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The School Library Team: How Does It Influence Learning and Teaching?

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In New Zealand school libraries, the nature of educational activities performed by school library staff is unclear. Three parallel case studies were conducted to explore the actual work of school library team members. Ways of working with teachers and each other were explored in interviews and focus groups and the characteristics of information service provision were compared with those reflected in the wider literature. While many practices were affirmed for their positive influence on teaching and learning, areas for further development were identified. These are discussed in terms of creating change and strengthening learning outcomes.

In assessing what schools can do to make a difference to literacy outcomes, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2002 report notes that where student use of resources, such as the school library, computers and Internet, is "relatively high, mean reading scores tend to be higher, even when other factors are discounted" (OECD, 2002, p. 22). Affirming but predating this conclusion, American research indicates that well-developed school library programmes have a marked, positive effect on learning outcomes in a wide range of school community contexts (Lance, 2000; Lance, Welborn and Hamilton-Pennell, 1993).

Through these and other studies, the use of school libraries and associated instructional activities has been correlated positively with students' learning outcomes from a variety of viewpoints. However, research also shows that there are some severe impediments to the implementation of such programmes. For example, there is a perceived lack of understanding of the intellectual role of the library that leads to the resource (including ICT facilities) and its staff being undervalued and poorly supported (Todd, 2002). Moreover, positive correlations rest on the assumption that where there is a school library, there is also a school-wide, coordinated programme of educational activities led by a skilled practitioner. Where this is not the case, one must ask, what are those responsible for school information services doing to influence teaching and learning, how are they working together and what would a school library programme add to their effectiveness?

Haycock (1999) states that quality school library programmes exemplify specific foundations, or prerequisites, for success. These include "having:
- a stated aim for the programme
- a clear definition of the role of the qualified teacher librarian
- a priority on collaborative programme planning and team teaching between the teacher librarian and classroom colleagues
- a systematic approach to teaching an information process based on a school-based continuum of information skills and strategies
- flexible scheduling of classes and groups, and
- appropriate and effective program and personal evaluation by administrators." (p. xi)

These points indicate that a particular school library philosophy has been adopted and there is a commitment to the establishment of baseline conditions, but it may take time for that commitment to be realised.

According to Loertscher (1988) the school library programme itself is founded on three functions: solid warehousing support, direct services to teachers and students and resource based teaching. These underpin learning and teaching across the curriculum to develop reading motivation, research skills, information analysis, technology skills, cultural literacy and support for specific student groups. The three functions are the focuses of core action by school library staff. In this context, the teacher librarian is said to be responsible for the creation of a developmental, vertical programme addressing these aspects of learning and is accountable for the excellence of that programme. The complete programme may not come to maturity instantly however and different aspects of the instructional programme are likely to take priority as a result of the needs of students, resource availability and educational priorities within an education system.

In addition, guidelines from Australia (*Learning for the Future,* 2001) capture five critical relationships centred on the role of the school library:

- learners and learning
- teachers and teaching
- resources and the curriculum
- access to information, and
- the physical environment

These relationships are facilitated and enriched through the knowledge and expertise of those developing and delivering the school library programme. A significant level of agreement about essential elements of that professional understanding is reflected in role, task and responsibility descriptions produced by, for example, the American Association of School Librarians (AASLA) and the Canadian School Library Association (CSLA). In some countries, for a variety of reasons, these reflect aspirations rather than current realities.

Any initiative to improve student learning outcomes and realise those aspirations implies a need for evaluation of learning and of the initiative itself. School library programmes are no different. To assist in programme evaluation, Loertscher (1988) developed a series of taxonomies that describe ways in which library staff, principals, teachers and students function in relation to utilisation of school library and information services in teaching and learning.

Taking the relationship between school libraries and learning a step further and providing long term goals, Henri (1999) discusses the concept of 'information literate school communities'. This emerging concept is giving rise to identification of potential milestones for evaluating a school's progress in establishing a culture in which the focus is on learning and development of abilities essential in the information age (Henri, Boyd & Eyre, 2002). Student learning outcomes are a key concern, but attention is also given to the teacher as a learner and to overall knowledge management within the school.

