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Te Kura Toi Tangata

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Te Hautaka Mātauranga o Waikato



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## Waikato Journal of Education Te Hautaka Mātauranga o Waikato

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## Introduction

This selection of general articles covers a wide range of topics. One of these is Stewart and Dale's re-examination of the Ans Westra photographic essay *Washday at the Pā*, published in the *School Journal* in May 1964, and the controversy around it. The intention was to review it from a Kaupapa Māori perspective. Stewart and Dale consider the meanings and learning that can be drawn from this artefact. They critique the Pākehā mindset of the social world of Māori via its traces in this work, before examining the critique of it at the time. In the 60s, commentators had argued that the photographs of run down houses with no modern conveniences worked against the predominant narrative of equitable race relations at the time, contradicting ministerial comments about state housing and its role in raising equality. It is a fascinating review of an historical moment that has echoes now.

The second article (Richards, Fisher, & Reggie) explores the impact, via teachers' own perceptions, of a new one-year campus-based teacher education programme in the Solomon Islands. Through interviews with teachers, the researchers argue that teachers felt that the benefits of this programme (of classroom practice, school leadership, teachers' professionalism and skills) were outweighed by the challenges to implementing what they had learned. These issues included fewer resources than they need, how colleagues responded to what they had learned, and the nature of their local classrooms. In part, the one-year teacher education programme was intended to plug the gap between the number of untrained teachers and the desired number of qualified teachers. The article addresses the impact on teachers' learning of this new programme, and is able to report that some effects are highly desirable regarding teachers' knowledge base and ability to design learning well. They report that given the context of large classes in sometimes remote areas, the need for professional development is high and that context plays a significant part in any educational endeavour.

Two articles focus on mathematics education. Dayal and Chandra's article is the first and examines solving word problems in Fijian primary schools. The key finding from this investigation was that relatively inexperienced primary school teachers did not particularly apply real world mathematical knowledge to solving word problems. This suggests that they would have difficulty in teaching their students how to do the same. The second mathematics education-oriented paper is Jourdain and Sharma's literature review of language challenges in mathematics. Through this review of mathematics and applied linguistics ideas, the authors conclude that developing mathematical knowledge through paying attention to linguistic features in mathematics texts, positively helps learners. However, there are some hurdles to achieving this. Moving students from informal language uses to using correct mathematical terminology is one example of how difficult such a transition could be, especially when many mathematics teachers view the subject as "universal and free of cultural influences" partly because its symbols are understood across cultural divides. However, prior knowledge is a big influencer on understanding. When teachers are more aware of this factor, then the distance between the learner and the new mathematical knowledge can be reduced.

The final article centres attention on how teachers' practices might alter or shift when using mobile devices for learning. A group of early adopters in bring your own device (BYOD) classrooms were asked about their practices and behaviours. These teachers noted that accessing information and producing work can be altered considerably—and often for the better over paper-based learning



products. Lindsay, Lee and Hope argue that when teachers join communities of practice where discussions about learning with such tools takes place, then they are more likely to shift their thinking and practices. Perhaps this is helped via mentoring and modelling from peers, but without a school having a robust infrastructure to support multiple simultaneous use, then the endeavour will be pointless.

We hope you enjoy this selection of general articles.

**Noeline Wright**

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