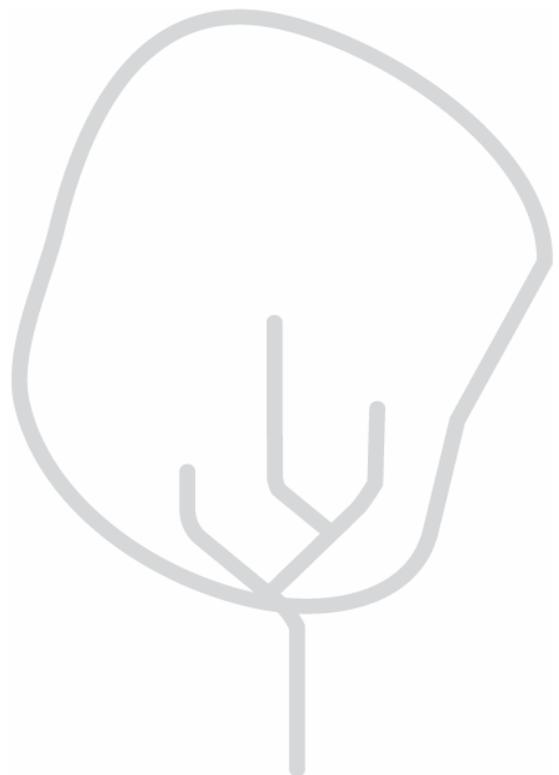




# The TLRI: Teachers' perspectives on partnership and research

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*This research has planted a seed not only in the teacher's heart, but also in the students' hearts. They see the effect of research and now they want some more.*

*(Participant 2, about the TLRI research project undertaken in the participant's school)*

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the NZCER for the opportunity to undertake this research; in particular, Robyn Baker (Director), for support and mentoring of the process, and Kristina Louis and Susan Tompkinson, for their significant help in searching and sourcing literature. I would also like to thank the research project leaders for providing access to teacher researchers. Last, but not least, I would like to thank the teacher-researchers for their time, their honesty, and the rich data they provided.

It has been a pleasure to take a close look inside research projects at the school level, and hear at first hand about the teachers' learning.

# 1. Introduction

This research project, “The TLRI: Teachers’ perspectives on partnership and research”, examines the roles of teachers within a number of the current school-based TLRI projects and the teachers’ views and experiences of research and partnership.

The TLRI aims to

- (a) build a cumulative body of knowledge that links teaching and learning;
- (b) enhance the links between educational research and teaching practices; and between researchers and teachers, across the early childhood, school and tertiary sectors, and
- (c) grow research capability and capacity in the areas of teaching and learning.

Its intention is to achieve these aims through researchers and teachers working in partnerships to undertake research into teaching and learning and to disseminate project findings to the communities of interest.

This project was undertaken on behalf of the TLRI Co-ordination Team, which was interested in finding out about partnerships in practice from the teachers’ perspective so that it could identify ways to support and develop the partnership model within the overall TLRI programme. The project focuses on TLRI Principle Five, which states that “The TLRI will recognise the central role of the teacher in learning”, and Principle Six, which states that “The research projects within the TLRI will be undertaken as a partnership between researchers and practitioners”.

These principles are underpinned by current research findings that the teacher is key to student success at school, and brings a wealth of knowledge to the teaching and learning process.

## **Structure of this report**

This section briefly describes the rationale for and basic aim of this project.

Section 2 provides a review of the literature, surveying both New Zealand and international work in the field. It looks at the fundamentals of partnership, the nature of the relationship between teachers and researchers, the benefits of teacher–researcher partnerships, and the conditions that promote the best outcomes for teachers as researchers and support the successful transfer of learning beyond the teacher-researchers themselves.

Section 3 describes the methodology of the project. It defines the objectives and the research questions and explains the research design, the data collection methods and how the data were analysed.

Section 4 gives the findings. It describes the teacher participants, their research backgrounds, their roles in the research teams, and their views both on partnership and their experience of undertaking research. It outlines the factors teachers felt helped or hindered their experience, and discusses their overall learning in terms of their professional development.

Section 5 contains the recommendations.

The letters, interview questions and consent form sent to the participants and their principals in the course of the project are given in the appendices.

## 2. Literature Review

### Introduction

This review of literature examines two key themes that are explored in this study of teacher-practitioners' perspectives on partnership and research. The two key themes are:

- notions of partnership; and
- teachers as researchers.

### Why is partnership a focus for the TLRI?

In planning for the TLRI programme the NZCER-based co-ordination team was guided by the aims and priorities of the TLRI as set out by the TLRI Advisory Board.

The aims of the TLRI are to:

- (d) build a cumulative body of knowledge that links teaching and learning;
- (e) enhance the links between educational research and teaching practices; and between researchers and teachers, across the early childhood, school and tertiary sectors, and
- (f) grow research capability and capacity in the areas of teaching and learning.

The notion of partnership is implicit in Aim 2.

A set of six guiding principles for the TLRI were identified, using current literature in the fields of teaching and learning, research, and models of partnership. These principles are:

- The research projects within the TLRI will address themes of strategic importance to education in New Zealand.
- The TLRI will draw on related international work and build upon New Zealand based research evidence.
- The TLRI research will address strategic themes and be forward looking.
- The TLRI research will be designed to enable substantive and robust findings.
- The TLRI will recognise the central role of the teacher in learning.
- The research projects within the TLRI will be undertaken as a partnership between researchers and practitioners.

The notion of partnership was made explicit in the TLRI Overview, in which the project priorities were stated within the context of the six TLRI principles. The idea of “partnership” was that teacher-practitioners and researchers would work together in a reciprocal process that:

- “deepens researchers’ understanding of teaching practice by engaging with teachers”; and
- “enables teachers to gain expertise as teacher-researchers supported by researchers”.

In this way teachers would be encouraged to engage more with the findings of research and explore methodology, while researchers, through engaging with teachers, would further their understanding of teaching and learning.

## **Notions of partnership**

The underlying premise of the TLRI is the collaborative building of knowledge between teacher-practitioners and educational researchers to improve knowledge about teaching, improve learning outcomes for learners, and develop and build the research capability of both teacher-practitioners and researchers.

In line with these aims, applicants submitting expressions of interest are asked to show evidence that a partnership involving teacher-practitioners and researchers has been established. The NZCER has not dictated how the partnership should be designed and implemented, but there is an implicit assumption that all partners should have the same opportunities to develop and explore questions and ideas of interest to them within the research. For practitioners, the notion of partnership extends beyond that with a researcher to the partnership of teachers within and between schools, as teacher research is a collaborative, social activity requiring intellectual exchanges among colleagues (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993).

## **Defining partnership**

According to Timperley and Robinson (2002), partnership means the sharing of tasks when working collaboratively. In a partnership, each party accepts some level of responsibility for the overall task and the team establishes processes for accomplishing the task that “promote learning, mutual accountability and shared power over relevant decisions” (Timperley & Robinson, 2002, p. 15).

For a partnership to be successful, partners must share values such as “respect” and “trust”, and these should (according to Timperley and Robinson) ensure the task is achieved to the satisfaction of all members of the partnership. Effective partnerships benefit those involved in a number of ways. Working together on tasks provides opportunities for teachers and researchers to learn from each other. Partnerships contribute to learning opportunities, as “more diverse information and expertise is available than is the case when partners work alone” (Timperley & Robinson, 2002, p. 21). In effective partnerships, partner feedback provides opportunities for ideas and actions to be

assessed and clarified. While there is always the possibility of the task being dominated by one partner's biases and beliefs, partnerships that are based on trust and respect enable the balancing of differing points of view (Bransford et al., 2000).