From the above, seven dimensions of school librarianship can be distilled to guide consideration of current effectiveness and the potential gains resulting from development of school information services comparable to those correlated with an increase in student literacy and academic performance:

- Underlying philosophy (vision) and critical conditions for effective implementation (Haycock, 1999)
- Structural components focusing action and underpinning programme development (Loertscher, 1988)
- Critical relationships informing action (*Learning for the Future, 2001*)
- Tasks and responsibilities of the school library team (AASL & CSLA)
- Essential teaching and information expertise brought to the tasks, (AASL & CSLA)
- Responses to all of the above by school staff and students (Loertscher's Taxonomy, 1988), and
- Milestones for monitoring progress towards establishment of information literate school communities (Henri, Boyd & Eyre, 2002).

These dimensions have several facets in common and the themes that unite them are captured in the six principles identified in *School Library and Learning in the Information Landscape: Guidelines for New Zealand Schools* (Ministry of Education and National Library of New Zealand, 2002). These principles focus on:

- information literacy
- reading
- access
- information resources
- place
- service

These guidelines state that "people are the key to the library's role in raising the students' achievement" (p.23) thereby reinforcing the view that the nature of learning and teaching relationships with school library staff are of paramount importance. The study reported here examined those relationships in three New Zealand schools.

New Zealand Context

The contribution of New Zealand school libraries to learning has been examined through quantitative survey research (Chalmers and Slyfield, 1993) and some school libraries appear to be highly effective in supporting learning. However, the evidence to date does not reveal actual teaching practice or ways in which school library staff work with classroom teachers to promote student learning. While the new school library guidelines give advice based on six principles, there is a need for complementary recommendations that will enable school leaders to examine curriculum design and teaching practices to make optimal use of school libraries and information technology. A further spur for examining the contribution of school libraries and their staff to teaching and learning is the implementation of the National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA), a new secondary school qualification that makes heavy demands on information literacy and research skills.

While few New Zealand schools have full-time, qualified teacher librarians (TLs), they all have long had libraries, together with a pedagogical emphasis on constructivism and resource based learning, particularly in the primary schools. Their libraries or information centres operate in a variety of ways, often with responsibilities shared among teachers, librarians, paraprofessionals, parent volunteers and students themselves, hence use here of the inclusive term 'school library team'.

Several elements of effective school library programmes are expected to be present in New Zealand schools, but the extent to which the notion of the ideal school library programme is in operation is uncertain. It may be that a different model to ensure that the investment in school library and information centres is used to best advantage emerges in light of local constraints. To promote improvement on present practice, therefore, the following study examined three schools in light of dimensions of school librarianship known to lead to excellence.

Research questions focused on the following issues:
- In what ways do the SLT and teachers collaborate in terms of their roles, in development of classroom programmes and the use of information and communication technology (ICT)?
- What educational activities are initiated by school library teams?
- How is the effectiveness of these activities evaluated?
- In what ways is that effectiveness apparent in student performance?
- What constitutes best practice as perceived within the team and by other staff?
- What is the nature of the students' perceived response to this practice?

The study was exploratory, with perceptions and misperceptions of stakeholders becoming evident through semi-structured interviews. Findings will be used to inform further research and professional development opportunities.

Method

Participant selection

Researchers used the term 'school library team' (SLT) to describe varying arrangements known to exist in schools where full time teacher librarians are not necessarily employed. The term was expected to refer to working groups ranging from loose associations to tightly organised, formally recognised, collaborative partnerships. For the purposes of this study, the SLT is, therefore, defined as those people who have responsibility for the efficient management and utilisation of the school library. This team may include the principal, the Teacher with Library Responsibility (TLR) or the Teacher Librarian (TL), support staff, classroom teachers and students. In some cases parents and members of the Board of Trustees, the governing body of the school, may have an active role.

Recommendations for selection of 'good' school library teams in Auckland were sought from three independent sources: lecturers in teacher librarianship, school library advisers, and the national executive of the School Library Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (SLANZA). There was a high degree of agreement in the recommendations received. A primary/elementary school catering for students between 5 and 11 years, an intermediate for students between 11 and 13 years and a secondary school for students ranging from 13 to 18 years of age were selected to reflect differences across the compulsory education sector. The schools varied in size and the socio economic standing of the communities they served.

