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Perspectives on the Role of Teacher Aides
and the Implications for Inclusive Practice
in Aotearoa Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

Every young person has the right to experience school, learning alongside their peers, building friendships with classmates and gaining a sense of autonomy. Teacher aides have traditionally been placed in classrooms to support students with disabilities and diverse learning and behavioural differences. An overreliance on teacher aide support, however, may lead to students becoming stigmatised and dependent. Through thematic analysis of interview data gathered from six teachers and eight teacher aides, supplemented by survey responses from 23 teachers and 14 teacher aides, this thesis examines the perspectives on the teacher aide role and the implications for inclusive practice in Aotearoa classrooms. It identifies four prevalent role types perceived by participants, the teacher aides as: an *aide to the teacher*; a *co-educator*; a *student aide (in class)*; and a *student aide (outside class)*. Some roles, particularly the *co-educator*, are more conducive to social interaction and facilitating students' independence. Others, particularly the *student aide* role, risk further isolating particular students.

This thesis argues that it is teachers rather than teacher aides who are the primary agents of inclusive practice. As teachers adapt their practice to ensure that learning and achievement are possible for every student in their class, the need for one-on-one teacher aide support can be reduced. Teacher aides can work alongside teachers as *co-educators* overseeing the entire class, instructing small groups and checking-in with various students as needed, enabling teachers to work with students who benefit from more nuanced instruction. School leaders must examine the roles they assign to teacher aides and the associated practices in schools and classrooms. This will ensure that teacher aides are not viewed as the sole mechanisms for instructing and caring for students with disabilities and other diversities. Teacher aides are valuable members of the school community and can play a key role in contributing to inclusive practice in Aotearoa classrooms.

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IMAGE CREDITS

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Ma te huruhuru ka rere te manu
Adorn the bird with feathers so it can fly

When asked, “What do you think of your new teacher aide?”, a student quite flatteringly replied, “She’s beautiful, but she makes me carry my own stuff”. I was the teacher aide in question and this student’s charming response was a catalyst that sparked my journey into exploring perspectives on inclusive practice with teacher aides. The student was perplexed by the fact that I would not carry his ‘stuff’ for him, nor would I unpack his schoolbag or speak to his teachers on his behalf. It was my role to *aide* this student, but I found myself constantly returning to the question: how does one *aide* a student whilst simultaneously promoting students’ independence? As it turns out, this question and many others surrounding teacher aide practice have been the subject of inquiry for education researchers for more than two decades. This study aims to contribute to this growing body of research within Aotearoa/New Zealand through a qualitative lens.

The role of the teacher aide in Aotearoa/New Zealand

There is no specific training required in order to gain employment as a teacher aide/kaiako kaiāwhina in Aotearoa (Careers NZ, 2018). While the Ministry of Education has developed training modules on supporting effective practice for teacher aides (Ministry of Education, 2014, 2017, 2018a), it is not known whether these guides and other training resources for teacher aides are being used. This guidance from the Ministry of Education aims to establish clearly defined roles for teacher aides, as ‘role ambiguity’ has been identified both internationally and in NZ as a barrier to effective practice for teacher aides (Bourke & Carrington, 2007; Giangreco, 2013; Rutherford, 2011).

Attempts to define the teacher aide role are evident in *Module 1 – Teachers and Teachers’ Aides*:¹ *Who does what?* (Ministry of Education, 2014). It states that:

¹ The Ministry of Education uses the terms teacher aide, teachers’ aide and teacher’s aide interchangeably.

The main role of a teacher's aide is to be an aide to the teacher (not a 'helper' for individual students). Teachers' aides work, with guidance from the classroom teacher, to support the classroom teaching programme and student learning (Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 6).

Yet a recent media report on the poor pay conditions for teacher aides framed the role of the teacher aide as a support person for "high-needs and vulnerable students" (Whyte, 2018). One teacher aide remarked that:

[Teacher aides] work with children with extremely high health needs, children with very challenging behavioural needs and children with significant learning difficulties ... They do it all day every day, and they do it for very little pay (Whyte, 2018).

This example suggests that there is a potential disconnect between the *aide to teacher* role espoused by the Ministry and current teacher and teacher aide perceptions of the teacher aide role. Are teacher aides indeed *aides to teachers* as their name implies? Or do they act as *student aides* for those students who may have more difficulty accessing the curriculum and overall school experience? And what implications might this have for students? In light of these questions, this study aims to gain insight into how teachers/kaiako and teacher aides/kaiako kaiāwhina perceive the role of the teacher aide and the implications these roles have for supporting diverse students in Aotearoa classrooms.