A partnership can be played out in a number of ways. While members of a project may work in unison on the tasks, it may be more practical for partners with differing experience to divide the work into distinct tasks and assign them appropriately. In this situation, members of the partnership may be working independently of each other, and there might be differing levels of interaction between various members of the project team (Timperley & Robinson, 2002).

Effective partnerships are an empowering alternative to the "taking over" or "handing over" of resources or power; in them, teachers' knowledge and sense of self-efficacy are valued and maintained (Timperley & Robinson, 2002). The vision for the role of the academic researcher within the TLRI projects is "to work with the teachers, rather than on teachers" (Groundwater-Smith & Dadds, 2004, p. 242).

Traditionally, teachers are seen as the consumers of knowledge, and academic researchers as its producers. This, Robinson believes, leads to a gulf between the two. She suggests that, rather than "thinking of practitioners and researchers as different categories of person, we should think of them as different roles" (Robinson, 2003, p. 27). This in itself suggests a more equal status; one that acknowledges the knowledge and skills teachers have and, by extension perhaps, that practitioners and researchers are both integral to the making, testing and putting research knowledge into pedagogical practice. Aligning teachers with teachers, and teachers with researchers, increases opportunities for "teacher talk" and reflection, further helping teachers to investigate the theories and assumptions they operate by. If the workplace climate is supportive, this teacher learning provides opportunities for positive, relevant, contextual professional development for teachers that meets the requirements for the positive transfer of learning.

When we examine how similar projects have operated in the international context, it appears quite common for partnerships between researchers and teacher-practitioners to be played out within the teaching and learning context, over a period of one year or longer. Many of these partnerships employ an action research practitioner inquiry model (Groundwater-Smith & Dadds, 2004). This is an area that is explored in more detail in the next section.

## **Teachers as researchers**

### **The teacher–researcher gap**

Teacher research arose from the need to close the gap between the work of academic researchers as producers of knowledge about teaching and learning and teachers as consumers of that knowledge (Labree, 2003; Boostrom, Jackson & Hansen, 1993). Historically, teachers have been considered "technicians"; the consumers, not the producers of professional knowledge of teaching

and learning. Within that paradigm, teacher knowledge and expertise have been largely disregarded. A “technical” view of teacher development, in which a pre-constructed knowledge base is transmitted to teachers from “outside-in” (that is, “from university based researchers who are outside of the day-to-day practices of schooling”; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 6), is a standard one, as opposed to current trends in which teacher knowledge and development are socially constructed by teachers working collaboratively (Hawk & Hill, 2003; Hill, Hawk & Taylor, 2002).

Academic research tends to be too theoretical (Hemsley-Brown & Sharp, 2002), in part because teachers have been left out of the production of knowledge (Boostrom et al., 1993). Knowledge of teaching and learning constructed outside of the specific context in which it is intended to be applied leads to distrust and disregard on the part of teachers (Groundwater-Smith & Dadds, 2004). Elliot concurs, and argues for the involvement of teachers in research as active participants working alongside academic researchers to actively construct useful knowledge, saying it would better enhance their engagement with research, because teachers “rarely use the findings of research on education to inform their practice” (Elliot, 2004, p. 266).

Early last century Dewey considered the gap between teachers and educational researchers and argued for the importance of the teacher’s role in, and contributions to, educational research (Noffke, 1997; Olsen, 1990). “Dewey emphasised the importance of teachers’ reflecting on their practices and integrating their observations into their emerging theories of teaching and learning” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 9). Schön’s (1987, cited in Cochran-Smith & Lytle) notion of the teacher as a reflective practitioner was developed from some of the ideas Dewey proposed. Conversely from the notion of the teacher as technician, Schön “depicts professional practice as an intellectual process of posing and exploring problems identified by teachers” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 9).

Action research as a teacher research method has grown since the 1950s. Stenhouse (cited in Cochran-Smith & Lytle) and others who have been influential in the action research movement encouraged teachers to improve their classroom practices by becoming involved in action research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). In this present report, the term “teacher research” is used to describe a range of methodologies, including action research and variations of action research such as practitioner research and practitioner inquiry, and “teachers as researchers” means those teachers who use any of these research methods to investigate and improve teaching practice.

The teacher-as-researcher movement, recognising teacher knowledge and experience, aims to empower teachers. Teacher research reframes teachers as knowledgeable professionals who through their classroom work are able to construct knowledge about teaching and learning as schools begin to develop a “knowledge base for change”. Cochran-Smith and Lytle define teacher research as “systematic, intentional inquiry by teachers about their own school and classroom work” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 24) and base their description upon Stenhouse’s

“systematic, self-critical enquiry” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 7). The benefits, for both teaching and learning, of teachers undertaking research are outlined in more detail below.

## What are the benefits of teacher–researcher partnerships?

When teachers undertake research in partnership with researchers, the benefits can extend to the students, the teachers, the school, the parents and caregivers, and the researchers. (Jones & Moreland, 2003).

### *Benefits to students*

The benefits to students include: being listened to by teachers (Berger et al., 2005); improved learning as teachers try new curriculum and pedagogical practices (Holm, Hunter & Welling, 1999); and raised student achievement (Cushman, 1998; Evans & Songer-Hudgell, 2003; Lodge & Reed, 2003).

### *Benefits to teachers*

Cole and Knowles (1993) consider teaching as inquiry, and inquiry as development. They say that teacher development represents a commitment to lifelong learning and ongoing inquiry into one’s practice through ongoing reflection. Teacher research is a highly effective and powerful method of professional development (Gettinger et al., 1999; Robinson, 2003).

While the TLRI is not intended primarily as a method of teacher professional development, the appropriateness of teacher research undertaken in partnership with academic researchers as a teacher development model is much too valuable to ignore. Specifically, this includes learning that is contextual, relevant, collaborative, specific and tailored to a need, adaptive, and provides mentoring and support in the workplace so as to enable the transfer of learning. The factors described in the literature as the benefits of, and best practice for, teacher professional development are closely aligned with the factors described as benefits of, and best practice for, teacher research.

#### Engaging in teacher research

- enhances the teachers’ professional self-esteem and overall sense of self;
- improves their skills and knowledge of teaching and learning; and
- encourages collaborative practice.

#### *Teachers’ sense of self*

Engaging in research stimulates personal and professional growth, provides opportunities for reflection and self-examination (Dyson, 1997). It has also been suggested that engaging in research leads to enhanced levels of motivation and a greater sense of self-efficacy (Berger et al., 2005; Cushman, 1998; Evans & Songer-Hudgell, 2003).