Although having a trained teacher librarian was not a criterion for selection, two schools had had one for more than eight years, while the third SLT leader had dual qualifications in teaching and librarianship. All three schools had support staff in the library, none of whom had formal teaching or library qualifications. The context of SLT operation in the intermediate school was complicated by the fact that each year a third of the teaching staff were new appointees, often in their first or second year as teachers.

In each school, the principal and Teacher Librarian identified the SLT members for interview. In addition, class teachers were invited to participate in the study on the basis that they had worked closely with SLT members for at least one term and perceived this association to have benefits for their teaching and student learning outcomes. In the event, those interviewed were principal (3), teacher librarians (3), support staff (7), members of the SLT who were also teachers (6, but none in the secondary school), students (14) and, in two of the schools, members of the Board of Trustees and parents (3). Different SLT structures resulted in the primary school contributing more interviews (23) than the other schools (12 each).

To take account of differing perspectives, the interview schedules varied slightly according to whom was being interviewed. For example, principals and SLT leaders might have an overall vision for school library services, but students would be unlikely to be able to comment on long term plans.

Data collection

Data collection used semi-structured interviews, focus groups and examination of school documentation, for example policies and plans. The interview team of five participated in training to increase the level of reliability in interviewing technique. Interviews were recorded on audio-tape with the permission of interviewees, who later verified the accuracy of transcriptions. Finally, researchers and their assistants noted their personal impressions of relationships between factors, attitudes and events in post-interview field notes.

To analyse the data, the verified transcriptions were coded in terms of school, information source (role of participant), interview question and content. The content codes emerged from the data themselves, with some categories providing sufficient depth of information that several sub-codes were required. Triangulation between the different data sources ensured greater reliability of interpretation.

The resulting case study descriptions do not allow generalisation to all schools of their type, but do identify factors against which similar schools may reflect on the effectiveness of their own SLT, what ever its form. In addition, as with any interviews of this type, the content reflects those aspects of the topic that were salient to participants at the time of the interview. The study, therefore, represents a snapshot of a misty landscape rather than panorama on a sunny day.

Results and discussion

Underlying philosophy and critical conditions

The overall research question was what does the SLT do to influence teaching and learning? However this question cannot be answered without reference to the philosophical and cultural underpinnings that positioned the library in each school. All three principals expressed strong affirmation of the place of the library in the culture and intellectual life of the school, stressing its role in learning and teaching and the critical nature of the expertise of the SLT leader. The depth of this commitment is apparent in the following statement from the principal of the primary school:

"… the school has been determined not to lose [the TL position] so there's been considerable emphasis put on ensuring there are sufficient funds to maintain it, to the extent that local funds would be used in the payment of salary. The pressure on the bulk grant for paying support staff for the library, is quite considerable, but that's where our priorities lie." Similarly, it is particularly important to the principal of the intermediate school that the TL is "kept right up there with the play and if that means paying more for her to become even better at the job, then that is what we will do."

The three principals saw their task as providing resources and active verbal support for the role and activities of the SLT, particularly of the TL. For example, the intermediate principal views his main input to promoting the library as one of ensuring staff appreciate the value he attaches to library activities,

"Whenever I talk to staff, they know that I regard the library as the centre of the learning community. Whenever we have a staff meeting, that's where we meet, either in the library or the ICT centre or both. It's more my role in modelling, than what I say, that proves my values to the teachers."

However, as will be seen, there was a gap between the principals' general expectations for integration of the library in learning and the actual levels of interaction between the SLT, teachers and curriculum activities.

Although the policies, role descriptions and other documentation from the three schools demonstrated support for student learning as an educational goal, instructional programmes for literacy and information literacy that included a clearly stated educational purpose spanning all age groups or subjects were not presented to the researchers. In each school the TL's role was comprehensively described and the appointees were highly active in pursuing the general goal, but the route to its achievement was at least partially hidden from many teachers and perhaps from the TLs themselves.

In each school the TLs verbalised a focus on collaborative planning and teaching, but their commitment to, and understanding of, the term was not matched by that of teachers. Further, the TL's responsibilities were very broad and some aspects (e.g. ICT management) were eroding time for collaboration and instructional partnerships. As will be seen, few interviewees could provide evidence of any instructional collaboration, but information sharing and resource consultancies were abundant.

