of school curriculum for the territory, is hugely respected for the part she has played in the educational transformation in Nunavut. I spent significant time with Cathy developing an understanding of how the development of a culturally responsive curriculum took place and what made it possible. Cathy also made it possible to visit two elementary schools Nakasuk, and Joamie Iliniavik School. In addition to this I had the opportunity to interview other key people within Nunavut education administration while in Iqaluit.

Since inheriting a system from the North West Territories, Nunavut has been through a steady process of change to better cater for the learning needs of its students. 1970 was the first year that primary aged children could attend public schools in their own communities and they had to wait until 1995 for the same opportunity for high school age children. Previous to this children had to attend residential schools if they went to school at all. Formal education in this part of the world is very young in a western education sense.
With self-determination and the opportunity to define priorities for Nunavut students, the administration worked on the mandate of designing curriculum based on traditional Inuit values and concepts bought into the 21st century which is a fundamental in the education act. To do this representatively the Department of Education went through a process of visioning within communities and later working with a small group of elders over a three year period to define the core fundamentals of the new curriculum. There was recognition by all concerned that to be successful Inuit students must be proud of their heritage, know what it is to be Inuit and know what is still relevant in today’s world. The concept of knowing self was fundamental to everything else.

The design of a whole new school system or ‘Raising the Tent’ as the process was illustrated as included a commitment to design a culturally appropriate curriculum and supporting it effectively through staffing, professional development and administration process.

Cathy talks both of the tremendous positive change that has occurred and the feeling she has of it not being enough. The effects of colonialism took away Inuit independence and power over a very short time with serious social repercussions, similar to other indigenous communities. It will take many years to reinstate the self-belief and confidence needed in Inuit to sustain and grow positive change.

Because of the other pressing educational priorities of this new territory, catering and realising the needs of its gifted and talented students has not been a priority at an administrative and legislative level. Instead the priority has been to provide a culturally responsive curriculum for all Inuit. This includes recognition of the importance of language, Inuit teaching Inuit and a curriculum that reflects the values and structure of Inuit culture.

It became clear through the other interviews that Inuit can and do identify giftedness within their own cultural context, often by elders and will quietly deal with the needs of these children within their families. Traits of giftedness in Inuit students identified by those I talked to included: children who are ‘bright and shining’, self-motivated and not afraid to talk and question. In traditional Inuit
society children speak less and do what is expected of them. Age and knowledge is highly respected to the point where those younger people, including adults are not given the same opportunities or respect. Much of this is predicated on the very harsh conditions in which Inuit lived, the total lack of environmental forgiveness and the need to do things right the first time if a family was going to survive. Given this base there is a predisposition to linking giftedness to those traditional needs, including knowledge of and survival on the land. This includes the ability to hunt and clean animals, sensitivity to and understanding of environmental changes as well as an ability to manufacture clothing and erect shelter. A modern link with sporting talents is also recognised.

I had an interesting conversation about what skills a gifted hunter had. They are seen as tactile, observant, solution oriented and able to deal with crisis. There is some research that shows those Inuit diagnosed with the Edison gene (ADHD traits) have the ability to hypo focus with a short attention span which are useful hunting skills. It was suggested that in indigenous societies where people are cast within the role of a hunter’s society there are higher rates of this gene and it is known as the ‘hunter’s gene’. As we know students with ADHD in a European schooling context struggle to deal with expectations with many dropping out. It is possible the existence of this gene should be added to identification criteria.

The role of the grandparent for children was seen as very significant in Inuit society. Many Inuit children are brought up by grandparents. An Inuit elder told me, “They have wisdom about them”. In families where this happened they saw the culture of respect as being a legacy. Many of those have special qualities that could be defined as gifts or talents. Here too are similarities to Māori and Pasifika cultures.

The last possible gifted trait that I became aware of was that of an ability to maintain harmonious relationships. Historically Inuit lived in very confined spaces and their very survival was often dependent on the relationship or interrelationship with each other. As a consequence there was an expectation that everything was done to keep the peace. Those that managed to do this where and are still respected in a cultural sense. Unfortunately there is now a link between the expectation to internalise feelings and high rates of suicide amongst Inuit.