### *Knowledge and skills*

Teachers' knowledge of teaching and learning is enhanced through opportunities to examine their practice (Dyson, 1997). Conducting research encourages teachers to reflect on practice (which in itself improves teacher effectiveness) and to try new curriculum and pedagogical practices (Holm et al., 1999). Teacher research provides both opportunities and the climate for exploring issues that are important to the daily work of teaching. It assists teachers to examine aspects of their practice (Flack & Osler, 1999). Further, it provides opportunities and strategies for teachers confronted with problems to delay action, undertake further investigation, review decisions, probe more deeply, and make evidence-based decisions to effect sustained improvement, rather than rush to find a solution, as they too often tend to do (Lodge & Reed, 2003; Robinson, 2003). Teacher research provides opportunities for teachers and academics to learn from other teachers (Flack & Osler, 1999) and encourages teachers' engagement with research; teachers are more likely to find evidence credible if they actively participate in its generation (Elliot, 2004).

### *Collaborative practice*

Situated learning is learning that occurs in an authentic context of social interaction and collaboration. Professional development for teachers is making a slow shift towards situated learning through collaborative and school-based activity (Hawk & Hill, 2003). An increasing move towards collaborative teacher development has led to benefits such as interaction, feedback and the sharing of ideas, and may be of greater value than individual learning (Hawk & Hill, 2003; Noe & Colquitt, 2002; Sites, 2003). It is these same features—social interaction, collaboration, idea-sharing, interaction and feedback—that teachers find supportive when engaging in teacher research. Research partnerships provide a basis for collegiality and collaboration between teachers. The characteristics necessary to encourage collaboration include mutual support, encouragement, motivation, trust, teachers' ability to identify each other's strengths and weaknesses, personal and professional respect, and the confidence to take risks (Flack & Osler, 1999).

Teachers desire opportunities for talking collaboratively (Boostrom, Jackson & Hansen, 1993). Research partnerships provide opportunities for increased teacher collaboration, discussion, mutual support, and sharing of what has been learned (Berger et al., 2005; Flack & Osler, 1999; Holm, Hunter & Welling, 1999; Lodge & Reed, 2003), as well as lessen the isolation of teachers (Holm et al., 1999). They promote the voice of the teacher, the voice that is confident in class, yet less so when communicating knowledge to peers. The partnerships give the teacher-researchers an opportunity to talk about their work to colleagues (Flack & Osler, 1999), so that other teachers and academics can learn from it and they themselves are able to make a difference to the profession (Flack & Osler, 1999).

### *The wider benefits*

While the benefits for individual teachers (provided the circumstances and context are supported) are clear, there is potential for the benefits to spread further, to other teachers and the wider

profession. However, as discussed later, findings from teacher research are rarely disseminated beyond the teacher researchers to the wider staff.

## **What conditions enhance outcomes for teachers as researchers?**

### **A culture that supports the transfer of learning**

“All new learning involves transfer based on previous learning” (Bransford et al., 2000, p. 53). At its most simple, transfer of learning usually involves the near replication of new learning from one context to another that is substantially similar. More complex transfer involves the linking of new learning to prior learning in order to make a new, expanded learning which is then applied some time later in another context and in an abstracted way that goes well beyond simple replication. If learning gained in the course of professional development were transferred successfully to teaching and learning, change in teachers’ behaviours would be evident. In the broad context of adult learning and training, the literature on transfer of learning indicates that it often fails (Haskell, 2001), or is only partially successful. Successful transfer of learning into the workplace, over time, is estimated to be as low as 10 percent (Machin, 2002).

Teacher learning is an inherent aspect of teacher research. In terms of the TLRI, the relevance of transfer of learning depends on whether:

- learning transfers from the activity the teacher-researcher is engaged in to their future classroom practice;
- learning transfers to other teachers in the school, thereby ensuring that effective practices become an inculcated part of the collaborative culture of the whole school; and
- the teacher-researchers are able to transfer effective practices across contexts (for example, into other subjects, or groups of students other than those involved in the initial research project).

### **A climate that supports the transfer of learning and a culture of inquiry**

In analysing the many factors that serve to inhibit or facilitate transfer of learning, writers such as Broad and Newstrom (cited in Machin, 2002) and Foxon (1993) have categorised the factors under three major headings:

- learners’ characteristics, such as motivation, self-efficacy, and aptitude (Haskell, 2001);
- training delivery and design; and
- a managerial and organisational climate that includes manager support and feedback (Holton, cited in Tennant, 1999; Foxon, 1993), peer support, and the availability of resources. When reviewing the specific factors teachers identified as necessary for the successful transfer of

learning, Holton and Foxon both found that almost all depended on the managerial and organisational climate.

Berger et al. (2005) explored the link between teacher research and whole school change in three US schools that were described as having close ties between teacher research and school culture. They found that it was very hard to move teacher research out of individual classrooms and into entire schools, and that transfer of learning was both difficult and highly dependent on the school management.

They found not only that the learning from the research failed to transfer beyond the teacher researchers, but that the findings themselves were not disseminated beyond the group of teachers involved in the research project. The teacher-researchers thought that if other teaching staff were interested, they would ask about it; the non-research staff thought that if anything of worth had come from the research, the teacher-researchers would have shared it with them. Groundwater-Smith and Dadds (2004), who value the contextual nature of teacher research, found similarly that in order for research to have impact beyond the immediate classroom it needs to be embedded within the overall school culture, and that the school—perhaps led by the manager—needs to plan for specific ways to use and embed the knowledge in order for it to be useful.

Teacher-researchers thrive in schools where the principal is fully involved and provides a strong school culture and a collaborative, supportive environment (Berger et al., 2005; Jones & Moreland, 2003; Lodge & Reed, 2003). Teachers need to collaborate with other teachers, and the research needs to be a collegial enterprise. However, it has been shown that when supportive principals leave schools, research tends to stop and teachers stop meeting and talking about their projects. Some believe that the influence of the principal extends beyond the level of support, and that the principal needs to mandate involvement for teachers if research is to operate successfully throughout a school and have an impact on it. Berger et al. (2005) also point out, however, that while such a mandate may be necessary, it is impossible to achieve, as teachers cannot be forced to participate. Jones and Moreland (2003) discuss the role of other factors related to school climate, such as:

- the strategic choice of teachers involved in partnerships;
- a long-term commitment by the school to research projects of at least three years' duration; and
- the creation of a research-driven school in which teachers are encouraged, as additional factors that will affect the success of the research, to use and examine research, and investigate their own practice.

## Relevance of the research

When teachers undertake research into their practice with the intention of improving it, they are ultimately preparing to learn. That learning is of use to them only if they can then apply and use it

in the context of their classrooms. Among the strengths and benefits of teacher research is the contextual nature of the investigation.

## Resources

The factors required to assist teacher researchers create a culture of inquiry are:

- adequate time for research work such as data collection, reading, journaling, and meeting with colleagues (Berger et al., 2005; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993);
- a sufficient allocation of money and materials; and
- supportive leadership and modelling from school management (Berger et al., 2005).

## Research support

Flack and Osler (1999) identify several factors teachers within partnerships require from researchers in order to sustain their involvement, including: mentoring; support and encouragement; affirmations of practice through showing enthusiasm and interest in classroom work; project management; direction from the research partner, to learn the skills and language of research; and encouragement to present work to wider audiences (Flack & Osler, 1999).

