ESOL Students' Sense of School Belonging, Inclusion, and Wellbeing

High School Report

Massey University
CaDDANZ research team

Contents

About the report

This report summarises the findings of research undertaken at an [School] and has been prepared for the purpose of feeding back findings to the school and to participants and for providing specific recommendations to the school. The findings are based on an analysis of data collected through questionnaires, observation, interviews and focus groups with students as well as interviews with teachers and other staff.

In this report, quotes are used to illustrate important themes in the findings. Participants are anonymous. We use simple letters to refer to quotes from students (S), focus groups (FG), and teachers (T). Interviewers' questions are marked in *italics*. Future writings on this project, aimed at wider audiences, will not refer to the school by name.

We wish to thank Dr Ben Soltani who participated as a researcher in the fieldwork for this project.

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Executive summary

This study investigated ESOL[1] students' sense of belonging, inclusion, and wellbeing at an [School]. The findings in this report are based on data collected between May and October 2016, including a student questionnaire and story template, classroom and recess observation, student interviews and focus groups, as well as interviews with teachers and staff.

Data analysis revealed three key elements that are most important for students' sense of school belonging, inclusion, and wellbeing. These are (1) peer support and friendship, (2) a supportive learning environment, and (3) language and ESOL practices at school.

Peer support and friendship were fundamental to ESOL students' sense of school belonging, inclusion and wellbeing. ESOL students were part of small, close-knit friendship groups made up almost exclusively of fellow ESOL students. Having 'real friends' who could be relied upon for support was especially important in the absence of family. At the same time, a lack of friendships with domestic students most prominently contributed to a sense of exclusion amongst ESOL students. Students consistently reported feelings of frustration because their efforts at developing friendships were not reciprocated by domestic students.

The research revealed some divergence between student and teacher perceptions of peer interactions. While ESOL students consistently stressed that they tried hard to initiate contact, teachers by and large felt that ESOL students were isolating themselves in the International Student area of the school and needed to be more outgoing. By contrast, the students themselves attributed their difficulties to more structural factors, namely the school's large number of international/ESOL students (of the same linguistic background), and the ESOL class system which reduced their opportunities to mix with 'domestic students'[2].

Equally important to students' sense of school belonging, inclusion and wellbeing was a supportive learning environment and strong teacher–student relations. Students overwhelmingly reported very positive impressions of teacher attitudes towards them. Students specifically appreciated day-to-day practical help, especially when first settling into the new environment. Students also valued their experience of a different learning environment that afforded them the opportunity to develop new skills. Overall, a sense that teachers cared about them as individuals along with high expectations for academic and personal development on the part of teachers were integral to students' wellbeing.

Participating teachers described strong and trusting relationships to students and pastoral care as central to their responsibilities. In this context, the study revealed great concern amongst teachers that their ability to develop durable relationships with their students was limited by the school's high-stress environment which resulted from a strong emphasis on maintaining academic achievement. Despite the school's explicit efforts to promote staff wellbeing, high workloads resulted in time constraints, low morale, and subsequently a high rate of staff turnover.

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[1] These are all students who are enrolled in the school's programme targeting students with English as a Second Language. For the most part, these are fee-paying international students.

[2] These are students who are not fee-paying international students. The ESOL students we spoke to mostly referred to native English-speakers in this context.

Lastly, the school's practices regarding linguistic difference, and especially its ESOL class system, substantially detracted from ESOL students' sense of school belonging, inclusion, and wellbeing. In the context of exploring the place of diversity in the school's everyday practices, linguistic diversity was a key theme for both students and teachers, with widely diverging views between the two. All students we spoke to were dissatisfied with the school's ESOL system. Being separated from the mainstream was seen as an obstacle to making friends with domestic students, and also as impeding their academic potential. Students felt that separation slowed the process of learning English, reduced their access to mainstream courses, and increased the likelihood of being placed in a lower stream. Students also reported occasional conflicts that arose from being discouraged to speak their home languages in the classroom.

By contrast, teachers accepted ESOL classes as a necessity that assists students with reaching a level of English language proficiency that will allow them to successfully participate in mainstream subject courses. Moreover, most teachers found linguistic diversity in the classroom challenging and described students' use of home languages as something that needed to be managed or even proscribed. This was largely based on the assumption that the use of home languages delayed progress in gaining English language proficiency but also resulted from a fear of losing control when students could not be understood.

Based on an analysis of the data and other available research, this report makes the following recommendations in relation to the three key areas:

Key area 1: Peer support and friendship
1. Reflect on the scale and purpose of enrolling full-fee paying international students
2. Increase informal and formal opportunities for cross-cultural friendships
3. Consider moving the International Student area to a more central location
Key area 2: Supportive learning environment
4. Better define the purpose of form class
5. Address concerns regarding staff wellbeing and retention
Key area 3: Language learning and ESOL practices
6. Reflect on policies and practices of home language use in classrooms
7. Reflect on the scale and purpose of the ESOL programme

1. Introduction

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, and especially in urban centres, increasing immigration and the expansion of international education programmes has introduced greater linguistic and ethno-national diversity in many secondary schools. For education providers, this raises the question of how to respond and adapt to this diversity.

Available international research in the area has pursued two angles. One body of scholarship has focused on the institutional level, examining, for instance, teacher attitudes to and engagement with students of diverse backgrounds, practices of culturally relevant pedagogy, and the role of school management in adapting to diversity. Another set of scholarship has focussed on the student experience, investigating student satisfaction, as well as the particular challenges that immigrant and international students face as they transition into new education systems and the coping mechanisms they employ to overcome these challenges.

In this research project at an [School], the students' perspective was central but we aimed to investigate the role of the school environment in shaping their experience. In investigating their 'experience' as ESOL students at [School], we homed in on their sense of school belonging, inclusion and wellbeing, defined as 'feelings of connectedness to school or community, or feelings of inclusion and support in the school social environment' (Van Der Wildt, Van Avermaet, & Van Houtte, 2015, p. 1). Research on predictors of school belonging has primarily concentrated on the role of individual student characteristics (such as gender, socio-economic background, and minority status in relation to the school population) although initial research points to the vital role of school and classroom structures and environment in fostering belonging and wellbeing. The study at [School] contributes more knowledge to this area of enquiry and, more specifically, to the school.

The remainder of this report provides an overview of the methods used for data collection, followed by a detailed discussion of the key components of ESOL students' sense of school belonging, inclusion, and wellbeing. These were (1) peer relationships, (2) student–teacher relationships, and (3) the school's engagement with linguistic diversity.

2. Methodology

This study was conducted between June and October 2016. In order to create a comprehensive picture of ESOL students' sense of belonging, inclusion and wellbeing at [School], we undertook the research in three stages using multiple data collection tools.

In the first phase of the project, all ESOL students were invited to fill in a network questionnaire and a story template. Both of these contained a number of questions designed to gather demographic information about the students' migration and education history. Further, the network questionnaire asked students to list their closest friends at school, as well as interests or characteristics and activities they shared with these friends. The story template consisted of five open questions prompting students to write short paragraphs about their experience of being a student at [School].

Both the questionnaire and the story template were administered by teachers during class time. This resulted in a high response rate: out of a total of 142 ESOL students enrolled at the school at the time, 134 students completed the social network survey and 138 completed the story template. The data collected this way gave us some broad insights into the size and characteristics of students' friendship groups, their first impressions of the school upon arrival as well as examples of particularly positive experiences and difficulties that come with being an ESOL student at [School].