When discussing the concept of culturally differentiation and giftedness with Principals in Nunavut, the conversations always defaulted to the importance of the process of providing a culturally responsive curriculum for all children. They appreciated the flexibility to make the most of the cultural opportunities such as spending time with children on the land in the summer, sometimes killing and cleaning animals, making their own Inuit clothing or questioning the hunters of the bowhead whale. Paid elders worked in all the schools I visited providing a cultural backbone to the classroom through language, process and practice. There was a pervasive opinion that within culture, many children were gifted and it was a case of identifying the area of giftedness.
20th World Council for Gifted and Talented Children Conference 2013

During August of 2013, I attended the World Gifted and Talented conference in Louisville, Kentucky, USA. It was an opportunity to listen to the key people in the field and talk to people with similar interests. I listened to most of the keynotes and chose workshops that had a cultural or creative focus. Two keynotes stood out as being exceptional insights into what was really important in mainstream programmes. Both Joseph Renzulli and Sally Reis made me think about the practical implications of their content which is summarised next. They are very well known in Gifted Education, especially Joseph for his 3-ring identification model and type 3 enrichment model. Three others, New Zealander Tracey Riley, Texan Lisa Van Gemert and French Todd Lubart had messages that resonated with me.

Dr Joseph Renzulli

- The world needs leaders.
- Schools should be putting more effort into generating them.
- Gifted students will be our leaders of tomorrow.
- By providing general enrichment activities for all students we will discover those who are truly gifted.
- When developing programmes we should be asking ourselves “What is the difference that makes the difference?”
• Renzulli believes that when students are given opportunities within programmes that teach and encourage persistence, commitment, organisational skills, human interaction skills, those children with high potential will emerge and be involved in positive and important roles within different part of society whether it in the field of politics, business, religion or whatever.

• As such all educational institutions have a responsibility to provide the kinds of programmes that will enable children to emerge as these leaders.

• Social capital (Actions that benefit others)- Renzulli talks a lot about this and the decline of it within our young citizens.

• Instead it has been replaced with narcissistic attitudes that are less active within their communities. E.g. Cheating/ theatre of celebrity etc.

• There is a lack of caring for the well-being of others and there is a substitution of the real world with a virtual one.

• We must allow opportunities for students to develop social capital within our gifted and talented programmes.

1. **Operation Altitude**- Engage in learning programmes where the actions that benefit others and not just themselves.

• Unfortunately research shows that when educators of gifted children were asked about appropriate curriculum content only 4% mentioned anything to do with the concept of ethical thinking.

2. **Executive function** (The ability to engage in situations that involve planning, decision making, troubleshooting, and ethical leadership)

• Over two generations research shows that 5 year old children’s ability in this area has fallen.

• Not dependant on working within set routines or well-rehearsed responses-Involves organising and integrating thinking.

• A child’s ability to do this when they start school is more important to success than IQ.

• Renzulli talks practically about curriculum solutions to both these issues by primarily using the type 3 enrichment model.

• Involves looking around your school or community for a problem that needs fixing.
• By working through a process where children are directly involved in the processes of this model and creative action does the learning stick and affect on-going learning, skills and attitudes.

• Talks of other methods being less effective.

• The curriculum must provide creative opportunities to take action.

Key note available:  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1QHyCL_5Fc

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**Dr Sally Reis**

Sally M. Reis is a Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor at The University of Connecticut and the past Department Head of Educational Psychology Department at the University of Connecticut where she also serves as a Principal Investigator for the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented. She is also married to Joseph Renzulli.

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• Creativity and creative productivity are hugely important.

• Creative productive work needs to be done with a wide range of students.

• Research shows that there is no more creativity shown in the top 5% of students when compared to the top 20% of students. (Fits in with the 3 ring model)

• Talent development is a really important part of educational programmes. And productivity and enthusiasm for learning improves when programmes are in place.

• 50% of women often do not have the opportunities to develop their talents.

• But woman are more socially committed to make a difference and are more diverse in their creative lives.

• Half of gifted and talented students fail mainstream schools in the USA.

• Compacting curriculum is an important proven method for improving outcomes for G&T students.

• Reading instruction for G&T students must involve letting students choose their own reading material.
• Twice exceptional students- Focus on skills and not deficits. Compact curriculum and get rid of reading at lower levels

• Children brought up in lower socio economic situations have more resilience than children who are not. Developing resilience is important.

• Enrichment triad model should be used in gifted programmes.

• Buying into a creative curriculum is where it is in education.