## Summary

The literature identifies a number of ways that schools, students and teachers benefit from teachers' involvement in research. It also provides evidence that teacher research is a strong model for teacher professional development. The literature also points, however, to a number of conditions that are critical to the success of teacher research. Those conditions depend on the culture of the school, the level of support it offers, the characteristics of the teacher, and the support and actions of the researchers. They include:

- adequate time for work associated with research (Berger et al., 2005; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993);
- time for teachers to talk (Flack & Osler, 1999), which allows teachers to “engage in joint construction of knowledge through conversation” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p.94);
- a strong school culture, with positive modelling from the principal and a supportive senior management that encourages collegiality and collaborative teacher work (Berger et al., 2005; Jones and Moreland, 2003; Lodge & Reed; 2003);
- a research-driven school in which teachers are encouraged to use and examine research and investigate their own practice (Jones & Moreland, 2003);
- the strategic choice of teachers (Jones & Moreland, 2003);
- the perceived positive impact of the research (Jones & Moreland, 2003);
- the researcher's conduct (Jones & Moreland, 2003);

- long-term commitment to research projects (of at least three years' duration) (Jones & Moreland, 2003); and
- encouragement to present work to wider audiences (Flack & Osler, 1999).

## 3. Methodology

### **Purpose of this study**

This study focuses on:

- (a) the ways in which teachers have taken on the role of “teacher as researcher” and their perspectives on it; and
- (b) the notion of partnership and how that has been played out within five of the TLRI projects.

With the notion of partnership being a fundamental premise of the TLRI, this study seeks to discover:

- (a) how the teacher-practitioner became involved in the research partnership;
- (b) how tasks of the partnership have been shared or allocated, and how that was decided;
- (c) how the teacher-practitioners felt about their roles, and the level of their involvement within their partnerships; and
- (d) what they needed in order for the research to be successful.

As well as considering how the partnerships have been played out thus far, this study seeks to find out what if any changes are required in order to meet the aims and principles of the TLRI.

### **Research questions**

The research questions for this study were:

- What is the nature of the involvement of teacher-practitioners in current TLRI projects?
- What are the teacher-practitioners views of the strengths and limitations of their role as teacher researchers in TLRI project teams?
- What can be learnt from talking with teachers that could influence the future direction and planning of the TLRI?

## **Research design**

### **The researcher**

I have 21 years' teaching experience at primary, intermediate, and (more recently) secondary school level. Throughout most of my teaching career I have undertaken teacher professional development and academic study in addition to my teaching. I am now completing a Masters in Education. Within my MEd study I have undertaken an action research study into student truancy.

### **The sample**

In selecting participants for my research, I elected to interview teachers from the sectors that matched my own experience: primary, intermediate and secondary schools.

Sixteen teacher-practitioners were chosen from five project teams in 10 schools throughout four regions in the North Island.

Project leaders were contacted first, for permission to enter their projects. They were also asked to recommend suitable teacher-practitioners to interview. A range of personal characteristics within each team was specified, including levels of teaching experience; levels of research experience; and diversity of gender, ethnicity and position of seniority within the school. Teachers with varying partnership experiences were also sought, as it was important to include teachers who were unable to complete the partnership project work as well as those who had very successful experiences.

The 16 participants comprised one school principal, four deputy principals, one senior teacher and ten classroom teachers. Eight of the participants were working in secondary teaching, and eight in the primary-intermediate areas.

One teacher was a project supervisor whose work during the project was mainly one of co-ordination between five teachers and an external researcher. This teacher was often unable to respond to questions, as they were aimed specifically at participating teacher-researchers.

## **Methods**

### **Gathering data**

The researcher travelled to the 10 schools taking part in the study and interviewed the teacher-practitioners inside the school/research setting. One teacher was interviewed by telephone.

Data were gathered through interviews using a list of 12 open-ended questions (given in Appendix A). The interviews were often semi-structured, in that the teachers were often keen to talk in detail about their projects and were encouraged to do so, as the data often linked to and

enriched the 12 pre-set questions. The interviews were taped, and generally lasted 45–60 minutes. The tapes were later transcribed.

## **Analysing data**

Using colour coding, the transcripts of the interviews were analysed for themes related to the research questions. Other themes that arose from the data were also picked out. The data were analysed for patterns and trends, both between projects and between schools.

## **Consent and ethics**

An introductory letter (Appendix B) and consent form (Appendix C) were sent to the teachers. If a teacher consented to participate, a letter was sent to the principal (Appendix D) giving information about the project and details of the impending visit.

## 4. Findings

### Introduction

#### The participants

This project investigated the perspectives of 16 teachers, 8 from the primary-intermediate level, and 8 from secondary, from a total of 10 schools involved in five of the TLRI partnership projects. The level of teaching experience held by the teachers ranged from one year through to more than 20 years. Eleven participants were classroom teachers, some with senior teacher responsibilities; four were assistant or deputy principals with some teaching contact, and one was a school principal. Eleven of the participants were female and five were male.

### Research background of participants

#### Previous research experience

Six teachers, four of eight at primary school level and two of eight at secondary level, were completing or had completed postgraduate study, in all but one instance as a Masters in Education. The exception was a secondary teacher with a Masters in their teaching subject. Another two teachers had completed one or two papers at Masters level, and another counted informal reading on education as research.

Seven teachers said they had no prior research experience at all, beyond that encountered perhaps in undertaking a Bachelor of Teaching. Some of the primary school teachers had no previous university experience, but were currently studying part-time over and above their teaching loads to upgrade their qualifications from Teaching Diplomas to Bachelor degrees in Education.

#### Previous use of research

Of the 16 teachers interviewed, 13 said that before their involvement in a TLRI research partnership they had used research in some way to inform or improve their practice.

I just had a strong belief that the research should inform practice.

(Participant 8)

Of those 13 teachers, some recognised that while they may not have used research findings directly, they had done so indirectly when implementing curriculum initiatives that were research-based.

I don't think I would say because of a particular piece of research I have changed my practice... I would say that research has been the backbone and core of curriculum development, resource production ... teaching pedagogy so ... probably tremendously influenced in an indirect sort of way.

(Participant 12)

Only three teachers felt that they had not used research at all to inform or improve their practice. Of these, one said: "no, I learn from my mistakes" (Participant 2), another was new to teaching, and the third said they engaged in "thinking", or "reflective practice" (Participant 3).

A senior teacher who had some experience undertaking research, both before and during Masters study and during the TLRI partnership, said:

I'd done a lot of dabbling around with action research in my own class, but it wasn't until I started my own Masters ... action research study that I realised how powerful action research is ... particularly because it's your own research carried out by you in your own setting ... To me that's hugely powerful. This project and my own study have made me realise how useful a research approach to education is.

(Participant 7)

## **Teachers' roles in the research teams**

### **How the teachers became involved in TLRI partnerships**

In four of the five projects studied, the teachers had become involved in their research partnerships after the research project designs and research questions had been formulated by the academic researchers, who had then entered schools to recruit teachers with whom to form partnerships.

In the fifth project, the four primary-school senior managers I spoke with had completed, or were near completing, their Masters in Education. One had become part of the project after the project design had been set out by the teachers and researchers, to replace a departing staff member who had taken part in the initial design. The other three had initiated their individual research projects, and then worked together with the researchers and other teachers involved in the project to construct the overall research project, which was part of the TLRI programme and which they all had been instrumental in initiating. Having devised their own research designs and questions, these four teachers undertook the individual projects under the supervision of the researchers.

The 12 other teachers, including two with postgraduate experience, had been invited to participate either directly, or indirectly through their schools, by university researchers who were initiating the projects, which were initially designed without teacher-practitioner guidance or input.

## The projects—types and purposes

The research undertaken by the teachers generally fell into one of two areas of inquiry.

In the first area there was more emphasis on the teacher and teaching. Teachers were given strategies to reflect on their practice, and encouraged with guidance and mentoring from the researchers and teaching partners to make quite radical changes to their teaching methodology in order either to enhance their teaching in general, or to make changes to teaching practice to better align it with curriculum developments.

In the other area of inquiry the focus was more on the students, student learning, or curriculum. The teachers' roles in the project were to test students, analyse the results, and develop theories or findings and recommendations that would enhance student learning. In this second option there was also a need for teachers to make changes in practice, but here it was implicit rather than specific. Such changes were not included in the scope of this study.

## Teachers' attitudes and involvement

Looking at the nature of the partnerships raised questions such as:

- Did teachers have a say in the overall aims and objectives, or the design and methodology?
- Did they see it as part of their role?

In defining the notion of partnership, the principles of the TLRI set out that researchers and teachers should work together in a reciprocal process. They do not, however, define how the partnership should organise or share the project tasks. The expectation, implicit within the principles and explicit within much of the teacher-researcher literature, was that teachers would be empowered to have some ownership of the project, which might include framing questions that would both draw out and build on teacher knowledge. This study sought to explore the teachers' views of the nature of their partnerships with researchers in five TLRI projects.

Of the 16 teachers, half said they did have some level of input in the overall aims, objectives, design or methodology of their project. The responses of the other half were “no”, or “yes and no”. Those who said “no” all qualified their response by saying that the research was well planned, they were happy with it, and they felt that they could have had some input if they had wanted to. One respondent who said “no” took over the project from a senior manager who had initiated it and then left the school once the planning had been done. Of the respondents who said “yes and no”, most felt that at the beginning of their projects they were so unsure about what they were embarking on that they were in no position to make suggestions. They all felt that later, when they were conducting the research and understood the nature of the design and objectives,

they were then able to make changes based on how they were experiencing the process. It is possible that if those teachers had been involved in setting the research objectives, designing the research, or writing the questions, they may have been less unsure early on of the purposes of the project.

Not right smack bang in the beginning, because we didn't even know what it was about ... It was already established ... it was when we got into it ... [that] things evolved. At first I couldn't get my head around it, it was something so different, so huge.

(Participant 10)

Well, perhaps what didn't work so well was that initially when we got involved we didn't sort of have any idea of what the framework was that we were working with, it was all a bit woolly and we sort of felt that we went into it with some sort of blind faith that it would all fall into place and work. I think from the outset it wasn't very clear to us.

(Participant 15)

It took a while to kind of really start to see what it is that they were really looking for and to actually begin to really look and focus on that myself.

(Participant 4)

Others felt that it was after their successful involvement in the research project that questions started to flow, and one school in particular has decided to continue with the research in a modified form.

We [were] basically happy to go with the flow ... rather than taking the initiative ... it's actually after the research that the research has brought up so many questions and then the school is starting to take [the] initiative ... This research has planted a seed in not only the teacher's heart but the students as well. They see the effect of research, and now they want some more.

(Participant 2)

## Roles within the partnerships

The teachers were integrated into the research process and had research roles. The roles that were undertaken by the teachers were mostly in the areas of data gathering, data analysis and, in the case of three projects, a written report or another method of dissemination of the research findings.

According to the teachers, the roles that the researchers undertook in most instances included the design of the research projects, the preparation of the expression of interest and other associated correspondence, the framing of the research questions, the project plan, the budget, monitoring, resourcing, mentoring, co-ordination, assistance with reflective practice, feedback, project management, supply of related reading material, guidance on methodology, and writing for academic and practitioner audiences.

While the initial research designs and questions were often formulated by the researchers before the partnerships were formed, the teachers felt that the research projects and research questions were broad enough to allow them to write specific research questions that were pertinent to their own teaching experience. All teacher-researchers found that the research questions were flexible enough in their design to be contextualised, or were pertinent and relevant to their teaching, and that the research work would contribute directly to current educational initiatives (such as the primary schools' numeracy project), or would focus on pedagogical practices that enhanced current curriculum teaching (such as incorporating the use of "student voice"). Only one of the 16 teachers said that the research question they were involved with was not of great interest to them, although they had found the results interesting and relevant.

### Impact of previous research experience

The data show that the primary school teachers in management positions who had postgraduate experience were more likely to initiate research projects than teachers at other levels, whether or not they had postgraduate experience. It is possible that these participants' reduced classroom contact time may also have significantly supported their choice to take on work beyond the usual workload. They also had established relationships with university researchers and academics and have networks to call on.

Well, I was doing my Masters ... and I saw the ad in a *Gazette* ... so I talked with my supervisor.

(Participant 6)

Of those teacher-researchers with postgraduate experience, many felt that they still did not have "research experience" as such, and felt that they would have been disadvantaged if they had tried to do the project without having done a university paper on research methods.

## Teachers' views on partnership and undertaking teacher research

### Teachers' thoughts on their levels of involvement

The four primary-level teachers in the study, who were all in senior management positions within their schools, felt that despite their postgraduate study experience (including completing papers in research methods and running their own sub-projects as supervised postgraduate university study) they still had a lot to learn about undertaking research. They all felt that they had benefited from working with academic researchers and were not interested in changing the nature of the partnerships they were engaged in. The reasons they gave for this included:

- not enough time to do any more than they were currently doing;
- their own perceived lack of research skill and experience;

- their enjoyment of the project management offered by the researchers;
- their appreciation of the mentoring they received from the researchers;
- the academic rigour that came from being involved in research with academics who continually stretched their thinking and abilities; and
- the resources that the academic researchers were able to provide, such as recording devices, transcription services, networking with other academics and personnel.

All 16 of the teacher-researchers I spoke with were adamant that they were not in a position to initiate and run a project, for the same reasons given above. None of the teachers, regardless of prior research experience, thought that it would be realistic to undertake a research project on their own, even if support from academic researchers were available.

I'm not a researcher after just one or two projects ... my main concern is the classroom teaching ... for me to do this ... I couldn't have any HOD or acting HOD responsibilities.

(Participant 14)

Teachers, [and] schools are just tremendously busy places and I just don't think it would be a starter ... I think the balance is pretty well right, in the sense that you're gaining the expertise from the university, but they weren't in total control, they allowed us to do things and try things ... and guided us in the right direction.

(Participant 12)

## Teachers' definitions of partnership

The teachers gave a variety of definitions of "partnership", as illustrated below. None of them said that their definitions were any different from their experiences. Given that the projects were either well established, under way, or already complete by the time of the interviews, it is safe to assume that the definitions were based on their actual partnership experiences.

Genuine partnership is where status doesn't matter, where people work genuinely together ... I think it's based on a lot of trust, and it's based on a lot of collegiality and professionalism. I think if you've got those ingredients, then I think you can have a successful partnership.

(Participant 6)

A partnership means to me that I can be behind the wheel as well, and I share the driving. It could be that the researcher is doing the driving and I might be the co-driver, helping to navigate and then swap around ... not just having that one person there behind the wheel.

(Participant 10)

There is no inequality, so there is a real balance and an understanding between the researcher and myself ... learning from each other.

(Participant 5)

They are providing their expertise, they are the expert researchers, and they are helping us develop our skills in that area as well.

(Participant 12)

Some teachers saw the purpose of the research partnership more as supported reflective teaching, where the emphasis remained on the teacher and the teacher's learning, rather than a case of the teacher taking on a research role.

Research is actually a combination of classroom practice and theory. One cannot exist without the other.

(Participant 7)

It really is a process whereby somebody else is sharing a teaching learning experience with you and being able to reflect things back to you and allowing you time to respond to what they have seen.

(Participant 4)

Teachers engaged in reflective practice and then doing something about it, not just thinking about it, but actually making changes and seeing what comes of those changes.

(Participant 3)

## Experiences of partnership

In one particular project, a teacher I spoke with was researching a method for teacher development. The strategy was to involve a small number of teachers on the staff, in stages, with the intention of drawing in, over time, the majority of the school's staff. The teacher saw the partnership as extending in this way beyond that of the teacher-practitioner and the researcher to encompass the other teachers within the school. In another school, student involvement in analysing data was the heart of teacher learning, and there the teachers described how the partnership had extended to include the students.

In one school where the research was not as successful as expected, one teacher said that the project did not fit the teacher's own idea of a partnership:

I didn't get the feeling that there was a partnership.

(Participant 16)

However, in another school, the staff were engaging in collaborative work and the partnership was extending between schools:

I think what worked really well, too, is the talking between schools.

(Participant 15)

Most participants felt that they had benefited from their involvement with university researchers. They were appreciative of the support they received and all the work done by the researchers.

We have benefited from the expertise from the university ... and they have always been willing to come into the school if we sort of feel we have reached a stage where we are a little bit stuck.

(Participant 15)

Another teacher saw the benefit to the researchers:

I think the most important part of that relationship is the university getting a handle on what the chalk face is like.

(Participant 8)

### *Ways teachers benefited*

Fifteen of the 16 teachers I spoke with felt that they benefited in many ways from the partnerships they were in. The remaining teacher reported learning a lot from the project, but said little about the partnership effect. Of the other 15, it was evident when hearing several of their voices that the research work, and the relationships with the researchers, had had a profound affect upon them. Clearly, many of the teachers had committed themselves fully to their projects and had been prepared to take risks in opening up their classrooms and teaching practice to the critical scrutiny of researchers, other teachers and, in some instances, students. These teachers also spoke of the enormous trust and respect that their working relationships with the researchers were imbued with. It was evident that the researchers had worked hard to develop good relationships with the teachers, and in some instances the students as well. Often the researchers had maintained a relationship with the teachers, continuing to visit and support them for some time after the projects had been completed. The benefits the teachers cited included:

- being encouraged to try different ways of teaching;

... because I had never really taught maths like that before ...

(Participant 10)

- being supported to try new challenges;

... yeah, total support, 'don't worry if you think you are falling off the edge, I will pull you back in' ...

(Participant 10)

- receiving opportunities for self-reflection, critical examination of practice, and ongoing support and mentoring to change;

... for me it meant I had to look really closely at the way which I taught, the way which I did stuff, and I had to pretty much strip bare, right back and have a look hard at what I had actually taken out ...

(Participant 10)

... this is what this project not only encouraged you to do ... you were pretty much prepared to strip bare and lay yourself open ...

(Participant 10)

- enjoying the collegiality provided through partnership with other teachers.

... not only were we working in a partnership with ... [researcher], but I knew we would have some sort of team, that we would be able to work together as well, and for me that made a huge difference.

(Participant 10).

## Relevance of the project and research questions

The study asked the teachers if the purpose of the project and the nature of the research questions were relevant to their teaching practice, interests, philosophy of teaching, and learning.

All of the participants felt they could formulate or shape their own question within the big research question, or that the project design was relevant to current changes in curriculum or pedagogical practice.

One teacher entered the partnership for reasons other than that of real interest, and felt that the topic was not particularly stimulating. However, in terms of suitability of purpose and relevance to classroom work, all the other teachers found that the projects were relevant and suited their purposes.

Yes ... I thought, 'this is exactly what I'd like to be involved in,' because ... ultimately it's about what we can do to change teaching and learning in New Zealand schools.

(Participant 6)

I could see it fitting in with the evolving culture that we wanted to have here, with the change that we wanted to bring about in teaching and learning, so it fitted in very much with what I believed ... If you want to change your practice you've got to work with teachers to bring about that change. You can't impose it, you have to work with them ... And the teachers are now finding that because they've got a research base that they're starting to say 'Oh yes, we had some control over that'.

(Participant 6)

Yes, in terms of purpose ... for me, I want to improve my teaching practice, that's why I'm in ... I used this research as a tool ... it really forces you to think about your teaching practice ... to do something intelligent rather than doing something mechanically on a daily basis.

(Participant 2)

Yes, definitely, I think my teaching philosophy developed as I read the kids' transcripts.

(Participant 3)

## Workplace support for teacher research

While the relationships that developed between the teachers and researchers appeared to be a vital aspect of achieving positive results, it is clear from the findings that school support for the research and the overall school climate are equally essential. This finding is closely aligned with the literature on factors that support teacher research (Berger et al., 2005) and the literature on the factors that positively facilitate learning in professional development programmes for teachers.

We are a small school and there's already an established fondness between the teachers and the students, and respect, and we genuinely like each other.

(Participant 3)

The one teacher who was unable to identify many positive aspects of the partnership relationship, and had not received any release time “because it was not organised”. Participant 16 was not prepared to comment on whether or not the support of the school had been adequate.

The workplace factors most critical to the success of the projects were:

- release time;
- support from senior management;
- a strong sense of collegiality among staff (which included characteristics such as trust and respect); and
- a supportive and positive school climate in general.

I knew our school would support our involvement with the university.

(Participant 7)

As we all reported on our individual projects, we talked about trust. To get alongside a colleague and say, ‘I’m struggling’ ... It’s such a trusting environment here. And all schools have said that—the trust has to be high ... trust is huge.

(Participant 7)

The change process itself in the school needs to be collaborative.

(Participant 7)

[The principal] is a great leader ... embraced and valued my work ... was interested in it ... [and would say] ‘Tell me about it, what’s happening?’

(Participant 7)

You do need a leader that is on board with this whole thing, otherwise it just is not going to have the same momentum.

(Participant 15)

In a number of the projects the benefits to the school were intended to be school-wide. In some, the partnership was planned to extend to include the all or most of the staff over time. In another school, the intention was to include most of the staff from the outset. However, this did not

eventuate—only three teachers undertook the research (one participant quoted other staff as saying that unless senior management were going to participate, they didn't see why they should). In these instances, the school management was the determining factor in bringing staff on board.

## What teachers needed from their own schools

The resource that teachers required most was teacher release. Generally, the teachers thought this had been budgeted for by the project, and felt they got just enough. Some teachers said they did not use all the release that they were entitled to, as they felt they could not take so much time out of the classroom, and that it did not account for the time needed to prepare relief work to cover the relief time. One teacher, who was very circumspect throughout the interview, said that the teachers in the school who were involved in the partnership never got any release time, and was not sure if it was the responsibility of the school, the teacher, or the researcher to organise this. However, teachers in other schools within the same project were able to access sufficient release time to undertake regular supported data analysis activities.

Teacher–researcher partnerships benefit students, teachers, schools, parents and caregivers, and researchers (Jones & Moreland; 2003). Successful partnerships extend beyond the teacher and the academic researcher to include the students, other teachers in the schools, and beyond. Schools benefit from:

- increased collegiality and the positive environment that this creates; and
- improved learning experiences and outcomes for students.

Schools, in return, need to support teachers who are involved in teacher research.

In one large school the teachers needed to use their lunchtimes for data-gathering exercises. The method they used to communicate with students was to put requests in the “morning notices”, a communication method commonly used with varying levels of success in many secondary schools. Students often had not had the notices read to them, and participation was low. The teachers felt that if the whole staff had known about the research and what the teachers were trying to achieve, that they may have been better supported and had more students involved. Expecting students to give up their lunchtimes, or the activities they usually participated in during their breaks was detrimental to data gathering. Providing relief for research activities inside of school time and creating a school-wide expectation that selected students attend and participate in research activities would have better supported the teacher researchers.

## Teacher workload and stress

Most teachers felt that being involved in the research project was rewarding and interesting. They were glad to have been involved, saying that they learnt a lot from it, that it was a good way to learn, and that it contributed directly to making necessary changes to curriculum teaching. Some teachers talked about the amount of work it took, but commented that it was manageable. In general, they felt that the support and assistance from the researchers was the vital element in

keeping them going. One secondary school teacher said that, for the amount of work involved, some type of reward (such as being credited with a postgraduate-level university paper) would have made participation in the project more worthwhile.

All the teachers felt that because of the workload they were pleased with the input and support from the researchers. Some were keen to undertake research in the future, but were concerned that students were missing out on teaching when they took release time. This was one of the greatest concerns teachers had about the whole process.

In one particular school, all three teachers I spoke with mentioned the workload. They were very committed, hard-working teachers who had clearly put a tremendous amount of personal energy into the project—which, by the nature of its design, expected much in the way of teacher reflection and teacher change as well as curriculum development. The long-term benefits to these teachers (and all those taking part in the projects) of undertaking the research included learning appropriate teaching methods that best meet new curriculum initiatives and the experience of practising them in context and with support and mentoring. All three teachers mentioned during their interviews that the original intention was that the whole school would be involved in the research project but, for reasons that were not elucidated, only they themselves took part. For them this meant an increase in data-gathering and analysis, in order to gather enough data. There was a suggestion that the researcher working with the teachers was using the research towards personal qualifications, and that this influenced the amount of data required from the school. If this was indeed the case, the purpose of the project may need readdressing, and the benefits to rewarding the researcher for their competent work need to be weighed against the added stress for the teachers involved in the projects. This would help safeguard similar research projects from this kind of bias in the future.

## Overall learning as professional development

All the teachers said that they had been given research information relevant to their projects by their research partners. The teachers with postgraduate experience were more likely to have read this than the other teacher-researchers, most of whom said they did not read any of the material provided. During our interviews, the teachers with postgraduate experience were more likely to cite research and researchers they were currently reading. In schools where these teachers were in senior administrative roles, there was evidence that research was shared with staff. Posters citing relevant research findings were prominently displayed on staffroom walls, thus providing the whole staff with easy access to research findings.

All teachers agreed that the partnership research was a strong form of professional development. One teacher was critical of their school's regular model of professional development for the staff, saying it happened once a week or once a fortnight for two hours after school, involved a "big pile of books" and had "no students involved", whereas the research partnership provided constant contact with the researcher, who developed good relationships with the students (Participant 10).

All 16 participants agreed that what they had learnt through undertaking the research would have a lasting impact on them as teachers, and that they would be integrating the skills and knowledge gained into their future teaching. Some were able to list very specific concepts that they would introduce or change (Participants 3 and 4). Others said that, while they could not specify exactly what they would implement, they thought that what they had learnt from the research findings would have a long-term effect on their teaching. This suggests that the learning gained from undertaking the research would become part of their tacit knowledge.

I think it will be a subconscious thing, really.

(Participant 12)

The literature on the transfer of learning states that in order to enhance the likelihood of effective transfer of knowledge and skills, transfer of learning needs to be specifically planned for and managed (Haskell, 2001).

In the review of the literature, the importance to teacher professional development of the organisational climate and the manager is made explicit. Other factors that are also likely to contribute to the transfer of learning into the workplace are the contextual nature of the learning (Machin, 2002) and the collaborative nature of the learning (Hawk & Hill, 2003; Noe & Colquitt, 2002; Sites, 2003). Transfer of learning benefits from learning in the context of the workplace, and while there are arguments for not over-contextualising (Bransford et al., 2000), there is little positive evidence for transfer of learning between different situations (Machin, 2002); therefore, the argument for contextualised learning is supported. The benefits of all the TLRI projects are that the teachers are learning and practising in the context of their own classrooms, with their own students, and in most schools the partnerships include two or (in most cases) several staff. In one project where there were several teachers undertaking their research alone to satisfy the requirement of their Masters study, all but one had implemented their initial plan, which was to bring the staff into the partnership. These partnerships were, by my observation, strong models of collegiality and collaborative teacher researching.

An advantage of whole-school learning and development and the associated accountability that goes with collaborative work would make whole-staff learning more likely to occur. In all schools where the teacher involved in the project was a member of the senior management, the integration of project outcomes into school-wide policy was a primary objective of the research.

In a number of schools there were small pockets of teachers who through their research work were gaining important findings that, contextually, would have benefited the knowledge and practices of the whole staff. When I asked some of them if they would disseminate the findings among the staff they had no plan to do so beyond their immediate department. Berger et al. (2005) found that findings were not disseminated in the three US schools they investigated; all three had been recommended to them as successful teacher-research schools. The TLRI partnerships are required to produce a final report to publish the findings of their projects. In this way their

findings will, ultimately, be disseminated to those to choose to know, and the teachers will have a voice through which to share their knowledge.

The aims and objectives of the TLRI included increasing the research capability of teachers, and increasing the knowledge of teaching and learning for both researchers and practitioners. For the teacher-researchers, their experience of being in a TLRI partnership provided them with an insight into, and experience of, undertaking research; all agreed that it was a superior form of teacher development. When summarising their partnership experience, the teachers emphasised the extent and value of the learning they had gained about teaching and learning.

The research findings have shown that the teacher-researchers were highly satisfied with the ways in which the partnerships they were involved in had played out. The teachers worked hard on their partnership project. As a result, all were able to report that they had learned more about research, and had greatly benefited from what they had learned about teaching and learning. The teachers all felt that their level of involvement was about right, and they appreciated the amount of work that the researchers did as part of the project. In most instances they spoke highly of the researchers, who had clearly been highly supportive, professional, and had worked hard in the schools to maintain or create a culture of trust, respect, and deep learning.

## 5. Recommendations

### **To teachers and researchers**

1. Teachers who are involved in the early stages of designing the research and writing the research questions tend to be clearer from the beginning about the purpose of the research and what they are working towards achieving. I recommend that partnerships be formed early in the research planning, or at least that this point be considered when teachers are brought into the partnership.
2. Where appropriate, project budgeting should take account of research activities inside schools, to enable teachers to undertake the necessary administration and to provide relief for teacher–student research activities.
3. As part of the project planning and budgeting, I recommend that the team members work out the expected workload for each teacher involved. The time commitment required by the project needs to be made explicit. Teachers participating in the research project need to be able to renegotiate time allocation and/or time frames if the initial plans are not implemented as intended.

### **To the schools**

4. I recommend that school management meets with teachers undertaking research partnerships, to ascertain what their requirements are in terms of time and other research-related costs. Such costs need to be included within project budgets and then used as planned. I further recommend that all of the staff be informed about the project and encouraged to take an interest in it.

### **To NZCER**

5. I recommend that, where the partnership is not adversely affected, teachers be supported to contribute their research work towards higher qualifications.

6. I further recommend that research assistants who work in partnership with teachers be able to contribute their research towards further qualifications—but only where doing so is not detrimental to the partnership.

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## 7. Appendices

### Appendix A: Interview Questions

#### The TLRI: Teachers' perspectives of partnership and research: Interview questions

1. How did you get involved in this project?
2. At what stage of the planning of the project did you join? Why did you get involved?
3. Prior to this project, what research experience have you had? (formal study?—if so, at what qualification level? As part of teacher training? In-school professional development? Other? (Please specify)
4. Before your involvement in this project, had you used research to inform or improve your teaching practice?
5. Did you have a say in the overall aims and objectives and/or design and methodology of the project?
6. Did you feel that the purpose of the project and the research questions were relevant to your teaching practice, your interests in, or philosophy of, teaching and learning?
7. The TLRI places a focus on partnerships between teachers and researchers. What does the idea of “partnership” mean to you?
8. What do you think is meant or intended by ‘Teachers as Researchers’ in terms of the TLRI?
9. How well do you think your project fitted your idea of a “partnership”? What worked well? What didn't work so well? What do you think could have been done differently?
10. What was your role and responsibility in the research project? How much did you participate in the:  
  
overall planning  
  
operation of the project?
11. In what ways did you contribute to any of the following:
  - (a) framing the research questions

- (b) choice of methodology
  - (c) writing of interview questions, surveys etc.
  - (d) writing of the proposal
  - (e) reading and writing towards a literature review
  - (f) data gathering
  - (g) data analysis
  - (h) writing up of the final report.
12. What have you learnt from undertaking the research that you think has increased (or will increase) your teaching and learning knowledge?
13. In what ways do you think you can now improve your teaching practice, what changes do you think you will make to your planning and teaching?

## **Appendix B: Letter to Participants**

**5 April 2005**

<<Teacher name>>

<<Teacher's School Name>>

<<Address1>>

<<Address2>>

<<City>>

### **NZCER Research Project:**

#### **The TLRI: Teachers' perspectives on partnership and research**

Dear <<First Name>>,

My name is Alex Oliver and I am currently working at NZCER on the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) project. My brief is to undertake research into the role of teacher/practitioners as researchers in the current TLRI projects.

As part of this research, I would like to talk with you as a teacher/practitioner involved in one of the TLRI projects.

I am particularly interested in:

- teacher/practitioners' ideas about the TLRI,
- the roles teacher/practitioners are taking in the partnerships, and
- teacher/practitioners' views of the strengths and limitations of their roles of teacher/researcher.

#### **What I am asking of you**

If you agree to participate in this research, I would like to interview you in person at your school. I have enclosed a copy of the questions I would like to ask you. The interview should take about an hour, and will be tape-recorded.

The TLRI project will provide your school with a half day paid teacher release to enable you to participate in this project.

Please arrange a suitable space for the interview where there is little background noise, interruptions can be avoided, and where you will feel happy to speak freely about your research work.

## **Ethics and confidentiality**

Any information collected for this project will be kept confidential, and held in a secure location. This includes your name, your TLRI project's name, and the name, location and details of your school. The only exception is the project leader who has nominated you, and your school principal who has been informed of your school's involvement in this project. Neither the project leader nor your principal will have access to any data such as your interview. The tape recording will be transcribed, but the tape data will not be used as audio data. You may have access to your interview data at anytime, and you may withdraw from the project at any time.

## **What will the research be used for?**

Your participation in this project would be greatly appreciated. Your ideas and insights will assist in the production of a series of publications to inform teachers, researchers, others considering applying for TLRI funding, NZCER, and the Ministry of Education of the issues and practicalities of teacher/researcher partnerships. Your participation will also provide valuable assistance in the planning of possible future directions for the TLRI. You and the principal of your school will be sent a copy of the finished report.

## **Consent**

Please let me know if you are able to take part in this project by filling in the enclosed yellow PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM, and sending it back to me in the envelope provided.

I have been in contact with the project leader/s for your TLRI project and they are happy for the project you are involved in to be part of *The TLRI: Teachers' perspectives of partnership and research*.

If you have any further questions or queries about this research, please contact me at the phone number, address, or email below.

Yours sincerely,

**Alex Oliver**

NZCER

PO BOX 3237,

Wellington.

(04) 384 7939

E-mail [alex.oliver@nzcer.org.nz](mailto:alex.oliver@nzcer.org.nz)

## Appendix C: Participant Consent Form

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM</b> <b>NZCER Research Project:</b> <b>The TLRI: Teachers' perspectives on partnership and research.</b></p>
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I have read the accompanying letter about the NZCER project on *The TLRI: Teachers' perspectives on partnership and research*. I understand what the project is about, and what my participation will involve.

I understand that:

- a tape recorder will be used to record the interview;
- the information collected will be kept in a secure place;
- I have the right to gain access to the information collected from our interview at any time;
- my participation is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw at any time;
- information from the project will be used in reports and articles for teachers, researchers, TLRI, and the Ministry of Education.

Please tick one of the following:

**I am able** to participate in the project.

**I am not able** to participate in the project.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D: Letter to Principals

5 April 2005

<<Principal name>>

<<Principal's School Name>>

<<Address1>>

<<Address2>>

<<City>>

### **NZCER Research Project:**

#### **The TLRI: Teachers' perspectives on partnership and research**

Dear <<First Name>>,

My name is Alex Oliver and I am currently working at NZCER on the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) project. My brief is to undertake research into the role of teacher/practitioners as researchers in the current TLRI projects.

This is a courtesy letter to let you know that I have asked teachers in your school to participate in this project as part of the overall TLRI initiative.

I am particularly interested in:

- teacher/practitioners' ideas about the TLRI,
- the roles teacher/practitioners are taking in the partnerships, and
- the teacher/practitioners' views of the strengths and limitations of their roles of teacher/researcher.

I would like to interview teachers in your school involved in one of the TLRI projects. NZCER will provide a half-day teacher release for each teacher involved, and I will need to spend about one hour with each teacher.

I enclose information about the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative for your information.

### **Ethics and confidentiality**

Any information collected for this project will be kept confidential and held in a secure location. This includes the names of the teachers involved, the name of their TLRI project, and the name, location and details of your school. The only exception to this is the project leader who has nominated the teachers.

**What will the research be used for?**

The participation of the teachers involved is greatly appreciated. Their ideas and insights will assist in the production of a series of publications that will inform teachers, researchers, others considering applying for TLRI funding, NZCER, and the Ministry of Education of the issues and practicalities of teacher/researcher partnerships. Their participation will also provide valuable assistance in the planning of possible future directions for the TLRI. You will be sent a copy of the final report on completion.

If you have any further questions or queries about this research, please contact me at the phone number, address or email below.

Yours sincerely,

**Alex Oliver**

NZCER

PO BOX 3237,

Wellington.

(04) 384 7939

E-mail [alex.oliver@nzcer.org.nz](mailto:alex.oliver@nzcer.org.nz)