While all three TLs and the support staff in the secondary school referred to teaching information skills (especially those associated with technology and note taking), none had a systematic approach to teaching these across the curriculum. At this stage of development, the primary school TL had created a library activity resource for teachers to use as and when they wished, but this was not an integral part of subject teaching. It was however, well known and enthusiastically discussed by all teacher interviewees. The secondary TL had developed a research guide for students and was collaborating with teachers of English and physical education in developing curriculum activities in which it was integrated. Again, the feedback from teachers was extremely positive and the intention was to extend its use across the curriculum and all grade levels. The intermediate school's TL had not been at the school as long as the others, but had produced a variety of student and teacher guides for library and technology tasks. Again, these had a task specific rather than developmental curriculum focus.

Researchers gained the impression from interviewees that the connection between library and information centre use and learning outcomes had not been considered seriously before this study. For example, having said that support staff in the secondary school 'take' and 'teach' technology skills, one class teacher went on,

"They don't really do any teaching. Involved in the process, but not actually teaching for learning outcomes. They're supporting. It must mean that more students are able to complete the process because of their support and resourcing." The researchers could not reconcile the notions that support staff are enabling students to complete the process, but are not teaching for learning outcomes. It is likely that the confusion is influenced by the general belief that support staff are not supposed to teach, even within an instructional framework developed by the TL.

This was just one aspect of the lack of appropriate evaluation of the SLT's input to learning. It was evident in all three schools however that the SLT leaders were very aware of a need to demonstrate effectiveness. As the intermediate school TL commented,

"We really need evidence that I'm making a difference because although the Board and principal support this position, they won't be here for ever and I need to make sure that I advocate this position. …My gut feeling is that planning with and teaching with [others] would be more successful, but I can't prove that."

It may be that a framework for thinking about evaluation had not previously been available.

Structural components focusing action

The warehousing and collection development foundations of school library programmes as described by Loertscher (1988) were more salient to primary school than intermediate or secondary school interviewees. Not only was provision of curriculum plans to the primary SLT mandated in policy, it was discussed by almost all interviewees. The TL commented that in the past resources had often been inaccessible,

"…everybody would decide what they wanted, buy it and then stash it on their shelf away from everyone else, because they might never get it back. People are now very clear that all resources are for everybody. [The resources are] so well organised, accessible and quickly retrieved. The central system suits everybody now."

Through the consultation needed for centralisation, it appears that staff had gained confidence in the TL and her skills as well as experience of working with her on a non-teaching task. The primary school principal stated that, "Every syndicate or area of the school is always represented in any decisions that are made in the library. …The decision on resource buying always involves multi-level areas of the school."

That almost every interviewee discussed providing curriculum information, participating in book selection and commented very positively on the degree to which the collection reflected and supported the curriculum demonstrates the reality of his perception.

This was not evident in the other schools. Indeed, although the researchers' personal experience of the secondary school suggests otherwise, the interview data indicated little information sharing and few mechanisms for connecting the collection to the curriculum. Lack of communication of the value of sharing curriculum information to the TL was an issue in the intermediate school. To her, the connection between the curriculum, the collection and student success is critical, "…when a collection is built to support the curriculum, I think students are set up for success. In those units where it's not, teachers acknowledge they're setting students up for failure." The impression was conveyed however, and borne out by the TL's comments, that teachers were not aware of the ways in which plans could be used to ensure a close match between the curriculum and long-term collection development. Rather, the teachers' focus was on more immediate resource provision. As a result, much of the service to teachers centred on short-term resource consultancy, not instructional partnership.

In general, services to teachers and students in these schools closely reflected emphases within the broader instructional programme, other school initiatives and the personal interests of the SLT leaders. Thus educational activities in the intermediate and secondary schools focus on providing modelling and support to teachers and students in ICT skills acquisition. This focus did not emerge as strongly in the primary school interview data, although the TL was seen by others to lead ICT developments. The primary school TL has responsibility for the school-wide reading programme and this coincides with her passion for children's literature and drama. Thus in accord with one critical focus of a primary school, the reading programme overshadows other instructional concerns in the minds of teachers.