Key note available; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dw8eezu5eBk

Dr Tracey Riley  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aqd5rwzKwkI

• Tracey talked about using competition as a continuum of opportunity for gifted students.
• Future problem solving, community problem solving and science Olympiad are competitions where New Zealand students have had considerable success in the past.
• Competitions have two roles, the first being the identification of gifted students and the second to showcase innovation and talent.
• There are a range of competitions available that cover a range of curriculum areas.
• Students are hugely motivated by the competitive element and prizes available from this type of learning.

Lisa Van Gemert  http://www.giftedguru.com/

Lisa talks passionately and with a huge depth of knowledge in a range of areas including;

• The importance of self-concept in the gifted student.
• The power of serving others.
• Developing a growth mind set.

Dr Todd Lubart

Todd talks about a need for a worldwide commitment to teach creativity in schools.

Key note available; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQn78Lq7pz8
Beijing-China

In Beijing I was hosted by Michelle Parsons-Sim and her husband Bruce. Michelle is a teacher in charge of extension at the primary section of The Western Academy of Beijing or WAB. I have known Michelle since 2005 when we worked together, planning and implementing a gifted programme here in New Zealand. During my time in Beijing I spent two days at the school observing the programme and presented twice to different groups of staff members on both the findings from the World Conference and the findings of the research to that point.

The international school has a unique identity. WAB is an amazing educational facility teaching an exciting curriculum from kindergarten to the equivalent of Year 13 New Zealand. The facilities and resourcing provided for students are second to none. WAB caters for mainly expatriate students but also enrols Chinese students that come from ‘connected’ Chinese families. English is the main language of tuition but it is mandatory that all children are taught Chinese apart from the Dutch group of students. There are 45 cultural ethnicities at the primary section which has a roll of over 700 students. Teachers are sourced from all around the world and there is a relatively high turnover with many young teachers with varying degrees of understanding of gifted and talented pedagogy. The cost of attending this international school is approximately NZ$50,000 per child per school year.

Provision for gifted and talented students is managed through:

- Identification of exceptional students through set processes.
- Provision of a talent development programme for Grade 5 students based on the passions of children. This happens for 40 minutes a week over an 18 week period. Talent development focus areas have included Lego mindstormer / robotics, creative dance and film making.
- Afterschool talent development activities.
- An expectation that differentiation takes place within all curriculum areas.
- Support through an enrichment committee.
• Significant professional development opportunities for all teachers including overseas conferences and also within the Asia region.

Barriers to the effective provision for gifted students include:

• Timetabling of the school day to include specialist teachers as in a high school. This limits both the flexibility of the programme to cater for individuals and a lesser understanding of a child’s potential by homeroom teachers.
• The high turnover of staff, involving a loss of experienced teachers and the employment of younger teachers with less understanding of differentiation and gifted programmes.
• Inconsistent commitment and leadership within the management structure.
• The employment of teachers from countries and cultures where teaching and learning is based on a knowledge acquisition rather than an enquiry approach and where whole class teaching is the norm.

Cultural differentiation of gifted programmes is seen as a possibility but is complicated not only by the barriers mentioned previously, but also by the diversity of culture within the school. Different cultures see giftedness and indeed education in very different ways. The Chinese and Korean at the school focus almost entirely on academic excellence, especially in numeracy. Many of these children’s parents ‘hot house’ their children by getting them to attend another school linked to their culture after the WAB day finishes. The Scandinavian parents generally want learning to include a large peer base with a more flexible structure. They do not want to see their children working independently on laptops and prefer to see them working in creative ways. The Dutch place significant importance on the Dutch language and only this group has an exemption from learning Chinese, and learn Dutch instead.

When talking about possible solutions to these significant barriers, Michelle talked about the possibility of ‘culturally defined booster groups’, an idea with merit in my thinking. For this to happen successfully she sees a close connection with parents as a necessity.

International schools including WAB place significant relevance and focus on students as global citizens. There is also an acknowledgement that they are privileged situation and as such have a responsibility to support less fortunate people within their community. This does happen in authentic ways but at a fairy superficial level at WAB. There is scope to develop this concept of social capital more and have students working through local community issues in authentic ways to make them understand and benefit from the process of assisting others.
New Zealand

Over the years I have kept in touch with the work of Fraser Smith at Oturu primary school in the Far North and have a very good understanding of what has made the school a success, a story that has significant relevance to this research. In addition to this I know the Whangarei schools well, and enjoy a very positive and collaborative relationship with the schools in the Bream Bay area where we have developed a successful gifted education model. To get the overview of gifted education necessary I have used the considerable knowledge of Robyn Boswell, currently working for Cognition. Robyn, as well as having a long and involved career in gifted education has an international presence in the gifted education community. Her national and global understanding has been hugely beneficial in the writing of this report.

