

## SOCIAL STUDIES FROM A HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE: A THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL DISCUSSION

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### ABSTRACT

This collaborative paper describes holistic education models and explores the implications of such models for secondary Social Studies practice in Canada and New Zealand. After describing a number of features of holistic models, including attention to self-esteem, emotions, relationships and spirituality, models by Forbes, Rousseau, Robinson, and Integralism are discussed. The authors then present examples of holistic teaching practices that can be used in secondary Social Studies classrooms. After which, a review of the context and history of New Zealand sets the scene for a detailed case study exploration of the nation's new Social Studies curriculum, which is framed within holistic practice principles. The examples illustrate how holistic models focus on student learning, growth, and engagement in the classroom and promote the general well being of all students. Teachers are able to meet curriculum standards and expectations while at the same time enhancing the learning environment of all their students in a beneficial manner.

**Key Words:** Social Studies, Holistic Models, Student Engagement

### INTRODUCTION

Some Western discourses have split individuals' minds from their emotions, spirits, bodies, and natural environments, fragmenting humans' wholeness with themselves and their communities, with damaging consequences for these individuals and society in general. This split has connections to past Western, ideological movements such as the Scientific Revolution and Greek Rationalist Philosophy. Descartes' work, for example, helped to sever humans' intricate and complex relationship to nature as he argued for rational thinking as a means of managing and controlling the mind, and by extension, nature (Merchant, 1981). Such an attitude gave pre-eminence to the conscious, logical mind, rather than other ways of knowing and being (Belenky et al., 1986; MacIntyre, 1998; Popkewitz, 2010). Plato, similarly, argued that humans were composed of three natures (body—spirit—and mind), with the highest being the mind (Broom, 2011). An "educated" person, in Plato's view, was one who managed to overcome humans' "basal" natures through logical and rational thinking.

Traditionally, Social Studies has been dominated by these rationalized, fragmented approaches, emphasizing factual knowledge and critical thinking processes (in the mind) in a manner that can negatively affect student learning and engagement. This paper begins by describing some holistic models of practice that draw on present and past traditions and cut across cultural traditions. It then explores the implications of using these models for Social Studies teaching and learning. Holistic models aim to integrate mind, body, emotions, and spirit in learning and schools (Miller, 2007). They value the importance of logical skills and thinking processes but meld these with an expanded awareness and respect for the multiple elements of which we are composed, and which connect us to others.

### KEY FEATURES OF HOLISTIC MODELS

Holistic models, found in Western and Non Western traditions, understand people to be composed of a number of interacting parts that are found both within (mind, body, heart, and spirit) and outside (social/cultural and environmental relations) of us. The goal is integrated growth. The ancient practice of Ayurveda (Collinge, 1996), for example, aims at harmony between individuals' natural makeup and their environment, life, and work. Some key components of holistic models are:

#### SELF ESTEEM

Imagine a house build on a faulty foundation. No matter how beautiful the house is, or its unique features or the effort put into maintaining it, the house will crumble from within, eventually. Thus it is with our self-esteem -- how we feel and understand ourselves -- if it is low. It is the foundation of our actions, beliefs, and interactions with others. Our self-esteem influences how we view our intelligence, abilities and appearance, how we perceive the events that happen to us and how we act. Our self-esteem is rooted in our childhood and significant life experiences. Positive self-esteem fosters empowerment through building belief in the possibility and efficacy of individual action.

### **HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS**

Having positive relationships is vital to creating conditions in which we can flourish, or actualize, ourselves. Components of healthy relationships include feeling respected and safe, feeling positive emotions, being in an enabling environment that allows you to grow, feeling understood and supported in your activities and goals, feeling you can be yourself, and being responsible for yourself (Bancroft & Patrissi, 2011). Features of unhealthy relationships include unrealistic expectations, lack of trust, attempting to manipulate or control others, lack of common goals, poor communication, and lying, cheating or misrepresenting. These can foster toxic environments that lead to unhappiness, poor behaviour, and disengagement (Pawlik-Kienlen, 2008).

### **EMOTIONAL HEALTH/INTELLIGENCE**

Emotional health involves the ability to recognize our feelings and manage them effectively. Feelings reflect the confluence of how we process a number of internal and external factors, such as, our self-esteem, philosophy, and life events. Emotions play an important role in creating our perceived reality (Cherry, 2013). Emotional health is illustrated when we have purpose, resilience, and self-efficacy. We frame our reality in a constructive way, manage the good and bad in our lives, and recognize what we can and cannot control (Smith et al., 2013).