The second phase of the study consisted of ethnographic observations of students in selected classes and during intervals. Eight students from across Years 9 to 13 were drawn from the pool of ESOL students who had participated in the first phase and invited to work closely with the two researchers for the duration of the term. In order to gain a better understanding of students' day-to-day practices and interactions with teachers and peers, we observed each student approximately once a week for two successive periods (one ESOL class and one 'mainstream' class) and accompanied the students during adjoining intervals. We video-recorded classes and took field notes of observations related to the classroom environment, student participation as well as peer and student–teacher interactions.

In the third and final phase, we conducted individual interviews with the eight students we observed as well as focus group discussions with these students and their close friends. In total, 30 students took part in the focus group sessions. In addition, we interviewed nine teachers whose classes we had observed and two staff who work within the International Programme. The teacher interviews covered teachers' practices of engaging with diverse students, perceptions of school policies and practices of inclusion, and student and staff wellbeing.

The findings that are reported and discussed in the following pages are based on an integrated analysis of all data.

3. Peer support and friendship

Mutual peer support and friendships emerged as one of the most important elements shaping ESOL students' sense of school belonging, inclusion and wellbeing. When asked about positive experiences as students new to [School], many students chose to report specific examples of peer support in the story template. Examples revolved around initial help with settling in, such as finding their way around the school grounds, learning about the workings of the institution (e.g., where to buy a school uniform, how to make sense of the timetable, specific rules, and so forth), translating information, and retrieving lost items.

Similarly, friendship was a frequent topic of conversation and detailed reflection in interviews and focus groups. The students, many of whom lived in homestays, emphasised that friendship took on special importance in the absence of family:

> I think you need to make many friends in school because you don't have the family or parents here and many problems you need to by yourself and if you want to fix something and you go to – I mean just like friends, sometimes friends can help you to – [struggling to find English translation]. (S)

Many of the students we spoke to explicitly highlighted the difference between 'normal friends' – such as classmates – and 'real friends' in this context. This important differentiation permeated their reflections on connecting with other students at [School]. As one student put it:

> For me, real friend is like if something happen you actually help him, he actually help you. The normal friend, they probably will not. (S)

Most notably, it became clear that all students we spoke to had developed strong friendships with fellow international/ESOL students, yet remained largely unsuccessful in connecting to domestic students in the same way. As such, the relationship between international/ESOL students and domestic students remained overwhelmingly at the level of 'classmates'. The data conclusively shows that this discrepancy is one of the most pertinent concerns for the students, and something that substantially detracts from their sense of school belonging, inclusion, and wellbeing. Students' thoughts on the theme of friendship are discussed in more detail below.

3.1 International friendship networks

Analysis of the social network questionnaire showed that ESOL students were part of small, close-knit friendship groups that consisted almost exclusively of other international/ESOL students. As shown in the table below, the largest number of students (62) reported to have four friends at school, a further 61 students had between one and three friends, and, importantly, ten students stated that they had no friends at all at school and spent intervals mostly by themselves.

Number of friends	None	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Not stated	Total
Number	10	15	22	23	62	1	1	134

Table 1 ESOL students' number of friends at school

Unsurprisingly, given the predominance of Chinese nationals amongst the ESOL students that filled in the network questionnaire (119 out of 134)[3], most of the listed friendship groups were made up of co-national students, but some also mixed students of different nationalities (e.g. Chinese and Korean). Rarely, however, did they include domestic students.

This finding (which teachers and staff are well aware of as interviews showed) was also confirmed in observations of peer interactions in class and in the school grounds during intervals. In class, students were often seated in groups with or alongside co-national/ethnic friends. This is true as much for international/ESOL students as it is for domestic students of varying ethnicities.

Observations during intervals revealed that international students spent breaks in various areas of the school. This was also further explored in interviews and focus groups. We learned that while many of the students frequently spent time in the International Student area (P Block), they also regularly spent breaks in other places and, by their own account, did not avoid any areas of the school. On the flipside, we observed that domestic students hardly ever came to this part of the school. Given its location at the margins of the school grounds, it does not invite other students or staff to pass through the area. Nonetheless, we also observed that even those students who did spend their breaks elsewhere in the school grounds, spent them with other international/ESOL students because they had few friends amongst domestic students.

3.2 Connecting to domestic students

All students we spoke to in interviews and focus groups agreed that making friends with 'Kiwi students' was one of their key expectations as international students. However, we found that it was also one of the biggest challenges they faced. In the story template, 'making Kiwi friends' was, alongside 'learning English', most commonly listed as a major difficulty. In interviews and focus groups, students spoke at length about this topic.

The students stressed that they 'tried hard' to make connections but often felt that their own interest in getting to know their domestic peers was not reciprocated. The two responses below illustrate these feelings.

> *How about the other students at school, do they make you feel welcome?*
>
> - The local students?
>
> *Local and international.*

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[3] The remainder of survey participants were Korean (10), Thai (7), Filipino (2), Vietnamese (1), and Taiwanese (1). Two students indicated multiple ethnicities and a further two did not state their ethnicity.

- I don't feel the local students welcome. They didn't give me much welcome feeling.

Why? Why do you feel like that?

- They won't, the first term talk to you, be friends with you. You need to make the first step to. (S)

It's not us don't want to make friends with them, it's Kiwi students don't want to play with us. (FG)

Impatience with non-native speakers

Students thought that their lack of English language proficiency significantly contributed to their problems in making friends with native English-speakers at school. Overall, the ESOL students experienced domestic students as too impatient to engage with low-proficiency English speakers. The following two responses to the question about whether they tried to make friends with other students illustrate this well:

Yes, Kiwis. But my English not good so some people doesn't like me. Sometimes some people, they be my friend but more than fifty percent people hate me because my English not good. (S)

I want to make a lot of Kiwi because I meet them and can practice my English but actually I make a lot of Asian people. I don't know why, because maybe my English is not very good. (S)

The students described this as a Catch-22; they needed to learn English to make local friends but also needed local friends to help them learn English.

Asked about his friendship with an older New Zealand-born student, one student emphasised 'patience' in a way that suggested it was exceptional rather than the norm:

He's very, very, very friendly. I ask him a little bit things, he not angry, 'why you ask me a little bit?' You know but he not angry, he teach me. (S)

Cultural differences and exclusion

In addition, the students felt that cultural differences, such as being interested in 'different topics' and having a different sense of humour – and even racialised differences – were an obstacle to making friends with domestic students.

You know Chinese culture is different whereas New Zealand culture is so – I need to spend more times making local friends. So now I just have most maybe are Chinese friends. (S)

- Yeah, we have a lot of Kiwi friends but we even didn't hang out with them.

- Because we are different culture.

You don't hang out with them?

- Yeah, just because we are different culture. We are yellow, so they just will play with Kiwi friends. (FG)

Do you have some examples of the differences that make it difficult to make friends?

- They don't want to talk to Chinese or Asian people and maybe we talk something that they think is not interesting. (FG)

In this context, students described efforts to change and adapt their personalities (such as becoming more outgoing) and their interests (such as taking a greater interest in sports) in order to better connect to local students.

If you want to make friends you need to change yourself to be more outgoing, to be more … maybe because they [Kiwi students] won't change things themselves to accept you. You can only change yourself. (FG)

The quote above conveys a sense of resignation to the fact that the onus of initiating cross-cultural interactions was on them alone and that they could not expect any pro-active engagement from domestic students. But more than that, students also repeatedly expressed a sense of deliberate exclusion. The following excerpt from a focus group discussion shows a heightened sense that their relationships with 'Kiwi students' did not extend beyond the school gate and with that not beyond 'classmates' status.