My observations abroad enable me to confirm that New Zealand sits at the forefront of education in a range of areas. At the heart of our success are the skills and commitment of our teachers. We have an expectation of self-reliance and an ‘I can do’ attitude. This is backed by the fact we can make decisions and act upon them with individual and collective needs of our students. Being self-managing, especially when linked to strong and creative leadership allows schools the scope to identify need and then develop meaningful learning processes. This skill is learnt by doing and not by implementing others’ designs. In addition to this we also have a curriculum that has strong principles and values, allowing opportunities to teach what is important both individually and culturally. While overseas, I was disappointed to see schools implement educational policy and processes without questioning the relevance to their students.

Our educational flexibility has impacted on what we think and do in regard to providing for the needs of gifted and talented children in a mainstream context. Most schools acknowledge and act on the fact that Māori and Pasifika communities, although wanting their children to succeed in a largely European world, expect them to retain their cultural identity and be successful within their cultural context also. New Zealand now provides a far more culturally responsive curriculum than it has in the past. In the area of culturally differentiated giftedness, New Zealand academic research leads the world, and there are a small number of schools acting on the findings, some almost intuitively.

Oturu School is small when compared to an Auckland School. It is now becoming a victim of its own success with a growing role which ironically may limit its ability to offer its students the same degree of authenticity in curriculum. Over many years of development the concept of authentic curriculum has driven the learning culture within the school. It has become the context in which gifted and non-gifted students work, gaining success and developing skills and knowledge at their own level. Māori culture and content is woven through the programme with direct connections to
the authenticity of the learning. Oturu has proven that a small school is not disadvantaged when designing and resourcing curriculum that meets the need of its gifted students and importantly its Māori gifted students.

In 2010 Oturu entered the national community problem solving competition. Community Problem Solving is a component of the Future Problem Solving that encourages students to identify and solve problems in their own community using the Future Problem Solving process. Community Problem Solving teams use the six step process to solve problems they see in their community. Oturu’s problem was focused on the declining bee population, entitled ‘No bees, No Honey’.

The question they asked was, “How might they, the Bee-Friendly Problem Solvers, raise awareness of the importance of bees so people in our community will take action to encourage the bees back into their gardens in 2011 and into the future?” Through a process of garden development in which they grew bee friendly plants and community education where seeds were provided a new awareness was developed. Outcomes also include more bees seen around the school and the project continuing so the bee population increases. As winners of the national competition they were invited to the international conference in Wisconsin, USA, where they came second in the education section. Oturu students have now developed and marketed a range of bee products including skin salves. Ingredients include their own brand of olive oil, and native plants known by Māori for their medicinal qualities. When you listen to these animated, articulate, and confident students it is hard to believe that before they were involved in this curriculum, processes and outcomes they were a group of shy Māori students in a small Far North primary school that had rarely left the area. These students have potentially had their lives changed by these learning experiences.

For an inspirational little video clip go to: http://tvnz.co.nz/close-up/one-approach-learning-6-13-video-4186793

My discussions with Robyn Boswell and exposure to other schools has further consolidated my thinking about both mainstream and culturally differentiated gifted and talented teaching in New Zealand.
• Our New Zealand curriculum offers immeasurable opportunities to develop teaching and learning opportunities for our gifted and talented students.

• The development of a ‘creative curriculum’ is seen internationally as a way of preparing students for an unknown future. This is an unknown quantity for many.

• The identification processes for gifted and talented students in New Zealand schools lacks consistency and often a degree of rigour.

• Many schools have developed learning programmes that cater for the special needs of gifted and talented students including homogeneous and in class, and in many respects we provide better solutions than many comparable countries.

• Many New Zealand schools provide some opportunity to be involved in talent development in the form of ‘passion time’ or similar. This is an important aspect of a gifted and talented programme.

• Although more effective in accommodating for the needs of gifted and talented students than many overseas, practice within New Zealand is inconsistent.

• In general more resourcing is provided for those that are underachieving at the lower end of achievement scale than those that are not meeting their potential at the top end of the achievement scale.

• The enquiry learning model which many schools use, provides opportunities for children to extend their own skills and learning, especially in thematic areas but in many situations the investigations lack authenticity, both from a community and cultural perspective. Often the process stops before students have opportunities to be directly involved in the solutions aspect of the model.