### **SPIRITUALITY**

Another component of holistic models is the spirit. Spirituality encompasses individuals' values, morals, life purposes and connections to and between themselves, others, and places. Including it in education is a "missing link" between traditional Western and native educational systems (Doige, 1997). Spirituality engages students in exploring the connections between their experiences and thoughts and other people, societies, and natures (Doige, 1997). It highlights and extends individuals' understanding of their own identities as well as of morality, action, purpose and (in many traditional cultures) the unity and interconnectedness of living creatures (Cajete, 2002).

### **CONTINUOUS INTERACTION AND GROWTH**

Many holistic approaches value productive connections between the multiple, interacting parts of which individuals are composed and our interior and exterior worlds for full health, or flourishing (Broom, 2011). Personal growth (that is education) can occur through holistic practice. Forbes (2003) philosophically discusses holistic education using the concept of *ultimacy*, which is acting towards the highest form of human potential or development, such as love and compassion. This paper will review three holistic models as they apply to education: Rousseau, Robinson and Integralist thought and then present a case study discussion of New Zealand's new Social Studies curricula, as an example of the effort to connect Social Studies to holistic practice.

### **THREE HOLISTIC EDUCATIONAL MODELS**

#### **ROUSSEAU**

Rousseau (1712-78) presented a personalized, holistic educational scheme in *Emile* (1779) focused on how to educate boys (he had another program for girls). It stressed "wholeness" (Doyle and Smith, 2007) and was framed around nature, arguing that education ought to harmonize with the child's natural physical development, for the student "must remain in absolute ignorance of ideas of that estate which are not within his reach" (Rousseau, 1779, p. 178). The curriculum would develop his body, mind, emotions, and spirit (values/moral code).

Education began with the physical body. When a baby, the guardian developed the child's senses and self control. For a child up to the age of 12 in the "age of nature," the teacher focused on his physical development through games and protected him from error, society and the development of bad habits.

From the ages of 12 to 15, as the child began to think, the guardian provided the nurturing conditions that developed the student's mind through experimental science and his ability to be self-governing through reading, in particular, *Robinson Crusoe*. The student also developed technical skills and independence through learning a trade. Once the young man had developed his mind and reasoning ability, education of the spirit was to occur from the ages of 16 to 20. The guardian nurtured the student's moral and affective domains by taking him into society. Firstly, he should be taken to see the poor in order to develop compassion. Then, he should be introduced to corrupt city life and be guided through it in order to develop good taste, literature, and religion. Finally, as a young adult of twenty, his emotions and values were to mature through experiencing love and studying politics. The educational program was to end with travel, which allowed the young man him to experientially understand the world and to understand his place in it.

Rousseau believed that individuals' development is a function of individuals' interaction with the social, cultural, and physical environments that surround them (Dewey, 1916; Rousseau, 1979). Humans, in other words, are culturally and socially formed.

Developing the "best" educational program for children encompasses identifying what type of society is aimed at, what is valued, and what is considered to be human and societal "flourishing" (Broom, 2011). It also involves considering what structural systems best support such an education. For Rousseau, the aim of education was the creation of the "good" man, understood as the moral, empathetic being, developed in body, mind, and spirit. As the curriculum would be based on the student and individualized, Rousseau's educational program implied a significant valuation of the child.

Today's public schools with their large numbers of students, standardized curricula and assessments, and institutionalized structures are far from Rousseau's conception of a holistic and personalized education. However, Robinson applies some concepts similar to those of Rousseau to schools, with the hope of enriching education for students.

### **ROBINSON**

Robinson (2011) values each student's unique potential and students' diverse intelligences and abilities. He argues against broad categorizations of students and for personalized education as a way to manage high levels of student disengagement. Education is understood as a relationship between teacher and student. It leads students to understand themselves and their strengths and talents and aims to prepare them for their lives and to address the major challenges threatening humanity today. Robinson argues that schooling today, based on standardization and efficiency, evolved from European Enlightenment thought which divided the mind (reason) from the heart (intuition and feeling). Enlightenment philosophy valued rational, logical thought and encompassed a narrow view of consciousness. It can lead teachers to "disembody" their students and to view them only as minds to be filled with knowledge, rather than as physically embodied beings influenced by their emotions and environments.