- We all have Kiwi friends but when we finish school and when we out, just we Chinese.

- We can't with Kiwi friends. The activity not belong to us maybe.

- So the Kiwi friend, we actually just allowed to talk with in school but after the school, if they meet me they just say 'hi [name]'. But in the weekend if they have some activities they will not call the Asian student to join with them.

- Even we don't have their Facebook so I think you're like classmates, you're not like really close friends. (FG)

Discrimination and stereotyping

Besides the common perception that 'Kiwi students' were simply not interested in interacting with Asian ESOL students, students also reported experiences of overt discrimination and stereotyping.

Is there anything that makes you feel excluded or like you don't feel welcome, ever?

- Yeah. Because I'm Asian, discrimination. Some Kiwi.

At school or outside school or both?

- At school. I heard about at class – 'oh, he's Asian, don't let him join us'. And some teachers. One teacher.

[…]

- Some students have this idea because their parents teach them Asian is no good, don't–

I'm sorry to hear that, it's not good.

- Sometimes are sad why I am Asian, why I am not like white people? (S)

The following related example is a focus group response to the question of how the students experience cultural diversity at school.

- Some Kiwi will discriminate for you. They say 'oh, Asian, go back to your country' or whatever. Some Kiwi will say that.

Have you had that experience?

- Yeah.

In what context?

- It's like I'm not really – like two months ago and when I'm Year nine that will say that to me as well.

Other Kiwi students?

- Yeah, some. It's very rude and not respect for us.

Where does that happen, in the classrooms?

- It's not the classroom. In the bus. The bus is not any teachers, just students so they were racist. When we in the class there was teacher so they were not racist for us.

- Not most Kiwi. It's just like some Kiwi.

- Like sometimes in the class they will say 'oh Asian, you eat dog' or whatever. (FG)

Even though these students were quick to point out that this was 'not most Kiwi [students]', this finding requires serious reflection.

3.2.1 Factors that facilitate peer interactions

When asked what kinds of things were currently helpful for making friends, students deemed both the vertical form class format and co-curricular activities to be most instrumental in getting to know their peers across differences, including ethnicity, language, and age.

Participants saw their form class as a setting that enabled them to get to know other students they didn't usually get to spend time with (especially students from other year groups), but views on the usefulness of form classes diverged. Some students felt that form classes were too short and only used to read out notices.

I think at the morning the form class is good. We can make friends with Year Twelve, Year Thirteen, we can make more friends. I have made friends with a Year Ten student, that's a Chinese … and I also make some Kiwi friends in the form class. (FG)

Students also mentioned the role of sports clubs, other co-curricular activities and community organisations outside of school. As one student put it,

I have a lot of ways to make friends – table tennis, church, different subjects, and I hang out. My friend's friend together hang out.

Teachers concurred with the students' view and often noted that playing sports in particular is 'the best way of including the boys … especially for the international students'.

3.2.2 Factors that obstruct peer interactions

We also asked students what improvements could be made by the school in order to make building cross-cultural friendships easier. The students readily identified two key issues. Firstly, the students felt that it would be preferable to have smaller numbers of international/ESOL students, especially those of the same ethno-linguistic background, because the large number of fellow Asian students compounded their difficulties in making friends. Secondly, students unanimously advocated integrated mainstream classes because being placed in ESOL classes separated them unduly from domestic students.

Students expressed their surprise at encountering a large number of fellow international/ESOL students at the school and were further surprised that most of these came from China. Although they came to appreciate the support and friendship of their co-national peers, the students we spoke to unanimously identified the large number of international students as a hindrance to mixing with local students and to learning English. They felt that there were not enough opportunities for the cultural immersion they had anticipated when they embarked on overseas education.

Students felt so strongly about this issue that one student considered changing to a school with a smaller number of international/ESOL students and, when asked what would improve their experience at [School], many students singled out 'reducing the number of international students from Asia' as the key issue.

- Less Chinese, there's too much Chinese in this school. I just want less Asians.

You're from Korea, would it be different if it was more Korean students or do you think just less students from Asia?

- Just less Asians.

So more-?

- I want to make a lot of Kiwi friends. (S)

Not surprisingly, students were concerned that with so many international students of the same linguistic background coupled with a lack of frequent interactions with domestic English-speakers, 'some Chinese students just speak Chinese […] and they cannot improve their skills'. (S)

This concern is directly related to, and compounded by, the second issue the students raised. ESOL classes were an important topic of conversation amongst the students and something that negatively impacted their sense of school belonging, inclusion, and wellbeing. Students communicated both academic and social consequences of being partially separated from the mainstream. Although interrelated, social impacts will be discussed here, and academic impacts in section 5.2.

For the students we spoke to, ESOL classes were a barrier to making friends with domestic students. First and foremost, the students felt that being separated from the 'mainstream' and taught amongst students of the same national and linguistic background several times per day/week, reduced their opportunities to mingle with domestic students.

> They separate the student of International and Kiwi student, that's little bit … like they would like you to study English and you're not really making Kiwi friends because in your class all of the students were International Students. (FG)

As described further above, the students thought that their inability to forge connections with domestic students was closely tied to not being fluent in English. In their view, ESOL classes exacerbated this problem because they reduced their opportunities for communicating with native English-speakers.

3.3 Teacher perceptions of students' peer relationships

Teachers' perceptions and views of international/ESOL students' peer relationships varied. While some thought that the students mixed well, others felt that international/ESOL students primarily socialised within their own group. All discussions of this topic revolved to some extent around patterns of how students use the space of the school grounds.

Most prominently, teachers observed that many international students spent time in each other's company in the school's P Block. Views on the role of that space varied with some teachers describing it as a valuable 'safe space' where international students have the opportunity to 'just go and chill out and relax', and others as an impediment to integrating international/ESOL students with the wider student population, as illustrated in the three quotes below.

> *What other key things then do you think the school does that helps them [international/ESOL students] settle in, makes them feel welcome?*
>
> - They have a really friendly atmosphere down in the ESOL Department or International Department and they often go down there and there's microwaves and they can go down there and have their food. And they feel safe in that environment, I think, and I think the school provides that. I think the school can provide a bit more for them down there. (T)

> For those students who are less confident or those students who are quite new it's probably delaying the process of integration by being down here. (T)

> I think some of them do really, really well and others will just stay over by the International Office and stay with the other International students whereas others will happily mix more freely. (T)

Teachers' perceptions of the process of integration and making friends stood in stark contrast to the students' experiential accounts. Integration was by and large depicted as the responsibility of international/ESOL students. Successful integration requires the students to step out of their comfort zone, and a lack of cross-cultural mixing was largely seen as an individual problem that hinged on students' personalities. There was little expectation that domestic students play an active role in the process of integration.

As already noted, the students we observed also frequented other areas of the school – some stayed near the entrance to the library, some preferred to be near the tuck shop, and some spent intervals in classrooms if possible. Interestingly, students had no strong feelings regarding the P Block. When asked why some of them spent their breaks there, it transpired that more than anything, it was simply a habitual practice. This is of course very similar to the habitual spatial practices that we observed amongst the wider student population during intervals with the same groups of friends taking up their usual spaces, to either sit or stand and chat, play ball games or table tennis, eat lunch, or simply relax between lessons.

As such it can be said that while not all international/ESOL students frequent the International Student area, only international/ESOL students do so. Teachers agreed that the position of the P Block at the margins of the school grounds (as evident in the use of 'down there/here' or 'over by' in the quotes above) amplified its isolation and some suggested that moving P Block to a more central area of the school grounds might encourage better integration.