Philosophical stance

Every person has a right to an education, yet groups of people remain at risk of not being granted equitable access to education (see UN Human Rights, 2018; United Nations, 2017, n.d.). Aligned with the New Zealand Disability Strategy (Ministry of Social Development, 2016), this thesis takes the stance that societal barriers contribute to the disablement of those with disabilities and other diversities in learning and behaviour. Schools, classrooms, teachers and teacher aides can serve to reduce these barriers and enable diverse students to have equitable access to education (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). This thesis aims to serve the rights of all students to receive an education by exploring the teacher aide role in relation to inclusive practice.

Thesis outline

In order to address these aims, Chapter Two: Literature Review provides an overview of current research on teacher aides and inclusive practice, finding that students who are in constant close proximity to a teacher aide are at risk of being distanced from their teachers and peers. Chapter Three: Methods outlines ethical approaches to gathering and analysing qualitative data on teacher and teacher aide perspectives through semi-structured interviews and online surveying. Chapter Four: Results presents the findings of a thematic analysis of interview and survey results, identifying four main role types for the teacher aide. Chapter Five: Discussion evaluates these roles in relation to inclusive practice and presents recommendations for teacher aide best practice. Finally, Chapter Six: Conclusion provides a summary of the study as well as implications for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the literature on the topic of teacher aides and inclusive practice. The chapter begins by setting the context for teacher aide practice in Aotearoa classrooms, followed by questions of how teacher aides 'help or hinder' students. The discourse regarding the students whom teacher aides have traditionally been employed to support is also considered, illustrating the shift from the language of 'special needs' to that of 'inclusion'. These shifting discourses have implications for the role of the teacher aide in schools and classrooms. In light of this, a synthesis of existing recommendations for teacher aide inclusive practice is then provided in order to demonstrate how teachers and teacher aides can work together towards inclusive practice.

Setting the scene for teacher aides in the Aotearoa classroom

Aotearoa classrooms saw an increase in the presence of teacher aides following the passing of two vital pieces of legislation. The Education Act (1989) gave rights to those with 'special educational needs' (SEN) to enrol in and receive an education from State schools. In accordance, the Human Rights Act (1993) made it unlawful to refuse admittance to an educational institution on the grounds of disability. These laws were a monumental step forward for disabled persons' rights, particularly young disabled people, as they now had legal access to enrolment in mainstream schooling. However, this legal access to enrolment did not always result in access to the same learning opportunities as their non-disabled peers. One of the barriers was teachers' lack of knowledge on how to cater for the now increasingly diverse needs of their students (as exemplified in Clegg, 1987; see also Ward, 2011).

According to Rutherford (2008, p. 88), teacher aides were deployed as the "solution to inclusion" to accommodate for 'SEN' students. This thinking is evident in a thesis published at the time on the role of teacher aides in NZ classrooms. Clegg (1987, p. 34) explained:

Despite calls for reduced class sizes, many teachers in New Zealand schools still teach 35 or more children each day. It is little wonder that concern has been expressed about the mainstreaming of children with special needs. Teacher aides, if deployed thoughtfully, are an invaluable resource for busy teachers who suddenly find [a] disabled student in their classrooms.

Clegg's (1987) thesis demonstrates how teacher aides were traditionally employed as *aides to individual students* so that teachers could cope with classes that were increasing in size and diversity. This contributed to conditions where lesser qualified personnel were working closely with students who required more complex and nuanced teaching practices (Ferguson, 2014; Rutherford, 2008, 2011). These New Zealand-based perspectives align with literature on teacher aide practice from Australia (Bourke, 2009; Howard & Ford, 2007) the United States (Giangreco, 2013; Giangreco & Doyle, 2007) and the United Kingdom (Webster et al., 2010, 2011).

This practice of assigning teacher aides to work closely with students who have more "complex learning challenges" (Giangreco, 2013, p. 97) is said to further exclude and marginalise these students (Bourke, 2009). Rutherford (2011, pp. 114–115) supports these claims, suggesting that despite the rights for equitable participation enshrined in the Human Rights and Education Acts:

Students with disabilities' right to, and participation in, education may be dependent on the presence and actions of the least qualified and perhaps least powerful members of the education workforce ... Certainly, this fundamental injustice needs to be urgently addressed at various levels of educational policy and practice as well as within teacher education programs.