Robinson recommends a multidisciplinary and multigenerational school model that integrates mind, heart, and body. The metaphor of education is organic, not mechanistic. The Arts should be included as they engage the heart and develop creativity and imagination. Activities should be provided that allow students to delve into their own private consciousness, to understand themselves and the way in which they conceptualize and live in our physical world. This process aims to nurture self-understanding and emotional intelligence and students' consciousness of life and themselves.

### **INTEGRALISM**

Like Rousseau and Robinson, Sorokin (2006) acknowledges the importance of emotions to individual and social health and argues that love and compassion are essential for growth. His thought links to Wilber's (1995) holistic framework. Wilber views individuals to be composed of both individual and socially/culturally constructed elements that are intricately connected within and to our external environments. These elements are usually graphically represented in four quadrants. The individual is reflected in the top two quadrants. The top, left quadrant represents the individual's interior, their subjective self-consciousness (Esbjörn-Hargers, 2006). The quadrant to the right represents the individual's exterior self, their behaviour. The lower left quadrant is the socialized, cultural and collective consciousness, and the lower right quadrant represents social systems and the environment external to the individual. The model incorporates both individual and social/cultural elements and considers their relations. The model can foster individual "transformative learning" or growth through reflection on one's self and one's cultural environment, which can lead to changed behaviour (Mezirow, 1997).

In summary, the holistic models described view students to be composed of various parts, including mind, body, heart, and spirit, that are in dynamic interaction with each other and with individuals' external social and natural environments. They have implications for educational aims and processes. Rousseau and Robinson, for example, argue for a personalized and individualized approach. Applied to Social Studies today, a lesson would involve students in conducting individual research projects on topics of personal interest. The teacher would visit students individually as they conduct research and provide them with individualized care tailored to their needs and abilities. Further, the teacher would be attuned to the importance of nurturing caring relationships and of creating positive environments. For Robinson, cross-disciplinary, Arts-based, and reflective activities would be included in the curriculum in order to foster mindfulness and engagement. For Integralism, a lesson could focus attention on both self and culture/environment and their interactions. For example, students could be asked to reflect on how their beliefs and their culture influence their general views of an issue. As the students explore the relations between themselves, their cultures, and their beliefs, and those of other people, they are given opportunities to begin to glimpse the constructed nature of their beliefs and

thus to consider the possibility of different ways of being that exist outside of their own realities. They can come to identify their own, and other, cultural discourses. This promotes reflexivity, growth, and critical thinking.

Understanding Social Studies practice from a holistic perspective results in lessons that consider students' minds -- and their hearts (such as engagement), bodies (such as movement), and spirit (such as exploration of values and morals), while also attending to the interactions between the social/cultural and natural worlds. This expanded perspective aims to develop students in a manner that promotes individual and social health and flourishing. In the next section, sample lessons illustrate how these models relate to and inform practice.

## **GENERAL SUGGESTIONS**

### **SELF ESTEEM**

Teachers can help to develop their students' self esteem by caring for their students. They can help students understand how they are perceiving and labelling themselves, value all types of students as they are (not comparing them to false external "standards") and help students explore their values and beliefs. Teachers can design learning activities in concert with their students and help students establish and achieve realistic goals, which empowers students. Teachers can also aid their students in identifying barriers to their goals, teach students strategies to address these and help them to view mistakes as learning events. They can role model positive conflict resolution processes.

### **POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS**

Teachers can illustrate how behaving respectfully, being kind and building trust are important, and how students can support each other. Students can learn to communicate their feelings, laugh, appreciate and acknowledge the good features of each other, be responsible for their words and actions, provide conditions that nurture their (and other's) growth, and mutually enjoy activities together. Positive relationships embrace individual authenticity and foster positive feelings and engagement. Relationships are not peripheral to education: they are essential to it and so they should be given care and attention.

### **GENERAL IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE**

When lesson planning, the teacher with a holistic perspective will focus on more than activities that develop the mind. The latter include activities such as memorizing dates and names, doing a cause and effect analysis, conducting research or analysing a primary document. The holistic teacher will integrate individual and social beliefs, emotional engagement, and varied types of activities as well. For example, considering Rousseau's belief that affect/emotional attachment and physical development are key components, learning about sustainability and the natural environment would place conscious attention on nurturing students' love and respect for nature through enjoyable, physical experiences embedded in nature.

