

Exemplary Practice: A Case Study of One of New Zealand's Most Successful Enterprise Education Teachers

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Abstract—Many teachers are experienced; however, experience does not necessarily equate to excellence. Excellence in teaching is the single most powerful influence on student achievement. This qualitative, interpretivist case study investigates the practices of one of the nation's most acknowledged teachers in enterprise education. In a number of semi-structured interviews, and observational visits, this remote regional teacher talked freely about what skills and strategies she used to achieve this success. Findings from this study were compared to key ideas developed by Professor John Hattie with regards to differences between expert, excellent and experienced teachers. Key findings showed the 'expert teacher' central to this study; ensured learning was engaging, challenging yet achievable for all (for both teacher and student of all abilities), authentic and driven by local needs, involved community supports; and ensured the process and learning was constantly monitored and teaching adjusted accordingly. It is anticipated that the data collected via observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis will help others to support students to gain greater success (in whatever form that may take).

Keywords—Expert teacher, enterprise education, excellence, skills and strategies.

I. INTRODUCTION

ALL teachers strive to support their students' learning. Most are keen to learn and improve their practice. However, once you are an experienced teacher and know the content well, many teachers maintain usual strategies with the hopes they will always ensure students gain success. Many studies have focused on differences between novices and experienced teachers [1]-[4] however rarely is the difference between experienced and expert teachers researched.

In a 2003 paper, Hattie outlined five dimensions of excellent teachers, which were developed after a synthesis of over 500,000 studies [1]. These "expert teachers; can identify essential representations of their subject, can guide learning through classroom interactions, can monitor learning and provide feedback, can attend to affective attributes, and can influence student outcomes" [1]. In his conclusion, Hattie emphasized that these experts should be identified, esteemed and their wisdom and strategies investigated so as to inform future practitioners.

Hattie's research [1] highlights the need for this current NZ investigation into expert teachers in enterprise education. Only when we identify these teachers can we give them the

recognition they deserve and start identifying and sharing their wisdom.

A case study research [6] involved collecting data via three semi-structured interviews, email correspondence and a half day meeting with a teacher who had supported students to win national awards. Thematic and content analysis was used to code and triangulate these interpretivist findings. The findings from this study, support Hattie's work [1] on expert teachers. The teacher in this case study was experienced but also demonstrated the qualities of an expert teacher. The skills and strategies she shares and reflects on provide valuable ideas for those of us who are gaining experience but strive for excellence and expertise.

This paper has been written in a less formal and structured tone, with the hope that the reader will 'feel' as if they have participated in the conversation with this expert teacher. For this reason, large excerpts from the transcription will be utilized.

It is important to note that this expert teacher was interviewed because of her children's success in the field of enterprise education. The following section will contain a brief explanation of enterprise education and how it is incorporated into the NZ curriculum. As a way of setting the scene a brief section will be provided on the background to the teacher and school environment. This will be followed by the methods, findings, discussion, and conclusion sections.

II. BACKGROUND

A. Enterprise Education

No single definition or approach to enterprise education exists [3]-[6]. The UK, Australia and NZ tend to use the term enterprise education whilst the USA and Canada use entrepreneurship education [7], [8] with all countries having a slightly different approach [9]. Some focus on a more vocational approach and so prepare children to own, run or work in a business or enterprise. Other approaches focus on providing knowledge about business whilst others provide the opportunities for experiential learning [10]. Some countries and approaches focus on entrepreneurship whilst others believe that enterprise is a disposition and focus on children developing the skills to be enterprising (such as being creative and independent learners in an authentic context) [11]. New Zealand tends to focus on this latter dispositional interpretation and follows a UK approach where "Enterprise Education is the process of

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developing students in a manner that provides them with an enhanced capacity to generate ideas, and the behaviours, attributes, and competencies to make them happen” [12].