• The development of gifted leaders through the development of ‘social capital’ is a relatively new concept for many New Zealand schools.

• In other areas of the curriculum our teachers differentiate better than most, but because of workload and other priorities many teachers do not differentiate as effectively as they could.

• There is a lack of available professional development in the area of gifted and talented and it is not high on the educational agenda of many, with numeracy, reading and writing leading PLD opportunities and choices. As a consequence, teachers and families of gifted students often have a limited knowledge of giftedness and how to cater for it.

• Most identification processes for gifted and talented students fail to capture a relative ratio of Māori and Pasifika students. As a consequence these cultural groups are underrepresented in mainstream gifted programmes.

• Many schools cater for the cultural giftedness which includes: Māori arts, crafts, music, historic and cultural knowledge and traditions, whakapapa and te reo through kapa haka
programmes and te reo Māori for example. Few schools provide structured development of cultural giftedness (refer p.11).

- Consultation with Māori and Pasifika communities is an expectation of schools and happens to varying degrees. An understanding of the concepts of giftedness from their perspectives, and appropriate ways of catering for it is an area which is rarely part of the consultation processes.

- Cultural relevance and authenticity of curriculum is an important way to provide a degree of equity and engagement for all Māori and Pasifika students. I would suggest that in many schools, this is not planned for to the extent that is necessary.

- Māori and Pasifika teachers, and/or teachers possessing an understanding and connection to culture and language are an important component of success for Māori and Pasifika students. There is an under representation of Māori and Pasifika teachers in our schools. My anecdotal observations in Northland are that the cultural competency of non-Māori teachers is improving but I am unable to comment on other areas.
Conclusions – First aspect of research (Mainstream gifted and talented programmes)

The research, referred to in the literature review (p.9) that defined the properties of effective gifted and talented programmes is still highly relevant. It would be the ideal place to go to if schools decided to review their gifted and talented programmes. The problem with this research and much that comes out of a university is that it is very academic and general, lacking the practical detail all practitioners require as a base to move forward from. Gifted Education is a complex area complicated by many variables that exist within schools and communities. There is certainly no ‘one size fits all’ model. Schools need to develop programmes that meet the needs of their students and weigh these against the resourcing available, prioritising and compromising where necessary. These programmes need to be reviewed regularly to define if they are still meeting the students’ needs.

The obvious place to start is in developing an understanding of what giftedness looks like in a student and then develop identification processes that are accurate and consistent. This process of creating teacher understanding is in my mind the most important and fundamental part of the process as without a commitment by teachers little will happen within classrooms. Well targeted and focused professional development, sustained over a number of years will embed philosophy and practise, giving teachers a knowledge base to experiment from. There are many experts in this field that would be useful in this context, but few that come without cost.

The development of programmes should be defined by what is important, what is practical and what can be sustained. Because so much is being asked of schools, thought should be given to what can be integrated into classroom programmes in the form of differentiation and very importantly what this would possibly look like. Differentiation is an area that New Zealand primary teachers are fairly comfortable with. Providing guidance, ideas and templates that cater for the top end of the achievement scale makes a significant difference in a gifted child’s levels of engagement and achievement, lessens the boredom and improves the behaviour and relationships with the teacher and peers. Where practical, homogeneous programmes, in which groups of likeminded gifted students work together under the direction of a trained and enthusiastic teacher are effective in lifting the ceiling of achievement and levels of individual and collective thinking. It should be remembered, before deciding that running a homogeneous programme alone is not practical because of numbers or resourcing, that working collaboratively with other schools may be a viable option. The school I am principal of and two other local schools have been doing this very successfully for a number of years now. Talent development, where students are able to develop their individual talents is a critical part of any gifted programme. Recognising and building on what students are passionate about makes connections, acknowledges skills and builds a
culture of learning enthusiasm. In some situations it helps set a direction which impacts on lives. This is inspiring not only for the students but for the teacher also. Identifying passions and then linking to those of teachers is a good place to start but programmes can be extended to involve experts in the local and extended community.