Esbjörn-Hargers (2006) uses the following integralist approaches in his classroom: embodied reading, engaged reading, presence, reflective dialogue, shadow work, individual (self) inquiry, perspective taking, self-authorship, witnessing, and daily meditation. These techniques engage students in mindful learning experiences that integrate conscious self-reflection on oneself and one's relations to others into the learning process through discussion, reflection and journals. A sample Social Studies lesson using these approaches could involve students in exploring various political ideologies. As the students learn the ideologies, they also maintain a "critical engagement," or on-going reflection, in which they describe their thoughts and feelings towards the various ideologies they are studying. These reflections could be guided by questions such as: what past experiences have shaped the views you have, how might different experiences change your views, what actions would illustrate your preferred ideology, and what social system best actualizes it.

In addition, the four different quadrants of integralism could be used. For example, if students were studying a unit on the environment, students could explore their views on the topic in the "internal, individual-self" quadrant. They could explore the interrelations between their physical actions and the natural environment in the "individual self, external" quadrant by filling out and discussing an environmental behaviours inventory. In the "cultural self" quadrant, students could explore how various cultural groups relate to the environment, and in the "multiple realities" quadrant, students could explore various attitudes to the environment in global cultures, past and present, and be introduced to various paradigms that structure thought.

In effect, holistic teaching practice is good teaching practice, and many nations are beginning to recognize this. In the next section, a case study example of how holistic concepts are now informing Social Studies teaching practice through curriculum reform in New Zealand (NZ) is presented.

## **HOLISTIC TEACHING IN SOCIAL STUDIES: A NEW ZEALAND VIEW**

### **BEGINNINGS**

Holistic teaching in Social Studies has its beginnings in the earliest educational strategies practised in New Zealand. Parallel to Rousseau's educational philosophy, pre-European Maori (*tangata whenua*) were using oral teaching methods to recount significant historical events through the use of "strong memory skills" and calls to social action through the teaching and practising of "powerful oratory" (Mitchell, 2010).

The first formal "teaching" in New Zealand was by British missionaries to Maori students in their own language (*te reo*) in "mission" schools. These schools were completely abandoned in the 1860s however, partly as a result of fighting between local Maori tribes and the British Army over land "rights," ongoing disquiet about the 1840 signing of the Treaty of Waitangi and fears of Maori unity between tribes in response to growing European immigration.

A replacement Native Schools Act in 1867 offered Maori communities the chance to set up state-controlled schools supervised by the newly formed "Native Department." This was possibly seen as a way to speed up assimilation as the schools were generally based on colonial models of teaching, generally in English. This education model was the one used by the State until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Efforts to increase the number of *te reo* speakers led to the addition of the Maori language to teacher training college curricula in the 1960s. In 1981, the first *kohanga reo* (Maori language nest or kindergarten) was established to increase bilingualism. In 1987, Maori was declared an official language of New Zealand. Starting with the introduction of *kohanga reo* and continuing with *Kura kaupapa Maori* (Maori medium schools), bilingual schools and Maori immersion classes within mainstream schools were established. In 2004 a state funded public Maori television channel, brought Maori language into the homes of the general public. In 2012, a 51% Maori language standard across all programming on this channel was introduced.

The growth in Maori political power has supported and encouraged these innovations. Since 1867 there have been four seats in the NZ House of Representatives allocated to Maori and since 2004 there have been members of the newly formed Maori Party in Parliament. The Maori Party has been part of the current coalition government since 2008.

The aspirations of a Holistic education continue today. Due to the legacy of these strategies to embolden New Zealand's indigenous language and culture alongside an imported model of education, the development of a curriculum that was culturally responsive and therefore holistic, was almost inevitable. Holistic teaching and learning has the potential to become "mainstreamed" with the recent introduction of a compulsory, school-based curriculum which emphasizes knowing the "whole learner" and students "participating as critical, active, informed and responsible citizens" (NZ Curriculum statement, 2009).

### **CURRICULUM REFORM**

In national curriculum reviews, Maori organisations raised concerns about the absence of reference to the Treaty of Waitangi and Maori concepts such as *manaakitanga*. As a result, the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and the bicultural foundations of the country were included in a final draft curriculum document published in 2009. All students, including 20.3% Maori, then had the opportunity to acquire knowledge of *te reo Māori me ōna tikanga* (Maori language and protocol). The National Curriculum review views successful learning as being achieved by the "whole" student-- one who is able to experience the value of their own cultural contributions or who has significant access to affirmative confirmation of their own culture.

Up until its first comprehensive review, the New Zealand "curriculum" was specified through more than a dozen syllabuses and guidelines. Following a major public consultation in the mid-1980s (The Curriculum Review), the Department of Education began work on an overall framework for a revised school curriculum. This was to be an "outcomes"-based curriculum. In response to concerns about the fast pace and scale of curriculum change, a "stock-take" was initiated. This initiative sought input from international curriculum experts, national and international assessment data (PISA), 4000 teachers plus a range of other expert groups. This background set the stage for wholesale curriculum revision and hence Social Studies reform.

Another "driver" for curriculum reform has been student achievement and a focus on the "tail" or 5-20% of all students who are below or well-below "expected outcomes." When national secondary school results became more readily available in the early 2000s, they revealed that much of the 'tail' was made up of Maori students (40%). Professional educators sharpened their focus by researching curriculum interventions or strategies which could be implemented to minimize this tail. One key finding of this research (known as the *Te Kotahitanga* programme) was that school



curricula which included teaching the “whole child,” i.e. holistic education, would not only improve Maori student achievement but would improve all student achievement, regardless of ethnicity. Russell Bishop concluded, in his 2005/2006 research, that the “percentage gains in all student achievement in the Te Kotahitanga schools were higher than in those schools not in the program” (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2012). In 2008, this programme reached approximately 2,000 teachers and nearly 20,000 students. One result of this has been an “elevation” in the position of Maori learners, as the early part of the program emphasises the oral history of student experiences in mainstream classrooms.

### **THE NEW CURRICULUM**

The implementation of a student-centred, “school-based curriculum” in 2009 set out to create young people who are confident and creative, connected and actively involved. The document, in its key competencies, principles and values has handed schools a mandate to embed holistic teaching strategies into the curriculum framework which enables “life-long learning.” In 2011, a summary of evaluations of the initial implementation stages of the new curriculum found it to be “cherished but challenging” (Sinnema, 2008-2009, p. 2). Holistic teaching refers to “wholeness” or “meaning” discovered by students as they build connections with the community, their own cultural environment and as they develop human values such as *manaakitanga* (caring for things or others [relationships]) and *mana* (pride [self-esteem]). Teachers act as guides. Holistic learning introduces student-directed learning, meaningful goal setting and increased levels of social and academic achievement. Within the context of holism, students can lead their own and others academic and cultural learnings, making connections between school subjects, topics and concepts.

The holistic nature of the curriculum is given importance by the vision: “young people who will be confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners” and the values: “inquiry and curiosity...community and participation.” Key Competencies also place a high importance on the holistic nature of learning, using terms such as managing self, relating to others and participating and contributing. The curriculum “principles” likewise place strong emphasis on community engagement to enable students to “make connections with their wider lives” (New Zealand Curriculum, 2009, p. 7-10).

Holism is being absorbed into Social Studies as guided by the Key Competencies, the “capabilities for living and lifelong learning” (NZ Curriculum, 2007, p. 12). Competencies such as “participating and contributing” and “managing self” emphasize the whole student learning experience rather than a focus on knowledge acquisition, with overarching statements such as, “Students...have a sense of belonging and the confidence to participate within new contexts” (NZ Curriculum, 2007, p. 13). The key competencies are strong support for academic success: “successful learners make use of the competencies in combination with all the other resources available to them” (NZ Curriculum, 2007, p. 12).

Appendix 1 illustrates the requirement that the Ministry’s outcomes are to be transformed from generic to school-based. Championed by many school communities, the concept of teaching the “whole” student has been enabled by, and embedded in, the new curriculum.

Incorporating phrases such as “Confident Life-Long Learners and responsible citizens,” “relating to others” and “participating and contributing,” the new curriculum (The New Zealand Curriculum, 2007, pp. 12-13, 37) has handed Social Studies teachers a mandate to encompass holistic teaching. These core principles are the foundations on which teachers build their lessons. Such foundations can be found throughout the Social Studies curriculum as pedagogical innovations, supporting teachers to encompass the “whole student,” by making connections to students’ lives and using this information to create better educational outcomes. Raewynne, for example, engaged in the teaching inquiry process reflecting on her own pedagogy. Her learning story was how her predominantly Maori and Pasifika students learned about the concepts of cultural identity and cultural transmission by using their own family stories (TKI, 2009).