It is important to note however that in NZ like many other countries a diverse range of implementation strategies within the country exist. The NZ Education Review Office (ERO) (2011) reported:

Enterprise can have three main meanings ... ‘learning about business’ where enterprise relates to business studies, economics and accountancy ... [secondly it] can also be about developing and applying skills to operate businesses ... [in order to] develop the entrepreneurial talents of students [and] the third and increasingly important meaning is enterprise as authentic learning [13].

B. New Zealand

The 2007 national curriculum provides teachers with a much broader scope to ensure teaching content and delivery supports the learning styles and needs of young 21st-century learners [14]. A vision states that NZ children would be “creative, energetic, and enterprising; who will seize the opportunities offered by new knowledge and technologies to secure a sustainable social, cultural, economic, and environmental future for our country; confident, connected, actively involved learners” [15]. It encourages children to look to the future by exploring issues such as enterprise and globalization [16]. Schools and teachers are free to choose their content, method and delivery style when implementing all aspects of the curriculum. Schools teach enterprise education in a variety of ways. Primary (elementary) schools tend to teach it over a number of weeks (often in afternoon ‘topic time’). Other schools may have it as the focus for an entire 10-week term and in doing so integrate all learning into the same theme/topic. Secondary school (high school) tends to teach enterprise either in conjunction with a subject called business studies or as an elective.

Various organizations and programmes have been established to help teachers implement enterprise education. One of these organizations is a charitable trust called Young Enterprise Trust (YET) [17]. This organization supports NZ students to participate in experiential enterprise education and financial literacy programs. The Young Enterprise Scheme is now in 85% of New Zealand’s secondary schools, with the majority of students developing and bringing a product to market. The older Year 12 and Year 13 students often set up and run their own businesses for a year [18].

III. METHODS

This research involved identifying teachers whose students had won one or more national awards. When undertaking this research one teacher stood out, not only because of the number of awards her students had won but also because of the children’s engagement and attainment. Because of the consistent high overall standard of her students’ work, for example her Year 10 (14-year-old) students were allowed to enter the national competitions normally only for Year 12s (16-year-olds). Rather than integrating this teacher’s strategies and

techniques with those of the other expert teachers who were interviewed, this paper is devoted to identifying the key attributes and skills which she believed were critical for a child to gain success. The teacher was asked what skills and strategies she used, when these skills were taught and whether any key skills were learnt but not consciously taught. She was also asked about the assessment of the above skills. This was undertaken only after approval was sought and gained from the University ethics board. The interviews were transcribed and checked for accuracy. The source of data and quotes were recorded as Int1 (interview 1), Int2 (interview 2), Int3 (interview 3), email (email correspondence and date received) and personal notes taken during half day meeting. Thematic and content analysis was undertaken using a directed approach [19]. The remaining section provides a background of the teacher and school as a way of situating the data.

A. Background Information

The teacher was female and had been primary (elementary) trained. In the first interview she provided the following background information. “When I was in Auckland my focus was intermediate, but this is a full area school [country school with 5–18-year-olds] so each year I have been working more up the school. Next year I am taking up to Year 13 business which is new for me, it is going to be a bit of learning over the holidays, but it is just that I really enjoy not only the enterprise but the business aspect of things as well” (Int1).

The teacher had no formal enterprise education training or qualifications. She “fell into Enterprise Education approximately 8 years ago when a teacher left and a replacement teacher was needed for the subject” (email, 21-1-14). “Enterprise education wasn’t what I was trained in, it was just an opportunity that came up... and is something that I love” (Int1). This teacher clearly exhibited an enterprising and entrepreneurial spirit. “I am a single mother and I have friends that are single parents as well and they are always moaning about being broke and I am always saying to them “Look I don’t want to hear it, get off your butts because there are so many things you can do to provide for yourself”” (Int3). She later said “I think that if we can get all these children to think that if anything happens in their life, where times are tough, then they can actually provide for themselves... So, I think having the ideas and the creativity and the innovation to look after yourself and your families. And anything is possible” (Int3).

The school where this teacher has worked for the last 15 years was unique in that it was a private school in a remote area of New Zealand. It was established by a husband and wife team on a 14 hectare rural site. Enterprise is seen as an integral part of the school and forms one of the school’s six key learning areas (Academic, Leadership, Community, Enterprise, Music/Arts and Sport). The teacher stated:

It is something that our whole school has a philosophy on and so it starts right from our Pre-school ‘Head Start’ which is our 5-year-olds, right through to our Year 13. It is something that the school supports and is probably what the school is- an enterprise in itself. The school has 14 full-time teachers and a total roll of approximately 150

students in the junior school (under 13 years old). The school teaches enterprise in a variety of ways. All classes undertake PrEP [Young Enterprise for Year 1-8 students] for the first 5 years of school. In Year 9 (13 years old) students participate in “community projects” whilst in year 10 there is an optional enterprise class and another year 11 class participate in YES. These classes have relatively small numbers ranging from 12-16 students. Due to the small size of the school the children have me over a number of years. At different levels we have different focusses and I think that just builds from strength to strength (email 21-1-14).

Due to the passion and drive of this one teacher the school awards included;

- Trophy for the region’s Most Outstanding Enterprise School of the Year (this trophy has been won 5 times)
- National winners - Most Innovative Product (won three times)
- National winners - Community Project (won three times)
- National winner - Innovative Sales and Marketing
- National finalists for three years. Gained 2nd and 4th in New Zealand out of over 250 secondary schools, with one team winning a trip to Singapore
- Top regional Young Enterprise Company for 5 years
- Region’s Enterprise Teacher of the Year (won three times)
- Individual winner of region’s Outstanding Enterprise Student (won three times)
- Distinction awards in the national Cambridge University Young Enterprise Scheme examination.

The teacher in question is certainly one on NZ’s most expert teachers although not the most qualified or experienced. The results section which follows has been constructed in a way to present a coherent view of the skills this teacher values and develops. These notions have not been told sequentially but rather are extracts from a variety of sources and have been woven together in order for the reader to gain the understanding of this teacher’s views and teaching style.

IV. RESULTS

Attitude of both teacher and student is an important part of teaching:

I have a passion for it... I think if you are passionate about it, they just want to be on board... what is so great about enterprise you can actually see an end product whether it is the production of something or whether it is the completion of a project. It is actually hands-on, and it caters for those children specifically, a lot of the children that I have been really successful with, are children that other staff members may find difficult. Because they are the ones that think outside the square, they have the creativity, they have that energy and passion but often in the classroom maybe used in a different way, but in enterprise it is those types of children that really excel the most. They become your leaders... (Int1)

She acknowledges the importance of being a role model and not limiting children’s ideas and creativity “Like a child comes to you and says, “I want to start my own shop downtown” and

I will say “That is a fantastic idea, how are you going to do it? Let’s look at it” ... “I never limit the children, I never down their ideas” ... “I think they were offering something pretty unique and valuable to the teachers and the students” (Int1).

The teacher has high expectations.

What I am hoping the children learn is that the more you put into something is the more you get out of it. So, some of them don’t, it takes them a while to see the benefits because it is one of those intangible things that you, they don’t sort of realize and then there is others that do realize what they have gained. (Int3)

She believes in “pushing the children to be the best they can be, and they want to be successful. So, if you really believe in them and they have self-belief they can do anything” (Int1). She scaffolds the children to build on prior experiences and does not let them repeat previous year’s activities, even though they may have appeared successful.

If the child comes to me and says, “I want to sell ice blocks” I would probably say “Think a little bit, go away and think a little bit more about how you can make that a little bit more challenging”. So that each year they have to grow, they have to do something better than they did the year before. They can’t just repeat what they have already done. A child in Year 7 might have a business selling homemade ice creams, the next year they have to invent a product. The student has to take it to market. (Int1)

“I like a challenge for each year...you have got to have expectations. There has to be some teacher input because they don’t know for themselves” (Int1). She explained how she prepared all students who went to national competition days by explaining to the children that they had to dress and behave as if they were adults in the same situation.