Support staff comments were typical of those from primary teachers, the Board of Trustees and parent interviewees, "[Her] enthusiasm rubs off. You feel like you're learning something from her everyday. She makes you really appreciate books. You can see the turn around in kids who might have struggled with reading."

Interview and documentary evidence from all three schools suggests that while systematic programmes may not be in place for literacy, information literacy and technology skills across the curriculum and all grade levels, solid foundations are being built and extended. However, in each school there was evidence that the TLs are over stretched by the breadth of their duties and that they were not perceived by others to be responsible for the effectiveness of instructional programmes.

Critical relationships

The ways in which the five critical relationships were addressed by school library teams were illustrated to varying degrees in the three schools studied.

In each case principals focused on learners and learning as the key relationship for SLT action. For example the school library serves intermediate students and teachers as a learning space and the SLT's function is, according to the principal, "to focus on learning outcomes and to encourage them to improve their research skills and other things that come with the use of the school library." Likewise, the secondary principal sees the focus of the school library to be continuing to provide for the learning needs of students. She commented that ICT developments have been a catalyst for the integration of library facilities and services with the curriculum in that, as the TL leads both library and ICT initiatives, there is greater opportunity to involve teachers who might not otherwise use traditional library services. However, none of the principals articulated the need for evaluating the school library programme in light of student learning outcomes. The philosophy was sound, but it was not accompanied by operational measures to ensure it was enacted.

In terms of teachers and teaching, the three SLTs were providing resource consultancy on a variety of levels, together with incidental professional development as mostly the TL, but in the secondary school also the support staff, worked with students to increase ICT and research skills. At the intermediate school the principal sees the TL's position as critical, as her role is "to guide all teachers, including specialists etc, towards an effective use of the library for all learning areas" across all media. Each TL reported having run sessions for teachers on ICT skills and information literacy (especially applying a model known as Action Learning (Gawith, 1988)).

However, the TLs themselves noted that they do not work collaboratively with teachers as often as they would like. For example, the primary school TL commented that,

> "… the staff changes that we've had over the last year or so have meant that [we are] moving from a base of extremely experienced teachers, very au fait with Action Learning, information literacy and resource use, to a group that vary in their experience, their background knowledge and in the amount of teaching experience they've had."

As a consequence she focuses her collaborative energies on new and long term relieving teachers, a strategy recognised and supported by other teachers as ensuring that information problem solving approaches to teaching are maintained throughout the school. However, a barrier to further development of teaching skills was indicated in that one teacher said the need for the TL's input had changed,

> "… units have been refined over the years and perhaps do not need that input as much as we did. But we are still refining and will go back and ask do you think this will work or can you get these resources. But now we're flying solo."

There is a danger here that mental models of inquiry processes and teaching methods may be static, although content is changing. Similarly, in the intermediate school the TL had to work pro-actively, encouraging teachers to use her instructional design skills as well as library resource knowledge. She commented that,

"… it can be a battle sometimes to get people to realise what I can offer. No matter how many times I say I can help there will always be some teachers who don't take me up on it, and that's fine."

The provision of resources such as a research methods booklet for secondary students and teachers is prompting teachers to collaborate with the TL in the initial stages of instructional design, with support staff then able to work with teachers and students in ensuring that information processes are understood. In this school, teachers acknowledged most clearly the role that the support staff played in direct teaching but did not link this to learning outcomes. Support staff themselves had noted that over the years the degree of assistance available to students had gradually increased. For example, now the support staff facilitate orientation programmes for year 9 (13 year old) students.

The development of a balanced collection of multimedia resources to support the curriculum is at the core of the operation of these three school libraries. In each school this provision was identified as a key practice appreciated by teachers, although teachers in the intermediate and secondary school were not as articulate about their own role in that development as were those in the primary school.

Facilitating access to information is a major focus for all SLTs. This is demonstrated in the use of flexible timetabling as well as the option of regular class visits for book promotion and selection. Assistance is also given with the information skills required to successfully access information for a particular purpose. All libraries were open for the full school day with the intermediate school also running an after school programme that included the wider community. The primary TL commented that;

"The library has a theoretically fixed timetable that is very flexible. The provision of a research area out the back means students can come in and out if they are researching. The timetable is constantly being adjusted to the needs of the teachers and curriculum commitments. I am very keen on classes having a set 'library time' because of the routine it establishes in reading promotion, reading mileage and use of the library."

This comment reflects a need for adequate physical facilities to make flexible access a reality. All three libraries had undergone major renovations in last few years with two of the schools constructing completely new buildings. The guidance provided by National Library of New Zealand advisers was critical to ensuring creation of successful learning environments and access to resources.

All three schools had ICT facilities as part of the library complex and the information technology was obviously an integral part of the services that were provided for staff and students. The intermediate principal summed up his concerns in talking about his vision for the school as one that integrated the library and technology. He said:

"we had no ICT centre and we had to make that decision as to which way we went and I felt there was not much to be gained from having an ICT centre stuck in a room well away from anything, where kids just went in and played on the computers. I wanted that associated with the learning centre which is the library. I wasn't going to make a decision between 'in class rooms' or a centre, it had to be both."

The shifting balance between traditional library and digital resources was continually reflected in the interview data from all schools. The secondary principal noted that the library is "a hub of learning, a real place of learning. Not just the province of the TL and English teachers any longer."

Overall, these school libraries seemed to be the physical location of the hub of the learning community for the resources they provide, but not necessarily for the learning activities inspired. The teachers' lack of awareness of learning activity assistance the SLT can provide may be an indication of how quickly ground is lost when school library development and promotion are overshadowed by other priorities.

Knowledge and expertise, roles and responsibilities

Parallels between these two dimensions of school librarianship in the literature and in the New Zealand schools were most apparent. The roles and responsibilities and underlying knowledge and expertise were captured in job descriptions for all SLT members and in the acknowledgments of teaching colleagues. Interview data leave no doubt that teaching staff were totally confident and appreciative of the information world knowledge of both the TLs and the support staff. At the secondary school, it was observed that,

"The library staff are very well trained so when you come in and have questions they are always able to help. They take a leading role in training the staff. You never feel like a nuisance. I think the students feel the same way."

The abilities of student members of the SLT also drew comment from teachers in the intermediate school. Speaking for her colleagues, one commented that, "Our student librarians are so well trained that they peer tutor during lessons."

Abilities in library management and matching resources to the curriculum were frequently commented upon, as were abilities of particularly the TLs to teach information and ICT skills on behalf of class teachers. The potential for partnerships in instructional design were, however, rarely expressed.

So what do the SLT do to influence teaching and learning? This was most apparent in categorising interview responses in terms of Loertscher's taxonomy for school library media specialists.

Responses to library service provision

Interview data elicited from admittedly partisan teachers showed that all use the library to some extent, they do not by pass the library. Further, none appeared to use the library as a self-help warehouse, rather they and their students called on SLT to respond to reference questions and generally assist in locating resources relevant to immediate information needs. SLTs actively encouraged this interaction.

Although two of the TLs described incidents where they were called upon to provide resources at a moment's notice, in general, resource gathering was carried out in response to planning in which the SLT was not included as an equal partner. Certainly, with teachers more established in resource based teaching, there were reports of the TL being consulted briefly, often for ideas to spark thinking for activities and to identify appropriate resources.

All three TLs, but especially those in primary and intermediate schools, were highly active in promoting the school library as an integral part of learning, be it for ICT or more traditional inquiry and reading. In the intermediate and secondary schools such activities were taken for granted and were not seen as any particular promotional effort – this was simply what the SLT did.

In addition, TLs took part in formal planning with teachers to resource curriculum units that had been planned in previous terms or curriculum meetings in which the SLT had no role. Sometimes, as in the primary school, this type of planning and associated collection development was strongly based in the provision of long term curriculum plans. However, involvement in curriculum development was limited, not because teachers did not value the TL's input, but because the TL was unable to be part of every curriculum team. In the intermediate school, the TL had elected to be part of one curriculum team each year, but teachers interviewed were not aware that this was the case. A couple of classroom teachers declared that the TL is not a member of any curriculum team. In all three schools, TLs relied on close communication with curriculum and subject team leaders to facilitate resource gathering.

It is the two instructional design levels of Loertscher's taxonomy that expose weaknesses in the three schools studied. In the first of these, library involvement is seen as a supplementary enhancement of learning and teaching, and in the second it is seen as an essential integral element to success. In both, the TL is expected to be involved in the conception, teaching and evaluation of the resources, teaching and learning outcomes. Instructional partnerships that extend to joint teaching and evaluation were not present in these schools, perhaps because the connection between SLT activities and learning outcomes has not been explored and formal programmes for both reading and information literacy have not been fully articulated.

Information literate school communities

A clue to ways forward on this point comes from consideration of the final dimension of school librarianship. Henri, Boyd and Eyre (2002) list a series of benchmarks developed as a checklist for evaluating overall progress towards an information literate school community. Although the New Zealand School Library Guidelines refer to such communities, comparison of these three schools with those shows a number of gaps. Information technology plans and information policies are in place. All three schools clearly defend the role of the qualified teacher librarian and support professional development for all staff with regard to information literacy.

However, no information competencies expected of students at each grade level have been documented and thus systematic programmes for their development are currently absent, although data imply that an information skills programme was created for the primary school. All three TLs are making considerable efforts to ensure that information skills are taught and learned in context across the curriculum and if they personally are not involved, then they have provided teaching and student resources to assist.

The interview data imply that teachers do not to any great degree focus evaluation of learning on information literacy and evidence that students are constructing knowledge. Such evaluation is again dependent upon an understanding of what it is reasonable to expect students to do with information at each stage of development. Instead, evaluation of learning activities involving SLT input rests largely on observation and anecdote. The most concrete evidence for evaluation of learning came from a primary school teacher who is a member of the wider SLT. She reported, based on pre and post activity assessments, that, "I could see a definite improvement in critical thinking. Making judgements, making statements about plots, which the children previously couldn't have talked about."
However, another observed that,

> "You'd hear the year 3 teachers say that the children had learned those skills that had come from when we had first got this information resource centre and set up progressive skill development. Now we've had major changes of staff and a lot of teachers hadn't had [information literacy training], and we could see that the children were not developing these skills."

In contrast, the implementation of NCEA in secondary schools and the use of a research methods framework for teachers and students is scaffolding teachers into the kinds of learning evaluation that provides evidence for the existence of an information literate school community.

However, in this exploratory study in which interviewees were encouraged to reveal the most salient aspects of their interactions with the SLT, insufficient evidence for the existence of information literate school communities was elicited at this time.

Conclusions

Factors of size, differences in curriculum delivery and emphasis on formal assessment distinguish the activities of the secondary from the primary and intermediate school library teams. In each school these teams are valued for the resources, services and resource based teaching support they provide.

The principals and SLT leaders, the TLs, are highly committed to the support of students and teachers as learners, but although some highly productive and effective strategies for working with teachers were identified, interview data reflect incomplete understanding of the seven dimensions of school librarianship distilled from the international literature.

In sum, the philosophy espoused by the principals of these three schools is in accord with international thinking, but within their schools there does not appear to be a high level of consensus or deep understanding of the general goals expressed. In addition, without evidence of the concrete effects of collaborative instructional design and school library programme development on student learning, there is no incentive for teaching staff to engage with the SLT more collaboratively. The three schools have TLs with considerable knowledge and expertise who display educational leadership in a variety of ways that may not necessarily be acknowledged, but they have each ensured that resources for

teaching are excellent. They do, however, lack the time resources for promoting instructional partnerships. Where support staff are of a high calibre and have been in their appointments for some years, a skilled TL has been able to provide them with professional development and teaching tools that enable her to extend the sphere of her influence, supporting the learning of a wider range of teachers and students.

The data suggest that while elements of the ideal school library instructional programme do exist in these schools, they are fragmented and as a result, students are not systematically exposed to essential skills and knowledge of the information world. It appears that in schools where staff turnover is low, it takes considerable time and effort to establish instructional and leadership programmes that balance reading, inquiry and technological learning needs of staff and students. An SLT with relatively new TL in a school with a high staff turnover is likely to make speedier progress where the school library programme is formally focused on coordinated activities and communication of information competencies across the school is assured.

Above all, these schools lacked tools for evaluating the connection between the educational activities of the SLT and student learning. Looking at their efforts in terms of seven dimensions of school librarianship has focused attention on a variety of potential tools and areas for further research. It has also identified points for focusing future initiatives that will effect change.

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