### **CONNECTIONS TO STUDENTS’ LIVES – CONNECTIONS TO COMMUNITY: EXAMPLES OF HOLISTIC EDUCATION PRACTICE**

Identification and celebration of culture and environment supports holistic teaching. Making real connections through consistent strategic teaching is vital. Strategies include opportunities to eat together, compete with each other, seek input and feedback from the community and celebrate student successes frequently; that is, the practise of cultural responsiveness. Once connections are made, students’ belonging and self-confidence improve and pathways into deeper understanding are supported.

Aranui High School (student ages 13-17) is a co-educational state secondary school located in eastern Christchurch. The ethnic composition of the school includes 30% Maori and 15% Pacific Island students. The school is divided into curriculum “departments” and Social Studies, as in all state secondary schools, is a compulsory subject in Years 9-10.

Social Studies is also a compulsory subject in Years 1-8 at Primary School, although it is popular to integrate it with English and/or Science topics.

Examples of how pathways or connections are currently practised by students and Social Studies teachers at Aranui High School:

- Students designed and built 3D models about the effects of and recovery from the 2010/2011 earthquakes and presented these to Auckland schools. Students educated other students about their first-hand experiences. Students were connected to the topic and the process was important enough to them that they felt compelled to share it with others.
- In February 2013 students across the city were invited to enter a design competition which will re-imagine a part of the Central Business District into “The Amazing Place.” The winning entry had the opportunity to have their design incorporated by developers into a real project. <http://theamazingplace.co.nz/>
- Again, using the recent earthquakes as a context, students in my class were asked to envisage what a new school might look like for a rebuilt eastern Christchurch. A “superschool” from Year 1 – Year 13 is proposed to replace four schools with falling rolls due to the earthquakes and students were given a business challenge: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9PLIXaTkmr3UDBwN0t1VXZMRnc/edit?usp=sharing>
- Getting to know students at the start of the year happens through activities such as designing, or having students design, a series of questions that ask them about their lives outside of school.

### **HOLISTIC TEACHING RESPONSES**

The release of a government document, “Directions for Education Renewal in Greater Christchurch” (May 2012), proposed changes to the way education is delivered in Christchurch as a response to the population changes following the earthquakes and invited public feedback. Students in my senior Geography class saw this document as directly affecting their educational futures and, as a result, became actively involved in this process. Education leaders, teachers, business leaders, stakeholders and local *iwi*, Ngai Tahu were also consulted. This Education Renewal Plan has been released and students have made connections between their input and the final outcomes. Regardless of the outcomes, at the time, students felt they were listened to and, as stakeholders, held views and opinions which they thought were important enough to share (anecdotal feedback to teacher July 2012).

Getting involved also means participating and contributing in the students’ physical environment. This could mean designing a new use for a space inside school grounds such as a technology hub or an area to serve breakfast. It could also mean encouraging students to get involved in experiences outside their comfort zone, such as tramping (hiking) trips, community issues, performance poetry and music workshops with industry experts and university mentoring systems.

The local university initiated an after-school programme to create links between Maori students and university. Students travelled to university after school for two hours study/week, made connections with their mentors and gained a positive experience from the campus. As students actively participate in the cultural and social environments they live in, they are more connected to them and are more likely to remain in them or want to return to them, to “give or get back” something in return.

Another aspect of holistic teaching is experiential learning, exposing students to a range of “real-life experiences”: trips to the surrounding area (the beach, the city, the local hills), visitors to the classroom who bring expertise such as flax weaving and opportunities for students to interact with providers of specialised knowledge (MPs, Travel Agents, farmers) and finally role-plays inside an historical suburb (e.g. Ferrymead) for a day. Research which places these strategies as important to making connections to students’ lives is found in the New Zealand Curriculum “Best Evidence Synthesis” (Aitken & Sinnema, 2008). This substantial publication released in 2010 is a collection of best pedagogical practices in Social Studies and how these can be implemented. Teachers/leaders are encouraged in their lesson planning to explicitly make connections to students’ lives, build and sustain a learning community and design experiences that interest students. In short, the priority is to teach the “whole child” including recognising, using, and building on the prior learning and experience of all students.