Somewhat missing in the local research, but developing significant importance internationally is the concept of a creative curriculum. At one level it refers to schools providing a host of creative opportunities for students, integrated into a range of curriculum areas. On another level it refers to the concept of problem solving in authentic contexts. Creative curriculum allows student voice, and a degree of self-direction. It is driven by the students with the assistance of teachers. Oturu is an example of a school successfully using this concept. Using structure like Community and Future Problem Solving provides a degree of scaffolding and guidance to the authentic learning process. Students’ concepts of self-worth and expectations of self are developed through a process where they develop 'social capital'.
Conclusions - Second aspect of research (Culturally differentiated Gifted and talented programmes)

There is inequity within the current education system resulting in underrepresentation of Māori and Pasifika students in mainstream gifted and talented programmes. A large degree of responsibility could be placed on the identification processes being currently used and how they are implemented. The outcome is underachievement for the students at the top end of the achievement scale. There is now research that clearly defines that in addition to these students being gifted in the European sense they could be gifted in a cultural context, which can be defined in two different ways. This could be separate to, or in addition the European identification.

Culturally responsive curriculum and environment allows opportunities for these students to relax culturally and develop pride in their culture and an understanding of heritage and self. The identification of cultural giftedness is possible only when a student is working and socialising within this educational setting. To be an effective teacher within a culturally responsive environment there needs to be an affinity and respect for the culture by the teacher. This includes in New Zealand the use of some Te Reo Māori which acts as a catalyst. Content needs to reflect aspects of culture, including values of the culture. Being a Māori teacher for Māori students and a Pasifika teacher for Pasifika students would be an advantage but not a necessity.

As in the first part of the research, the prerequisite for a culturally responsive environment and then the identification of these students relies first on teacher understanding and agreement. Professional development over a sustained timeframe is necessary to embed these concepts in a sustainable way.

The more I think about the comparisons between a mainstream gifted programme and that which would cater for cultural giftedness, the more obvious it is to me that content would make them very different. There may be similar components where authentic problem based learning takes place, and where curriculum coincides. The kopapa, defining the values, content, place, and personnel in the cultural programme is likely to be very different. An example of the culturally gifted programme for Māori students we are planning at the moment involves a live in at our local marae. It will be collaboratively run by our local Māori community, including experts from the larger iwi, and teachers who have a passion for Māori culture. Content although yet to be confirmed will include aspects defined by the research earlier in this document (p.11). I am hopeful that an outcome of this programme will be the formation of a mentoring system for our gifted Māori leaders. Mentoring is a proven method of maintaining cultural growth over longer periods.

When I observed cultural differentiation of curriculum while away, there was always a connection to culturally authenticity. This would form the base of programmes I have a part of in the future.
Programmes such as Community Problem Solving have the flexibility to be used in different cultural contexts and as such may be a valuable template.
Discussion and implications of key outcomes and concepts

- Given the current education environment where schools put significant energy into improving literacy and numeracy a change of mind set may need to be made by some. Improving achievement happens in a variety of ways, but fundamentally takes place through students being engaged and motivated by teachers who are knowledgeable and connected socially and culturally. As a consequence schools may have to invest more in developing or attracting teachers that meet the requirements of a learning environment where gifted students thrive.

- Providing for the needs of gifted and talented students can happen in a variety of ways. Schools, when reviewing their programmes, need to take their own individual circumstances into account so change is meaningful and sustainable.

- Being gifted does not disappear when a child leaves primary school. It is with them for life. It is important to communicate and collaborate with the families of gifted students from the time of identification and help them to support their child long-term.

- Gifted students need to understand that with their ability comes a degree of social responsibility. This needs to be taught as part of the programme.

- It has been established that the gifts of Māori do not only belong to the individual, but also to the larger whanau. This places a large degree of responsibility on these students, a situation educators should be aware of.

- It is my thinking that gifted Māori who are very successful in a European world are often doubly gifted. They are likely to be highly intelligent and fluent in both cultures. Generally they will have extremely good support from their whanau. See http://www.Māoriboygenius.com/

- The first expectation of a gifted student is they live a happy life.
Recommendations

Nationally

- That government provides more resourcing for schools to promote the professional development of teachers in all areas of giftedness.
- That government supports schools in the development of gifted programmes through the provision of more gifted and talented specialists.
- That a programme similar to Nā Pua No‘eau which runs in Hawaii is investigated as an option for gifted Māori.

Within Schools

- That schools review their gifted and talented programmes and follow up the review by making necessary changes that maximise the opportunities for gifted and talented students.
- That schools provide culturally responsive and authentic curriculum and later develop culturally responsive programmes for their culturally gifted and talented students.
- That schools consider the concept of a creative curriculum and how it may look within their organisation.
References:


