

# RESEARCH PROJECTS COMPLETED 2008–2009

## BACKGROUND OF STUDENTS IN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

**Dr Keren Brooking and Ben Gardiner, with  
Dr Sarah Calvert**

The project was commissioned by the Ministry of Education and designed to document the voice of alternative education students. These are students under the age of 16 who have been truanting for more than two terms, or who have been expelled from mainstream schools but are now in alternative education centres.

The project involved one-to-one interviews with 50 students from eight alternative education centres. The report looks at:

- how the students have experienced learning in their schooling so far
- the nature of their educational and social experiences in alternative education centres
- the impact of their health, friends and family-life experiences on their learning
- what students consider to be their strengths and aspirations for the future.

The report was finalised in the second quarter. It was due to be released by Ministry of Education later in 2009.

## BUILDING BETTER SCHOOLS THROUGH BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS EVALUATION (BBS)

**Dr Cathy Wylie & Marie Cameron**

The Building better schools through business partnerships programme, now run through Ed & Co charitable trust, aims to develop and support high-quality partnerships between businesses and low-decile schools in New Zealand. The focus is on school leadership and governance, in order to make a strong positive impact on the partner schools and to add value to the business partners involved in the programme. NZCER was asked to provide independent formative evaluation of the

first wave of the partnerships, comprising 11 business–school partnerships, all in the wider Auckland area. This evaluation was completed in late 2008, and the results reported to the partnerships and the Ed & Co board. The report explored the factors that supported tangible achievements for school leadership, governance, school reputation with its community, improved resources and student learning experiences.

## CENTRE OF INNOVATION RESEARCH ASSOCIATE SERVICES (WADESTOWN KINDERGARTEN)

**Dr Linda Mitchell**

NZCER and Victoria University of Wellington College of Education were research associates for Wadestown Kindergarten, a designated Centre of Innovation. The project used action research methods to investigate the following questions:

- What does multiliterate communicative competence mean in an early childhood education setting?
- How do multiple literacies interact and support each other at individual, interpersonal, and community levels?
- How does an emphasis on multiple literacies build community and children's communicative competencies?

The interest was in literacies as ways of conceptualising and knowing as well as a means of communicating. This focus links with the communication strand of the early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, which highlights domains beyond the print or verbal-based literacies that have tended to predominate in literacy discourse. The project took place over three years, and involved a baseline data collection phase in July/August 2006, action research cycles, and a final data collection phase in 2008.

## COMPETENT LEARNERS @16

**Dr Cathy Wylie**

This was the seventh phase of the longitudinal Competent Children/Competent Learners project which started in 1993. There were four new areas of focus in the age-16 phase:

- senior secondary students' engagement in school
- the longer term impact of the transition to secondary school
- student experiences of NCEA
- the development of, and basis for, postschool aspirations.

The fieldwork for this phase was done in 2005 and late 2006. The first report from this phase was released by the Ministry of Education in March 2007 and looked at the development of competencies from age 5-16. The second technical report and summary, on the contribution of early childhood education experiences to age-16 competency levels, was drafted in March and released by the Ministry of Education in July 2007. There were two further reports, one of postschool expectations and aspirations, and the other on the impact of the transition to secondary school. A summary of all the reports was released by the Ministry of Education in May 2009.

## GENDER AND CAREER DECISION MAKING

**Dr Karen Vaughan and Josie Roberts**

This report explored young people's career decision making in relation to trades-related occupations, which have typically been heavily gender-segregated. It examined the ways in which gender and gendered ideas are interconnected with young people's decisions about careers.

The project involved focus groups and interviews with young people. The interviewees included secondary school students in trades-related school pathways, trainees in trades-related gender-segregated occupations, recent graduates of training, employees and former employees

from in gender-segregated trades-related occupations. The final phase involved workshops with trade trainees that were designed to allow participants to give us feedback on our initial analysis.

The final analysis was presented in a report to the Ministry of Women's Affairs and published in September 2008.

## LEADING AND MANAGING HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

**Dr Keren Brooking**

The objective of the Leading and Managing contract was to evaluate the advisory component of the Home-school Partnership (HSP) programme. School Support Services leading and managing advisers were contracted to provide support to principals who were implementing the HSP programme in their schools this year. The Ministry of Education contracted NZCER to evaluate the effectiveness of this support component.

The research plan was to interview each adviser in the six regions and the principals of the HSP schools in the first half of the year. However, only two schools out of six regions had begun to implement the HSP programme. All advisers were interviewed, as were the principals of the two schools. In the second half of the year, a summative evaluation was planned but was only able to proceed with one school which had completed the programme.

## TE RŪNANGA O NGĀI TAHU

**Garrick Cooper and Dr Jennifer Garvey Berger**

Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu commissioned NZCER to carry out a review of the Ngāi Tahu Education Strategy (adopted in 2006). The review focused on the strategy's principles, the strategy itself and current operations. Ngāi Tahu intended to use the review to inform any changes and decisions to the implementation of the strategy.

## WHY TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING OR SCIENCE?

**Sandie Schagen**

This work was carried out for the Institute for Professional Engineers New Zealand (IPENZ) and consisted of an online survey of first-year engineering, technology and science students. The aim was to find out what had influenced the students' choice of course and place of study, and to explore their thinking about careers. Responses were received from 1,148 students in 14 universities and polytechnics, and demographic details were gathered in order to identify differences between subgroups.

The research found the most important factor for students in deciding where to study was the course content available, and the reputation of the institution, department or course, and staff members. Suggestions from family members were also important, and more than half of the students wished to stay near their home or family. The research also looked at which careers students wanted to pursue, and the factors that influenced those choices.