Culturally-responsive teaching, with its origins in holistic teaching, has also been introduced to Social Studies teachers. Cultural responsiveness is the idea that learners are empowered and enabled by genuine teacher acknowledgement that Maori learners will succeed as Maori and the strategies supporting this expression enable all students’ success. Some of these strategies are already used in secondary classrooms, for example, a “getting to know you” interview sheet. Others have to be planned more specifically, for instance, including diverse learning activities for students presented visually, in written form, aurally and/or through group work. Further suggestions:

- Task choice is empowering and generally leads to high student engagement.

- Scaffolding, templates and model answers support literacy in that examples can be presented from a variety of contexts and students can respond in diverse ways.
- Role plays or “mock -----“ (e.g. elections to city council meetings) are responded to positively by students who enjoy performing. Other students can be delegated to be chairs or timekeepers.
- Competition of any sort means that students can use a range of skills to complete and excel in different contexts , e.g. group work, Education Outside the Classroom, decision-making tasks, tasks against the clock etc.

High expectations of all students and the rejection of deficit theorising (attributing the problems of educational achievement with the students themselves, or their families or cultural background, [Shields, Bishop & Mazawi 2005]) begins to address achievement inequalities between different ethnic groups, starting with a strategy of an “Ethic of Care” (knowing the learner and their culture and supporting them to experience success as a cultural learner). In practise this means getting to know students’ lives, the relationships they have with other students at school, the importance of paid work in their lives and what the wages are used for (possibly supporting family). With deeper understanding of the “whole” lives of their students, teachers make connections and promote engagement in learning and success.

NZCER Chief Researcher Rosemary Hipkins, in “Curriculum Matters” publications has explored the connection between the future-focus requirement of the curriculum and the development of student identity. She makes the case that students’ “selves” are an important curriculum focus to enable student participation. She also advocates that student wholeness and wellbeing allows them to engage and participate in an increasingly diverse and rapidly changing society. Learning experiences that are both “practical and academic,” combined with authentic inquiry, help to meet the challenges of making students’ “being” as important as “knowing.” Thus, the new curriculum is open to and supportive of holistic education.

#### **CONCLUSION: HOLISTIC EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND SOCIAL STUDIES**

In New Zealand, holistic teaching moved into mainstream curriculum from its earliest beginnings in New Zealand society. Teachers and students are involved in the development of a holistic school-based curriculum and community members, parents and school boards have the opportunity to “feed-forward” into curriculum design and review.

The national curriculum provides the framework and common direction for all schools. It gives schools the scope, flexibility, and authority they need to design and shape their curriculum so that teaching and learning is meaningful and beneficial to their unique communities of students. In turn, the design of each school’s curriculum allows teachers scope to make interpretations in response to the particular needs, interests, and talents of the students in their class. In many cases, schools include processes, strategies and concepts that align with the aspirations of Holistic education.

The curriculum aims for all New Zealand students to experience a rich and balanced education. The principles underpin and guide the design, practice, and evaluation of each school-based curriculum at every stage. The values, key competencies, and learning areas provide the basis for teaching and learning across and within schools. This learning contributes to the realisation of a vision of young people who will be “confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners” (New Zealand Curriculum Design and Review, 2007, p. 2).

In a relatively short time, the value of holistic methods of teaching have become embedded in curricula to such an extent that they are woven through the process of culturally-responsive teaching and are promoted as a way to address inequalities of achievement. They are believed to improve the education of all students. Deep regard for the learning and experiences of the “whole” student, their family and community drives New Zealand’s new curriculum. Rousseau’s emphasis on one-to-one caring and mentoring is “championed” by our curriculum (including the Maori concept of *ako* –both student and teacher as learners) as is Robinson’s belief in the importance of relationships. The Integralist focus on connections between individuals and their cultural environments are also incorporated throughout the curriculum, with the use of culturally-responsive teaching strategies. In the classroom, these holistic models are demonstrated as a range of teaching methods that engage the “whole” student and so reinforce the holistic nature of current teaching practise in New Zealand. They provide students with the nurturing contexts that develop their self-esteem, relationships, emotional intelligence, and spirituality—and, thus, open students up to the possibilities of reaching *ultimacy* in their lives.



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*Appendix 1:* The New Zealand Curriculum. Front end of the NZ Ministry of Education document. This diagram outlines how the vision, values, key competencies, principles and learning areas are linked together and adapted for local context to design an individual school curriculum. The NZ Curriculum document is available online at <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz>