I say you are business people. You dress like business people, you talk like business people... they stand out because no one has told these other children that these are the expectations and you go there and there is kids chewing gum, playing on their cell phones. I say no you put your cell phones away, you are there as a businessperson. You put your best foot forward because there will be someone in the audience that is gonna say “I really like that team; I want to invest in them”. (Int1)

She then described a boy from a poor family who attended this private school via a scholarship:

He works the room now. He has got people to bat for him in what-ever he does in the future. He has got job offers being thrown at him because he has huge potential and because somebody has seen it and he believes it now as well and he will be successful. He comes from a family of unemployed and there is no way he will be. (Int1)

The above is an example of the teacher’s high expectations and inherent belief that they are capable of achieving whatever they set their minds to.

I often say to my children I can’t wait for you to come back and be my guest speaker in a couple of years. And they go out be successful and then come back and give back. They all totally believe that they are going to be the next big thing out there. They have all promised to come

back and because I often get role models in, like guest speakers. At the beginning of the year we will look at entrepreneurial skills and then we will get some people that have started their own businesses and entrepreneurs in and the children will interview them and then I will make them identify what skills they can see in those people... and at the end you say what sort of skills or attributes did he have that makes him successful- and it leadership, it's his willingness to help the community, it's the team work... (Int1)

This teacher encourages the development of many skills one of which is "having a can-do attitude" (Int1). The main skills she focuses on are,

being able to work in a team and leadership and using your initiative. There are so many people in the world that don't even use their initiative, it is maddening. If you teach children to do that, then they are going to be successful in whatever job that they end up doing, or any career that they are going to be doing, because they stand out. They will be the people that see the need for change and the ones that actually instigate that change. I say to the children "Just because you are doing the subject [enterprise education] doesn't mean to say that you are going to go into business". That is not the case it might be that you are along at a playcentre and you think to yourself "I wish this place had a sand pit" and instead of saying "I wish this place had a sandpit" and thinking that every time you go there, you think "okay it needs a sandpit, how can we make that happen? What do we need to make that happen? Who can I get on board with the skills needed to bring this all together so that these children have a better experience at playcentre?" So, it is about being the best person that you can be and having the most input in the community. (Int2)

The notion of teamwork is believed to be critical as it is used in almost all enterprise activities. "There are hardly any enterprise activities that I do, that doesn't involve team work" (Int1). Working in teams begins in earnest with Year 7 children (11-year-olds). She believes that,

Teamwork and leadership comes from working in a team. And the more exposure that they have to those kind of opportunities the better that they get at it. Because as a class room teacher if you are doing social studies, or whatever you are doing if you are working in a team you can have all the dynamics going on and being understanding and having empathy for others is important too... just relating it back to life all the time -you are going to have a work environment where you are going to have to work with people you might not necessarily like, but you have to find a place where you can work and be successful and meet those goals while still in that team environment. (Int1)

Many of the identified skills which she identified as being important were not specific to enterprise education but rather 'soft-skills'. "A lot of it is life skills, problem solving, decision making, organization ability, meeting your deadlines, being responsible for others and meeting those deadlines" (Int1).

She saw her role as a facilitator rather than a person with all

the answers.

With our community projects if you make a commitment to an organization to help them you have to see it through. But I will help them have the tools to do that and things like charts and working out timelines etc. to try to make them and meet little milestones along the way to make sure that they are successful within the time frame. (Int1)

Although there were set roles often students were free to select and apply for each position.

I also put them into positions like an organizational structure, we have a CEO, sales and marketing, financial director and then at the end they evaluate their time and what they have achieved and did. They stick to their job description because I make them write job descriptions and then they can look at it, did I meet the job descriptions? Sometimes at the beginning of the year you think you are really hot on sales and then somebody else does most of the selling or you think you are really whiz with the numbers, but it didn't turn out that way so you either develop it or your roles slightly change and you find your niche and your strengths and you just work with them. (Int1)

The children have to take ownership of their own learning which includes setting goals. At the beginning of the year, the children have to identify [first with themselves like] what skills they have got and what enterprise skills they have got. So, we do quite a bit on what enterprise skills are and then they identify what their skills are or what enterprise skills they possess- and then they set goals on how they are going to fill the gaps in the ones that they don't have and we do that at the beginning of the year. I have developed an evaluation system where they self-evaluate every year and I have tracked that over several years now 'cause I might have the children in year 7, 8, 9, 10. I have a tracking system where at the beginning of the year they identify their skills and grade it and then at the end of the year -then the following year, then the following year. So they can actually see their own progress as well. (Int1)

At the beginning of the year the teacher focused on skill development, especially teamwork. Later in the year the majority of her teaching of skills was driven by the children's needs, using a 'just in time' support and skill development method. She explained, modelled and demonstrated in the first instance and then the children used these strategies when required. There was,

quite a bit of team work activity, decision making tasks that I do in the beginning and now I don't do it so much as they just get on with it and then I think a lot of it just happens naturally, they are working in a team, they have to make that decision, they have got a problem, they say we want do this because of blah blah-blah and I say "How are you going to solve the problem?" Or "Well go down and write a list of all the ways you can solve the problem, away you go" and they do it for themselves and then next time they have to solve a problem they write down a list

and they work it out for themselves or look at different alternatives. It is like planning -you show them how to do something once, like doing a GANNT chart. Plan out where is the end date, you want to be finished by the end of the school year, how are you going to make that happen? Coming up with timelines like having proper meetings with minutes and I will give them an example of one of my staff meetings and make sure there is nothing about students and that they can see. I talk about it and how it went and then they do one and they have to fill out the same format. Then after a while when they have a meeting one of the students is the secretary or whatever- and the communications officer grabs one of the sheets or a piece of paper and pen and does it all up. So, a lot of it probably just happens without me even knowing it. The situation may occur, and you then might give them some help or some guidance and then they end up doing it for themselves and hopefully they have learnt that skill. (Int1)

V. DISCUSSION

The above section was devoted to identifying the skills and attributes which one successful teacher used to support her students learning in enterprise education. In the following section these views will be linked to national and international findings. It is also important to note from the outset that while the teacher in this case study was undoubtedly talented and exemplary, she would not have been able to achieve this success had she been in an environment which did not support enterprise education or her style of teaching.

Gibb [20] stated that “heavily programmed curricula, standard timetables... high gearing to... testing of knowledge... and highly hierarchical departmental structures” (p. 28) are constraints to an enterprising approach to teaching and learning. With the support of the school and community this teacher was able to succeed with and for students.

“Excellence in teaching is the single most powerful influence on achievement” [1]. Hattie is quick to point out that “it is excellence in teachers that makes the greatest differences, not just teachers” [1]. He identified that expert teachers are different from experienced teachers in the way they represent their classrooms, the degree of challenges which they present to their students and the depth of processing the students attain.

‘Representation in the classroom’ refers to the integration of knowledge and experience. This is when content knowledge is combined with prior knowledge. Expert teachers can relate current content to other curriculum subjects and can make lessons uniquely their own by changing the planned delivery to meet the student’s needs and their own goals. They adopt a problem-solving stance to individual student’s work rather than the class as a whole. “Experts are more opportunistic and flexible in their teaching. They take advantage of new information, quickly bringing new interpretations and representations of the problem to light” [21]. “It is this flexibility, and not merely the knowledge/experience of possible scenarios that made the difference” [1]. These are central aspects of all teaching but especially to the subject of enterprise education. Enterprise education also requires the

teacher to be responsive to students and to quickly recognize and relate to events occurring in the classroom which may affect the learning and teaching of the topic [22].

The teacher in this NZ study exhibits a deep representation about teaching and learning. She is passionate about her subject and supporting her students to achieve. She devotes considerable time and effort into supporting each child’s project whilst ensuring each context is captivating for her students. One of her talents is her ability to stand back and not feel she has to teach the children but rather she sees her role as assisting them to learn. She listens and is comfortable not talking at or to the students but rather with them. A quote by Albert Einstein sums up her approach to teaching. ‘If A is a success in life, then A equals x plus y plus z. Work is x; y is play; and z is keeping your mouth shut’, Albert Einstein, 1950, in *The British Observer*, 15 January as cited by [23].

Hattie also identifies that expert teachers guide learning through classroom interactions. They are proficient in creating an optimal classroom environment and have a multi-dimensional perception of the classroom situation which is context dependent. They achieve a balance between content centered and student-centered instruction [1]. Again, these attributes are critical for enterprise and entrepreneur education which require approaches to be student-centered, with the teacher acting as a facilitator. The students are expected to have an active/generative role, work with independence and a wide discretion [22]. Lessons need to be flexible, opportunist and negotiated, whilst the learning context is driven by local needs, and in doing so puts theory into practice [24]-[26].

Hattie also identifies the need to monitor learning and provide feedback. Expert teachers are constantly monitoring the students’ learning and adjusting their teaching accordingly. They respect the students and are receptive to their needs without attempting to dominate the situation. They are passionate about teaching and learning and “show more emotionality about successes and failures in their work” [1]. These teachers engage students in learning and develop the student’s self-regulation, self-efficacy, and their self-esteem as learners. They provide challenging tasks and goals for the students and have a positive influence on their achievement. In doing so they enhance both surface and deep learning [1].

The majority of the aspects and dimensions of expert teachers are also those required by enterprise education and entrepreneurial teachers. The “enterprise approach is less about teaching in the traditional sense and more about “the teacher acting as an enabler, a facilitator, a supporter and nurturer of student learning”” [27]. This begs the question, are these teachers more capable and ‘expert’ (simply by necessity of the subject area) than those of other subject areas? The teacher in this case study is clearly identified as an expert teacher, not only as a result of the national awards she and her students have won but also because of her disposition, actions and the learning environment which she fosters. Many supporters of enterprise education believe its pedagogy can be used across subject areas and throughout phases of education [6], [20], [28]. If this is the case, enterprise education may be able to change teaching delivery, simply by the very nature of the subject discipline.

VI. CONCLUSION

Although this teacher's success is evident from the numerous awards she has won, it is clear that she clearly also meets the five major dimensions of an excellent teacher [1]. In doing so she is responsive to her students' needs, adopts a problem-solving stance and creates a multidimensional classroom where errors are welcomed, and learning depends on the context not the content. She is able to assess students' progress and provide feedback whilst maintaining a high level of respect for her students and their progress. She assisted students to develop self-efficacy, self-regulation, and enhanced self-esteem by providing challenging tasks and goals. The positive influence this teacher had on students' achievement reflects the passion and commitment she has to her students and this subject area.

This research has identified an expert teacher who has achieved national success in enterprise education. It has highlighted the need for future research in this area. Which should look at whether success in enterprise education relies solely on the expertise of the teachers, or whether the expertise of the teachers relies on their involvement and engagement with enterprise education. Future research should also investigate whether the very nature of the subject encourages the development of this expert practice, or whether success in the subject is reflective of this expertise. Whichever is true the children who are fortunate to be taught by an expert teacher will have an increased chance of success.

'Creativity is constantly in danger of being destroyed by success. The more effectively the environment is mastered, the greater is the temptation to rest on one's oars' (Henry Kissinger 1961, *The necessity for Choice: Prospects of American Foreign Policy*, 8.3, as quoted in [23]). This teacher could have sat back long ago with the pride of knowing she had supported children to achieve the highest national awards, but she has not. Success for this teacher is derived from her current student's achievements (in whatever form these take), not from the fact that she has helped them to win national awards. Every year provides another group of students to inspire and be inspired by.

This case study demonstrates an inspirational and expert teacher.

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