While spatial practices during intervals and the question of how to integrate dominated teachers' perceptions of students' peer relations, one teacher pointed to the role of classroom practices in bringing students together and, moreover, suggested that teachers should enable students to 'get to know each other'.

> It's all about building relationships and it's about yes, as teachers we're quite good at building relationships with students. Most teachers are very good at the pastoral side of that but I guess it's about getting the students to know each other. (T)

This teacher reported that using Māori principles in everyday teaching practice had been helpful because it allowed for more frequent and close collaboration between students through small group work.

3.4 Discussion and recommendation: Helping students to build peer relationships

The available international research in both secondary and tertiary education environments mirrors the findings of this research project. A number of studies, conducted both in New Zealand and overseas, have shown that international students struggle to develop friendships with domestic students (Bennett, Cochrane, Mohan, & Neal, 2016; Bennett, Volet, & Fozdar, 2013; Campbell, 2012; Gomes, 2015; Kim, 2013; Rienties, Johan, & Jindal-Snape, 2015; Turner & Cameron, 2016; Ward, Masgoret, & Gezentsvey, 2009). As was the case in this study, researchers found that international students are more likely to form cross-cultural friendships with other international students while friendships between monolingual local and multilingual international students are rare. Research on this topic is not yet well-developed but, so far, researchers have suggested several explanations that match the findings of this study at [School]. These include, for instance, (1) 'international students' were attracted to students in the same situation because that community provided an immediate sense of belonging and was a source of mutual practical support, (2) students felt that intercultural friendships violated unwritten norms on campus, (3) differences in language, culture, interests, and priorities were an obstacle to friendship, as were (4) a lack of interest on the part of domestic students, and (5) experiences of xenophobia and discrimination.

As a result, cross-cultural interactions between domestic and international students are unlikely to happen without explicit facilitation and institutional support. Researchers advocate strategically designed academic programmes, 'to counter homophilic tendencies and ensure intercultural communication opportunities are not left to "chance"' (Bennett et al., 2013, p. 548). Suggestions include facilitating cross-cultural interaction through 'formal and informal learning opportunities for students, who may have limited intercultural experience, and strategically designed intercultural pairs, groups, [and] discussions […]' (Bennett et al., 2013, p. 548) and buddy programmes (Campbell, 2012).

There are two key rationales for actively enabling contact between domestic and international students. For one, international students with extensive peer networks that include students from the host society are more satisfied, less lonely and less homesick (Gomes, 2015). This is especially the case when cross-cultural contact goes beyond the school gate and involves extended social interactions. For instance, 'sharing weekends, shopping, and entertainment with host national friends rather than only superficial interactions, is an important predictor of positive relationships between cultures' (Zhang & Brunton, 2007, p. 128).

The second reason is that such friendships are also beneficial to domestic students. If one purpose of internationalising schools is to prepare all their young people to be active participants in a globalised world and develop cosmopolitan attitudes and intercultural competencies, schools would do well to actively engage their domestic students in cross-cultural connections in order to make the most of the opportunities afforded by enrolling international students. As a last point, one often stated reason for New Zealand's internationalisation of education is to foster positive relations in the Asia-Pacific region. As such, it is important that international students are given the chance to develop lasting relationships with, and a positive impression of, the host country and its people.

Recommendations

1. Reflect on scale and purpose of enrolling full-fee paying international students

International students make up approximately nine percent of [School]'s student body and the number has increased over recent years. [School] has one of the highest numbers of international fee-paying students of all secondary schools in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Given the difficulties students reported in this study, it would be advisable for the school to define the purpose of attracting such large numbers of international students beyond raising revenue for the school. Current numbers, coupled with insufficient opportunities for cross-cultural friendships (see below), mean that neither international nor domestic students are able to reap the full potential social and cultural benefits of internationalisation.

2. Increase informal and formal opportunities for cross-cultural friendships

Based on data analysis and suggestions from previous research, we advocate that the school actively involve domestic students in the process of enabling strong and durable cross-cultural friendships amongst students. This can be achieved through, for instance,

- raising awareness amongst domestic students of the presence of international students at school as part of teaching about diversity and inclusion at school,
- encouraging collaboration in small groups as part of everyday classroom practices,
- instigating a formal buddy system or friendship programme that brings international and domestic students together.

A buddy or friendship programme needs to be available for international students early on, and it needs to be ongoing and regular.

3. Consider moving the International Student area to a more central location

This would reduce the isolation of international/ESOL students by attracting other students to the area, at least in terms of increasing through-traffic. This could be an opportunity to encourage all students to be involved in a project of thinking about the space of their school and how they collectively use it, and for jointly developing ideas for re-locating and re-designing this space.

4. Learning environment

A second element that is of great importance to students' sense of school belonging, inclusion, and wellbeing is the academic learning environment of the school. This encompassed elements such as available subjects to study, learning style, and access to a breadth of co-curricular activities but at its very centre stood the quality of relationships between teachers and their students.

This section of the report details students' views and integrates them with teachers' perspectives on the role of pastoral care. We found that students' and teachers' standpoints converged, but the data also revealed that the school, and management, could do more to support staff in fulfilling their pastoral care responsibilities.

4.1 Practical, social and academic support from teachers

When asked about positive experiences as [School] students in story templates as well as interviews and focus groups, a large number of students highlighted how much they valued the support from teachers. This included four levels: day-to-day practical support; showing interest in the students and demonstrating a caring attitude; high expectations for personal development; and high expectations for academic achievement and appreciation of students' skills.

The students overall reported very positive experiences of the school's learning environment. Teachers were commonly described as kind and caring, helpful and supportive, patient and respectful, as well as motivating and encouraging.

> It was the first day at school. I couldn't found my form class and one the school teacher took me to the class and told me don't nervous. I felt it was warm and made me calm. (S)

> The teachers make me feel very lovely and friendly. They can care about you, know what you study, what our life. Make me feel very good. They can have a little joker for us. We can funny. We can talk about the knowledge for the class. They very good for me. (S)

> They really want me to do my best and maybe they will feel happy when I achieve my goal. (S)

> In TFB class I made a hometown noodles by myself and teacher tasted good. And said I am good at cooking. All of the student really had good time. Because in China we don't have the subject that the teacher can let us to cook. And I posted the photo online, my Chinese friends were very jealousy me. In the class, we don't need to wrong about study and homework. Only thing we care is that the food is good or not. But in TFB we also need to write some recipe feedback and other work. So don't believe that we don't have to do work in class. But believe me it's fun. (S)

Teachers' appreciation of skills, especially new skills developed in a different education system, was also important. Students greatly valued the choices and opportunities afforded

to them by the New Zealand education system and the school, and explicitly referred to the following differences between their home country's schooling and [School]:

- Greater choice of subjects than in the home country's education system (especially non-STEM subjects such as Design and Visual Communication, Drama or Food Technology)
- A different learning style that is not solely geared towards repetition and exams
- A varied programme of co-curricular activities
- An improved work—life balance that allows students to spend their spare time taking part in co-curricular activities, socialising with friends or enjoying their surroundings.

Overall, the breadth of activities and a greater allocation of spare time allowed students to acquire and develop a wider range of skills than previously possible.

4.2 Pastoral care and the teacher–student relationship

Teachers also unanimously stressed the importance of developing positive and trusting relationships with all of their students. This included knowing students as individuals, 'what made them tick' and whether they were facing any issues that might adversely affect their academic performance or personal wellbeing.

In discussions about how the school aimed to build and maintain a sense of community and belonging and ensure student wellbeing, teachers most prominently referred to their own role in fostering strong and trusting teacher–student relationships. They particularly emphasised their responsibilities for providing pastoral care alongside promoting academic achievement.

> Trying to be someone that the students feel comfortable opening up to and discussing and in a way we're all probably a little bit like guidance counsellors who need to show concern over what their home life is like and things because they may not be that proactive if they've got a problem about going to see the more usual avenues to help them, like a guidance counsellor or something like that. (T)

Some teachers felt that communication about international students could be improved. According to these teachers, knowledge about what issues individual international/ESOL students were facing and pastoral care provision were too centralised in the International Office and not always passed on to teachers. It was pointed out that this could have adverse effects:

> If you separate the role of a teacher and the pastoral side of things you run the risk of the teacher seeing themselves as not being responsible for pastoral care which they absolutely are. (T)

4.2.1 Factors that facilitate strong teacher–student relationships

Vertical form class
Previously mentioned as beneficial to fostering peer relationships, the vertical form class structure also allowed teachers to develop a relationship with students over a number of years, rather than getting a new group of students every year.

> The bond between each other, from one year to another it's amazing and to me I feel that my responsibility is just the new Year Nine students to know more about them. Because I know the others. While in the old version of form class, every year in the beginning of the year I have to know everyone and to learn about the year and then they vanish. So I think this is so good. They trust you more because they know you. Your class routines are there. You know them, they know you and to me it's something that the school has achieved really well. (T)

At the same time, teachers thought that there was room for improvement. For instance, teachers told us that the role of the form teacher was 'not as clearly defined as it could be' and that a clearer articulation of the potential of the form class for establishing both cross-year peer relations and durable teacher–student relations would encourage teachers to use the form class periods appropriately. Moreover, in some teachers' views, 15 minutes per day were insufficient for realising the potential of form classes and meant that teachers were more likely to fill the time with minor tasks, such as reading out school notices for the day.

4.2.2 Factors that obstruct strong teacher–student relationships

It needs to be noted that most teachers felt that their ability to sustain such strong and trusting teacher–student relationships was adversely affected by the school's high-pressure environment. On the one hand, celebrating success was seen as positive and as playing a prominent role in building a sense of community for both students and teachers. On the other hand, the expectation to maintain the high academic performance required for the school to retain its attractiveness in the market place was seen to have a detrimental effect on both staff and student wellbeing. We frequently heard that teachers felt stressed and overworked 'because of the expectation of high results', and that pursuing excellence came 'at the expense of staff and student welfare for certain groups'. Overall, teachers felt that workloads and associated pressures were on the increase and needed to be addressed by management.

This issue plays an important role in relation to student wellbeing. Apart from the fact that students themselves were seen to be negatively affected by performance pressures, teachers were concerned that their workload-related stress also had a knock-on effect on students. More specifically, teachers felt they often had not enough time to adequately engage with students on an individual and personal level.

> As a teacher I don't feel I have enough time to connect on the same level that I did at my old school… in [a different New Zealand city]. I know sort of enough, but I don't think I know some of my students as well as I should do. (T)

This time pressure may have a particular impact on ESOL students. Firstly, for some teachers it reportedly took more time to get to know and develop relationships with ESOL students. In

large part, this was ascribed to the language barrier. As a result, teachers felt less able to 'get the best' out of these students. Secondly, time constraints also restricted teachers' ability to make use of the services provided by the International Department to support the teaching of linguistically diverse students.

> It's difficult when you have this constant one lesson comes in, one lesson goes out, one lesson comes in. You make a mental note 'I need to see the department if I can get this translated or get these things' and then other things happen, and then you forget about it or you make do. (T)

In addition, teachers were concerned that workplace stress also resulted in a high rate of staff turnover, and pointed out that this curbed the school's ability to ensure that students experience durable teacher–student relationships.

> We have a ridiculous staff turnover and this is what also doesn't help anyone's relationship with kids and it's not fair on kids, is that people just leave all the time, constantly. (T)

Whilst these concerns were voiced by most of the teachers we spoke to, some teachers within the ESOL Department felt that the generally high workload at [School] was amplified for them. As the quotes below show, whether accurate or not, there was a sense that there was more pressure for delivering 'value for money' for fee-paying international students.

> They are a large proportion of our student body and they bring in a lot of money and we have a duty to give them value for money I guess. (T)

> These kids pay fees so these teachers are almost more accountable in a really unfair way than other teachers and that's what it boils down to and it's sad. (T)

Furthermore, the implementation of changes to programme delivery, including a recent curriculum review, added to pressures. While there was consensus that the proposed measures were valuable, teachers felt that they were being implemented too fast, concluding: 'it's exhausting and people are fed up'.

Some of their concerns were offset by the school's flexibility in case of sickness or family commitments. Teachers also underlined that the school encouraged a collegial work environment. Examples of collegiality (such as cooperating in preparing course material) between teachers were raised frequently. However, some teachers were cynical about measures such as the recently instated Health and Wellbeing Committee because its recommendations for improving staff wellbeing (such as drinking enough water, regularly leaving the desk, not answering emails for a specified period) did nothing to address the more structural workload problem.

4.3 Discussion and recommendations

Previous research has shown that interpersonal relationships and the classroom climate are integral to students' sense of school belonging and that teachers play an essential role. In some respects, classrooms are said to be more important in shaping students' sense of belonging, inclusion, and wellbeing than the wider school environment. For instance, at

college level, students' have a higher sense of belonging when teachers are perceived as warm, friendly, helpful, and caring as well as organised and prepared, and when teachers encourage student participation (Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007).

At the same time, there is a vast body of literature that discusses occupational stress in the teaching profession (Fitchett, McCarthy, Lineback, & Lambert, 2016; Gonzalez, Peters, Orange, & Grigsby, 2016; Miller, 2011; Prilleltensky, Neff, & Bessell, 2016; Wolgast & Fischer, 2017). The teaching profession is generally regarded as a high-stress environment where staff are subjected to high demands and tight time constraints. This can negatively affect staff wellbeing and lead to burnout and high attrition rates. In schools with diverse student populations, stress can be particularly pronounced amongst ESOL teachers, as Haworth (2008) found in New Zealand.

Most of this research highlights the effects of stress on teachers themselves. Less attention is given to how it impacts on students. However, a recent study in a New Zealand school with a large number of international students found that 'time constraints and the schools focus on delivering the academic curriculum' limited teachers' ability to adequately support international students with settling in and with fostering cross-cultural peer relationships (Chou-Lee, 2016, p. 51).

Recommendations

4. Better define the purpose of form class

The vertically-structured form class is an effective tool for building community. It allows teachers to develop long-lasting relationships and enables peer connections across differences, such as age, nationality, or linguistic background, amongst others. Based on this study, we recommend reflecting on options for further improving this system. Data shows that form class sessions may be more useful if their purpose was more clearly defined, and this would allow the length and format to be adjusted accordingly.

5. Address concerns regarding staff wellbeing and retention

Ensuring staff wellbeing and retention is one of [School]'s strategic priorities and teachers acknowledged that the school does much to support them. Nevertheless, the study also revealed room for improvement with respect to stress caused by time constraints and high workloads.

5. Inclusion and diversity at school and in the classroom

The third key element that had a very strong influence on ESOL students' sense of school belonging, inclusion, and wellbeing was school practice that specifically addressed cultural, and more specifically linguistic, diversity. Both students and teachers discussed language practices and views on how to engage with linguistic diversity in detail in interviews and focus groups. Most notably, students' and teachers' perspectives diverged widely when it came to the use of home languages in classrooms and to ESOL classes.

5.1 Engaging with diversity

5.1.1 Student perceptions of diversity at [School]

Students generally found it difficult to articulate a clear view on how they experienced diversity at school. For most, it involved opportunities to learn about 'different cultures' and making friends from different countries. Unsurprisingly, given their limited exchanges with domestic peers, the students told us that they learned much about the culture and traditions, food, and even language of other international students. For instance, one Chinese student said:

> You can learn how to make different countries' food, like Korean food or Thai food and you can learn some little language for the country. (S)

While students enjoyed the cultural celebrations the school organised, they thought that diversity did not play a prominent role in day-to-day life at the school.

> The major part of this school is the Kiwi, the local students and the local teachers and the culture is like a small part of the school. (S)

On the other hand, some students felt that they had specific cultural knowledge to offer the school.

> I bring the school some Chinese traditional thinking and some Chinese traditional culture I can teach. If someone ask me I can tell him. So, I bring this for school, maybe I think. (S)

> I speak Mandarin and I'm proud of it and coming to another country, meet the Chinese speak Mandarin also proud of it. (S)

5.1.2 Teacher perceptions of diversity at [School]

All teachers who were interviewed thought that the school was inclusive, or aimed to become more inclusive, of diverse students. Examples of inclusion encompassed different levels, such

as celebrating cultural diversity at specific events, school values, and specific structures and policies designed to foster inclusion.

Overall, teachers foregrounded school values of respect and equal treatment:

> There doesn't seem to be specific policies as such that I am aware of. I think the school tries to have a culture that is respectful and that is something, it's what you describe as caught not taught, that people need to model, that if someone says something that is not appropriate, that teachers shut it down, that we talk in a positive way and we encourage and promote the respect of everyone's personal culture and belief. (T)

> All students are treated equally and fairly. (T)

Many teachers emphasised that celebrating cultural diversity was part and parcel of building an inclusive school. Specific examples most commonly mentioned were International Week, Chinese Night, and Korean Night.

> There's a lot of talk at assemblies about celebrating the cultural diversity that we have within the school. (T)

> The boys love it [International Week] mainly because of the food, so the different cultures get to sell their food but also demonstrate what makes their culture and then we have Chinese and Korean nights which the boys love. They get so involved and that's a big community as well, so lots of people from those cultures in the community come into the school. So, there's definitely lots of ways in which different cultures are celebrated here. (T)

Further, teachers referred to departments charged with providing support to specific groups of students (ESOL, learning difficulties, Māori and Pasifika) as part of 'structures in place to be looking after those groups individually'.

A smaller number of teachers drew attention to recent initiatives, including a comprehensive curriculum review, towards acknowledging growing diversity and described these as a positive 'paradigm shift':

> We've all had to learn a huge amount, like a massive shift in thinking in terms of our curriculum. A shift in the language that's used as well. As staff I think we used to use the word Islander to talk about Pasifika. A massive shift in the kind of cultural attitudes and it feels like we're moving in a very positive direction at the school. (T)

Those teachers who directed more attention to the policy level suggested that more needed to be done to put good intentions into practice more effectively and with stronger leadership:

> I think at the moment the school has got good policies for inclusiveness and inclusion but I think it's still in an implementation phase in terms of how to be inclusive of different learning needs. (T)

> The vast majority of the staff really want to go there but just need a bit of help – how do we get there, what shall we do? And it just needs– There is some good leadership

around it. There are some really positive things but there needs to be more leadership of all this. … We need more support from management on all of this, it needs to be led from the top. I feel like that's a weak point, particularly in biculturalism but I'd also say for multiculturalism. (T)

The above examples speak to policy, management and practice. With the school in a transitional space, this is a good time to reflect on sound implementation practice. One issue raised was the lack of diversity within the leadership team as one potential reason that implementing policies was not driven as effectively as it could be.

The entire leadership team is male. That's not diverse. Most of the senior leadership team is white and in their fifties. That's not diverse. There is a block on diversity and it starts with that team. (T)

5.2 Language learning and ESOL practices

By far the most prominent topic in the context of engaging with diversity was linguistic difference. The students criticised the school's model of ESOL classes in which they were separated from domestic students, while teachers were concerned about how to deal with multilingualism in the classroom.

5.2.1 'I think we shouldn't have ESOL class'

Learning English was identified as one of the key challenges by a large number of students. When we asked further about what helped and what made it harder for them to learn English, the school's ESOL practices moved to the centre of conversation. Students almost unanimously agreed that they would prefer to be taught exclusively in mainstream classes. While they understood the intended purpose of ESOL classes and acknowledged the benefits of a supportive environment of fellow Mandarin-speakers for settling in, students thought that the disadvantages of being in classes that are separated from the mainstream outweighed its benefits. Regarding academic achievement, students thought that ESOL classes acted as a barrier to:

- learning English
- attending courses of their choice, and
- entering higher streams

Students experienced ESOL classes as inhibiting rather than enabling them to gain greater English language proficiency. In particular, students thought that being separated from native English-speakers – coupled with being amongst fellow Mandarin speakers rather than in a heterogeneous group of speakers of different languages – compelled them to converse in their home language.

I think we shouldn't have ESOL class. I think we can choose with other students together to class, not just Asian students at a class. It's not very good to practice English I think. (S)

- The most important is study English.

- Talk, talk, talk and listen, listen, listen.

- But at [School] we are in ESOL class so we just talk to Asian students and the pronunciation not very good and it's not good for our English.

- So I think the best way is to take Kiwi class. For international student to Kiwi class to better the English. (FG)

Students were also concerned that their ESOL status reduced their access to courses and influenced the way they were streamed. One student, for instance, suggested that one only got value for money (made the most of the fees they are paying) in mainstream classes:

I have been ESOL for a long time then I just listen to teacher every day, like follow instructions. I want to get out of ESOL because I spend money on New Zealand, I just can't waste it, I have to learn more, then in class I just listen to teacher and try to speak English every day. Then you got the mainstream thing, you can choose. (FG)

Several students felt that the International Office determined students' access to courses rather than letting them choose, saying, 'It's more like "decide course" not "choose course"'. Students also explicitly related the problem to streaming:

A is the best, B is second, C is the worst. I have been C5 last year and a lot of good student got many first in every subject almost, they have been C5 as well. So in C5 we don't have any Kiwi friends. We can't practice formal, standard English and they say 'this is good for you, we need to separate you for special treatment' like that and I don't think this is a good way to practice our English. (FG)

Students in another focus group felt that teachers sometimes made arbitrary decisions about whether students were ready to move to mainstream classes.

- It's about the teacher, what teachers think.

Is there any sort of assessment?

- It is a little bit not fair. If [name] makes the teacher angry … he can't go to Kiwi class. It's about the teachers.

- And sometimes in a class if you naughty, … the teacher will angry about us.

And you think that has an influence on that decision?

- Yeah. (FG)

Whether this impression is correct or not, it alerts us to the fact that these students experienced ESOL classes as a constraint – even a punishment – they would like to avoid. Some students concluded that the school served domestic students better than international students because they were not subject to the same restrictions.

On the whole, teachers did not question the school's ESOL practices and, in contrast to the students, described them as a necessity.

Some international boys come in and they get put straight into mainstream classes and I think that's wrong. […] I do think they need to be going into an ESOL class first and then mainstream. (T)

However, some teachers raised potential drawbacks of ESOL classrooms. A teacher who thought that it was important to 'allow students to use the mother language where appropriate', felt that in ESOL classes students took 'advantage' of being surrounded with co-linguistic peers. This matches students' observations that ESOL classes do indeed encourage them to speak in their home languages.

A further issue raised was that ESOL classes presented teachers with ethnically homogeneous groups of students. In their view, it was easier to interact with and relate to diverse classrooms because teachers became part of that diversity rather than being 'an outsider' in relation to a group of students from a different background. Albeit from a different perspective, this mirrors students' perception that ESOL classes are monocultural environments that inhibit cross-cultural contact.

5.2.2 Learning English at [School]?

One noteworthy finding is that when we asked students what they would do differently if they could start over, many said that they would learn English prior to joining [School], either in their home country or at a language school in the host country:

So you would spend more time on English [before coming to New Zealand]?

- Yeah. So if I do that I wouldn't have a lot of issues after I came to New Zealand.

- I learn my English in China and then I would come here. (FG)

This statement indicates that students did not anticipate the problems they experienced upon arrival. It also shows that they did not regard [School] as an adequate environment for gaining English language proficiency. This perception is directly related to the school's ESOL structure.

The responses to the story template, in particular, showed a high level of agency amongst students with numerous examples of strategies devised in order to improve their English language proficiency. Students reported that they practiced English with their friends, their homestay families, and their teachers and that they used tools such as reading English books, watching TV, playing games and using their phone and dictionary apps. This degree of self-directed agency contradicts some of the teachers' views that international students were not putting enough effort into learning English.

For students, their experience amounted to a feeling that they had to adapt to New Zealand norms and values.

For me I think all the challenges or the problems is on me so I think the problem is on me. I choose to come to New Zealand so I have to face that kind of thing because you got no choice. You won't expect the Kiwis speak Chinese so you have to learn English by yourself. You can't expect someone would help you all the time or follow you to do something. That's the same because for example, you can't expect the Europeans to speak Chinese, like other Europeans speak Chinese. So New Zealand is not belong to

China so you need to follow their rules, their lifestyles. Like if they speak English then you need to speak English. If they do some things then you need to do the same. That's why I can handle it because I think… like all the challenges, we need to handle by ourselves so we need to do something about it, not someone else do something for you. (S)

5.2.3 'Managing' native language use in the classroom

While evaluating teaching was expressly not the purpose of in-class observation, we want to briefly note that teachers were obviously deeply motivated to help students learn English and we saw many examples of teaching strategies designed to do just that. However, in thinking about the role that teachers and classroom environments play in fostering students' sense of school belonging, inclusion, and wellbeing, it is important to note that this endeavour was often underscored by a monolingual approach that saw students' home languages as a barrier to learning English and to academic achievement. In classes and during intervals, we noticed several examples of an approach that favoured monolingualism over multilingualism: For instance,

- during classes, students were repeatedly asked to refrain from using their home language;
- students were told off for allegedly not putting sufficient effort into learning English;
- students were threatened with repercussions if they spoke their home language 'excessively' in class;
- formal opportunities for using home languages in class were limited and often constrained to solitary tasks (e.g., being allowed to use translators for a specific period of time).

Interviews showed that students' native languages were commonly seen as something that needed to be 'managed'. Attitudes lay on a continuum, ranging from a call to institute an English-only policy in the classroom at one end, to an acknowledgement that students benefitted both academically and socially from being able to use their first language extensively in the classroom at the other end. Most teachers, though, occupied a middle ground. While they accepted that students used their home languages occasionally in the classroom, they overall encouraged students to speak English as much as possible.

Students also raised concern about this approach. Some students felt that Asian students were occasionally treated differently and unfairly by teachers. One student described witnessing Asian students being stereotyped as shy or not being given enough time to answer questions in class. The student concluded: 'I think as a teacher you should have a good idea- If you teach two students everyone is the same, everyone is equal'. (S)

The following quotes from focus group conversations show that students were aware of and at times frustrated by the lack of tolerance for multilingualism in the classroom:

Was there anything else that was difficult?

- Sometimes teacher talk to us and we can't understand and the teacher getting angry.

- Yeah. She can really be angry.

Really? When you don't understand?

- Yeah.

- Yeah. When we don't understand.

- We don't understand something and we just asking her but she explains something but we can't understand more because she is talking really fast and – I think she speak alien language like that.

- She speak alien language and sometimes the teacher was like – I don't know something, I ask Chinese boy what that teacher said and the teacher said 'if you have any problem, ask me' and I think 'What!? Okay. I can't understand this and I ask my friend'. (FG)

A further example raised was a lack of familiarity with Chinese names amongst teachers.

How would you describe your relationship with the teachers?

- Maybe sometimes – most of my teachers can remember my name but some of the teachers, like the [subject] teacher cannot remember my name. The International students' name, it's not the same as the Kiwi names and English names so they can understand and remember it. (S)

Analysis shows that two factors impacted teacher attitudes and practices around managing students' use of their home languages. Firstly, international/ESOL students were defined as primarily 'English language learners'. Coupled with the school's definition of ESOL students as 'priority learners', this can be said to foster a deficit approach. Secondly, data revealed a sense of being underprepared for linguistic diversity in the classroom and a concern about 'losing control'. These two factors are discussed in more detail below.

A matter of definition: 'English language learners' and 'priority learners'

Often teachers thought of ESOL students primarily as 'English learners' and this arguably affected their attitudes towards the use of other languages in the classroom.

I found it quite difficult to manage that, them not talking in their own language and taking part in English which is the reason they're here, it's to improve their English but it's a battle to get them to speak in English. (T)

In fact, questions about students' decisions to embark on overseas study and to become a student at [School] revealed very complex motives. Most importantly, we found that learning English was of least relevance to students. Not one of the students we spoke to listed learning English as their main reason for studying overseas. Instead, it was seen as an incidental consequence, or 'by-product', of being immersed in an institution with English as the language of instruction, and in an English-speaking society.

Students gave the following key reasons for studying overseas:

- desire for high-quality education;

- becoming more independent and gaining practical life skills;
- having an immersive international experience;
- living in a safe and environmentally friendly place.

Part and parcel of embarking on overseas education was the students' interest in broadening their minds, having new experiences and learning about different ways of living.

What made you come to New Zealand?

- Reason? Maybe I think I need know besides China … work, I need to know how big about the world another country, culture, meet some new friend … I want change to my mind so I go New Zealand. (S)

Interviews and focus groups showed that the ESOL students at [School] were part of an increasing transnational academic and labour mobility. Many of the students we spoke to were planning to continue on to tertiary education either in Aotearoa/New Zealand or other English speaking countries (such as the US, the UK, and Australia) as well as continental Europe. Some students planned to subsequently return to their countries of origin while others indicated that they hoped to settle in Aotearoa/New Zealand or move to other countries. As such, transnational mobility appeared to these students as a normalised part of their life course. As one student put it, 'I want to go somewhere more than just like two countries'. Being a student at [School] was part of this paradigm.

[School] also explicitly categorises ESOL students as priority learners, positioning them as one 'target group' alongside Māori and Pasifika students and students with special learning needs. Despite good intentions, there is a risk of framing ESOL students as deficient rather than as students who bring additional knowledge to the classroom. Additional language learning is framed as a hardship and students are perceived as in need of 'help' with learning English.

Linguistic diversity and losing control

Interviews revealed that some teachers were uncertain about how to approach multilingual classes and students with other home languages.

I found that quite surprising, that there would be a student here who wouldn't be able to understand me very well and I wouldn't be able to understand him. I was like how am I going to help here? (T)

The school offers Professional Development sessions and Professional Learning Groups and the International Office offers a range of support services, including translators, which are seen as useful and are much appreciated. Nonetheless, teachers suggested that more PD opportunities needed to be offered as the school became increasingly diverse.

It's giving teachers the skills to deal with that because when I moved here I didn't feel I was equipped to deal with that. It wasn't something that I'd had experience with before so maybe training or providing some PD for staff. It's not just International students, some of the migrants here, their English isn't as good as well so I guess it's something we'll have to look at as the school continues to become more multicultural. (T)

Maybe [more than] just a one-off PD session about this is how you should talk to International students, which is what we normally get at the start of the year. (T)

Not all teachers who were teaching ESOL classes were trained to do so. These teachers need better support if they were going to be given the responsibility of teaching ESOL classes and ought to be included in regular ESOL team meetings.

In many cases, teachers' attempts to manage students' native language use in the classroom grew out of a sense of losing control if they did not understand what the students were saying.

That was actually a big frustration for me, just not knowing [what students are talking about]. They didn't mean to be rude, they were just conversing with one another. So, I've had to at times remind them that we need to speak in English because I don't speak Mandarin and I need to understand what you're trying to say or what you're trying to ask. (T)

They can be saying anything anyway and sometimes you know they are, you know it's not work related, and it certainly isn't helping them with the understanding in my subject. (T)

5.3 Discussion and recommendations

Previous research has conclusively established that it is beneficial for linguistically diverse learners to be able to use their first language in classrooms with a different language of instruction, such as English. Using their first language assists students in building a deeper understanding in subject classes than would otherwise be possible. Home languages thus represent a resource which helps students both with learning English and with learning course content (Tait & Gleeson, 2010).

At the same time, a number of international studies have also shown that teaching personnel often think of students' home languages as a deficit and a barrier to gaining proficiency in the language of instruction and, ultimately, to academic success. Just like in this research project, various studies in secondary schools have found that teachers thought students needed to be exposed to English as much as possible and aimed to bar them from using their first language. International research further confirmed this study's finding that 'allowing home languages in the classroom makes teachers uncomfortable; they feel they are losing control of what happens' (Van Der Wildt et al., 2015, p. 4). A study conducted with primary school teachers in New Zealand found that the presence of even small numbers of English language learners in mainstream classes led to a sense of uncertainty amongst teachers (Haworth, 2008).

Suppressing the use of home languages can negatively affect ESOL students' sense of school belonging, inclusion, and wellbeing for several reasons. Firstly, multilingual students use the languages they are familiar with 'in a natural and integrated way', (Van Der Wildt et al., 2015, p. 1) even when they find themselves in monolingual environments. Secondly, language plays an important part in students' sense of self. Some researchers have argued that when teachers see students' home languages as a barrier rather than a resource, they also have lower expectations for students, which can, in turn, negatively affect students' self-esteem.

Indeed, van der Wildt and colleagues (2015, p. 11) 'found a significant positive effect of tolerant practices towards multilingualism on [students'] sense of belonging'.

One argument advanced by researchers that applies to the [School] context is that students from different linguistic backgrounds (this includes migrant and international students) should not be predominantly defined as 'English language learners' (Dabach & Fones, 2016; Malsbary, 2014). These scholars argue that in defining students as English learners, schools reduce students' complex personalities and motivations and also emphasise need and deficit at the expense of seeing international students as bringing additional skills and forms of knowledge to the school and into classrooms.

One further issue that resonates with our findings is that both class size and the percentage of 'foreign' students in classes has an effect on intercultural contact. A study in Spain (González Motos, 2016) found that smaller classes experience better cohesion, making it easier for students of different backgrounds to interact. Not surprisingly, the larger the share of 'foreign students' in a classroom, the less cross-cultural interaction there is. Moreover, it is difficult to organise in-class group work in a way that connects students from different backgrounds when diversity in the classroom is limited (Chou-Lee, 2016). As such, ESOL students' sense that ESOL classes reduced their opportunities for contact with domestic peers should be taken seriously. Some available research into teaching students with languages different from the language of instruction advocate team teaching and 'plug-in' instead of 'pull out' models to avoid isolation, meaning that students attend mainstream classes and that ESOL teachers work together with mainstream teachers so that course content and language are taught simultaneously (Peercy & Martin-Beltran, 2012; Somé-Guiébré, 2016).

Recommendations

6. Reflect on policies and practices of language use in the classroom

The school can clearly build on current strong practices, such as providing extra scaffolding for ESOL students in subject courses, integrating language learning into subject courses and providing plenty of opportunities for cooperative group work in class. It might be useful to provide opportunities for teachers to learn from each other and share best practice examples.

We further suggest that the school encourage and support teachers in accepting and engaging with multilingualism as a normal and necessary part of the classroom. This involves (1) acknowledging students' home languages (and cultural knowledge) as an asset in the classroom, (2) moving away from defining international/ESOL students primarily as 'English language learners', and (3) re-thinking the effects of defining ESOL students as priority learners.

7. Reflect on the scale and purpose of the school's ESOL programme

Currently, [School] proposes to cap ESOL classes at 15 or 20 students depending on level (junior/senior) and subject, and advocates 'a balance' between inclusion in mainstream classes and separation in ESOL classes. In light of both the findings of this study and available

research that criticises 'pull-out' ESOL models because it isolates students and partially denies them access to mainstream courses, we recommend that the school revisit their ESOL course programme in order to identify practices that may better serve their international/ESOL student body. Available research suggests that 'plug-in' models based on co-teaching and collaboration between mainstream and ESOL teachers are innovative approaches to supporting international and immigrant students and to fostering greater inclusion of multilingualism.

6. Concluding remarks

The CaDDANZ research programme, which the study at [School] forms part of, is concerned with how increasing and new forms of diversity that result from immigration impact on New Zealand society and how, in turn, New Zealand institutions can better prepare for and respond to demographic changes.

Not least through their participation in this study, [School] demonstrates that they are invested in building capability in responding to diversity, and in working towards a greater sense of belonging, inclusion and wellbeing for students. [School] has already initiated a number of positive transformations (such as a recent curriculum review) that participants referred to as a 'paradigm shift'. It was also suggested that [School] is in a transitional space of operationalising new policies geared towards responding to diversity.

Based on this study of ESOL students' sense of school belonging, inclusion and wellbeing, one key element of responding to diversity is reciprocity. This study has shown that the ESOL students at [School] had very clear ideas about what facilitated their sense of school belonging, inclusion, and wellbeing and what subtracted from it. Crucially, students' sense of belonging suffered when they were excluded – either from mainstream classes or from socialising with their 'Kiwi' peers. At [School], as in other places, the work of integrating often remains with the 'other'. As Chou-Lee (2016, p. 59) has noted:

> …more efforts appear to be made on the part of international students to adapt their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours rather than the host country and nationals adapting practices to acknowledging cultural differences that international students bring into schools and New Zealand society.

Working towards addressing ESOL students' needs in particular, and towards inclusion more generally, requires a whole-of-school approach. All students, staff and management need to be invested in the benefits of mainstreaming and normalising diversity, including multilingualism. Actively promoting the inclusion of various forms of difference and making it a normal and valued part of the school has the potential to develop international capabilities of all [School] students.

Regarding peer-relations, there are opportunities to actively foster community-building through classroom and school-wide activities that bring students of different backgrounds together and that help to build and sustain new relationships. With respect to linguistic diversity, there are real opportunities to implement innovative approaches that can help to overcome outmoded monolingual practices. Especially in Anglophone contexts such as Aotearoa/New Zealand where many young people are only fluent in one language, it is important that multilingualism is actively promoted.

We hope that the findings and recommendations presented in this report assist [School] in capturing the dividend that diversity brings to the school as a whole.

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