Rutherford calls for further investigation into the teacher aide's role in supporting students, particularly those with disabilities, to ensure that students' rights to equitable participation in education are being upheld. Teacher aides work with students who are at risk of being marginalised and therefore investigation into how teacher aides help (or indeed hinder) these students is warranted.

Teacher aides: Helping or hindering?

For more than a decade, concerns have been raised over teacher aides contributing to the isolation, dependence and interference with social interaction for students both in NZ (Alton-Lee et al., 2000; Rutherford, 2008; Tutty & Hocking, 2004; Ward, 2011) and internationally (Egilson & Traustadottir, 2009; Gerber, Finn, Achilles, & Boyd-Zaharias, 2001; Giangreco, 2013; Giangreco & Doyle, 2007; Howard & Ford, 2007; Malmgren & Causton-

Theoharis, 2006; Webster et al., 2011). It has been posited that these issues are a result of a lack of role clarity and training (Kalsum, 2014; Rutherford, 2012) and of teachers who are unresponsive to the diversity of needs in their classrooms (MacArthur & Kelly, 2004; Rutherford, 2012; Ward, 2011). The following section briefly summarises the positive aspects of the teacher aide's role before examining these more problematic outcomes of teacher aide support.

Teacher aides "doing right by" students

Investigation into the role of the teacher aide and their experiences in Aotearoa classrooms has been conducted extensively by Gill Rutherford (2008, 2011, 2012). Her work has revealed that teacher aides tend to develop respectful and accepting relationships with the young people they are supporting. Teacher aides in Rutherford's research strived to "do right by" and advocate for students, despite at times feeling undervalued, underpaid and unqualified. Students interviewed by Rutherford (2008) appreciated these warm and meaningful relationships, explaining, for instance, that teacher aides were often more approachable than teachers.

These findings share similarities with Australian research by Howard and Ford (2007), who found teacher aides had a strong sense of commitment to students, showed deep understanding of them, acted as advocates, were proud of students' achievements and thought of their support as vital to students' wellbeing. Much of the literature (e.g., Kalsum, 2014; Rutherford, 2008; Tutty & Hocking, 2004) demonstrates that teacher aides are dedicated practitioners who have the best of intentions for the students they are supporting.

Providing support and encouraging independence: A paradox

Despite these positive aspects of teacher aide support, downsides are also evident. Rutherford (2008) uncovered these concerns when interviewing students who had received extensive teacher aide assistance, concluding that students did not want to be over-supported, overprotected or have their peer interactions disrupted by their aides. This highlights the paradoxical question inherent in the role of the teacher aide: how does one provide support and simultaneously promote independence?

This paradox is evident in research conducted outside NZ. Icelandic researchers Egilson and Traustadottir (2009, p. 28) have noted, for instance,

that there is a “fine line” between facilitating participation and inhibiting students’ development of autonomy. Findings from this research indicate that too much assistance can limit students’ potential and contributes to dependency and helplessness. These findings mirror those from research conducted in the US. Malmgren and Causton-Theoharis (2006) found instances of students perceiving a lack of control over their own learning and observed students waiting for help from teacher aides before engaging with new tasks. This behaviour can be related to the phenomenon of *learned helplessness*, where students learn to rely on adult support, creating an unnecessary dependence (Causton-Theoharis, 2009).

Independence is prioritised as a key competency in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). The Curriculum emphasises that with independence comes self-motivation, resourcefulness, resilience and the strategies to meet new challenges. Every student has the right to develop these vital attributes. Therefore, the teacher aide’s role in encouraging (or discouraging) independence is worthy of further investigation, particularly in New Zealand where there are no current studies with this as a primary focus.

Social interaction matters

Of equal importance to encouraging independence is promoting social interaction between learners. Interactions between peers are an integral part of the school experience for all students (MacArthur & Kelly, 2004).

Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory provides a foundation for this premise, demonstrating that children’s learning and development occurs as a result of generating ideas together. As Vygotsky (1978, p. 57) states, “Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later on the individual level ... All higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals”. Malmgren and Causton-Theoharis (2006) add an additional layer to this theory, suggesting that social interaction is *especially* important for learners with disabilities, as interaction not only improves academic achievement but fosters a sense of social inclusion.

Returning to NZ research, Ward (2011, p. 45) observed instances of teacher aides unwittingly hindering opportunities for social interaction by getting in the way when students were trying to talk to their classmates. Similar findings resulted from a US study which found that students spent an overabundance of time with their adult aides and experienced difficulty in making friends (Broer, Doyle, & Giangreco, 2005). Opportunities to discuss

learning or chat with friends are at constant risk of being disrupted by the 'supportive' adult, as is evident in research by Ward (2011) and Broer et al. (2005).

Students with teacher aide support often find themselves physically separated from their classmates, marking them as 'different' and further thwarting peer interaction (MacArthur & Kelly, 2004). This is demonstrated by Tutty and Hocking (2004), who found instances of teacher aides and students physically (and socially) isolated from the rest of the class, revealing that even seating arrangements can contribute to the social isolation of students who have support from teacher aides. Social interaction is not only vital for academic learning but also for students' sense of belonging and wellbeing. Given teacher aides' pivotal role in enabling (or disabling) social interaction, further investigation into teacher aide practice and social interaction between learners is necessary. Similar to matters of independence, the topic of teacher aides and student interaction is yet to be a primary focus for a New Zealand study.

A changing discourse: From special needs to inclusive education

Further to discussing the role of the teacher aide in 'helping or hindering', the following question must be raised: who are these students who seemingly fall outside the capabilities of mainstream teaching (or what Graham and Slee (2008) refer to as "the normative centre") and require additional adult support? These students have found themselves described as those with SEN or *special needs*. They have also been described as *disabled children* or those with *impairments*. Terms heard in contemporary settings now include *diverse learners* within notions of *inclusive education*. The following section examines this changing discourse in order to *a*) demonstrate how students with teacher aides have been characterised and *b*) pose questions regarding the nature of the teacher aide's role in 'inclusive' settings.

'Special needs': Worthy intentions, problematic outcomes

Special needs and SEN are terms which have emerged in the field of education over the last half-century both internationally (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000; Gulliford & Upton, 1992; Warnock Committee, 1978) and in NZ (Ministry of Education, 2015; Mitchell, 2010). Historically, the term, *special needs* was used with the intention of abolishing the "concept of the ineducable child" (Warnock, 2010, p. 11). However, it has been widely argued that this

language has problematic connotations (Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Dyson, 2001; Florian, 2010; MacArthur & Rutherford, 2016; Runswick-Cole & Hodge, 2009; Rutherford & MacArthur, 2018; Tomlinson, 1985). Rutherford and MacArthur (2018) explain that students labelled as having *special needs* are at risk of being seen as demanding and burdensome, as the name implies that they will require extra time and resources. Furthermore, the concept of *needs* is said to embody notions of deficit and dependence (Rutherford & MacArthur, 2018; Sayers, 2018). These deficit views can lead to lowered expectations and determinist assumptions (Biklen & Burke, 2006; Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Florian, 2010; Rutherford & MacArthur, 2018; Tomlinson, 1985). These problematic factors can detract from teaching, learning and students' rights to a positive school experience (Rutherford & MacArthur, 2018).

An alternate approach which serves to ameliorate the damaging assumptions and outcomes is the replacement of *needs* with *rights* (MacArthur & Rutherford, 2016; Runswick-Cole & Hodge, 2009; Rutherford & MacArthur, 2018; Sayers, 2018). A rights-based approach considers every student's worth, capability, agency and strengths, rather than focusing on deficits and abnormalities (MacArthur & Rutherford, 2016; Runswick-Cole & Hodge, 2009; Rutherford & MacArthur, 2018). This aligns with Booth and Ainscow's (2002, p. 5) inclusive approach to education, as they propose a system dedicated to reducing "barriers to learning and participation" for *all* students. Teacher aides have traditionally been employed to support students with *special needs*. By shifting from *needs* to *rights*, the responsibility shifts to the class teacher being responsible for reducing barriers to learning and participation, in collaboration with the teacher aide.

Impaired individual or disabling society?

While the term disability is less contested than special needs, how disability is conceptualised is relevant politically (Oliver, 2013; Shakespeare, 2006), socially (Davis, 2006) and in the field of education (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). Conceptions of disability have implications for schools, classrooms and teachers (Rutherford, 2008) and is of particular relevance to teacher aides.

Disability is often framed through either medical or social perspectives. The medical model positions disability as a problem emanating from the individual, needing to be solved or cured (Oliver, 1996). This model has seen those with disabilities reduced to pathology (Rutherford, 2008) and "having clinicians rule [their] lives" (Shakespeare & Watson, 2001, p. 23). The medical

perspective of disability is particularly concerning for education, as in this view, difficulties are seen to arise from impairments and deficiencies (Booth & Ainscow, 2002), absolving educators of the responsibility to reduce barriers to learning. Similarly, Linton (2006, p. 162) suggests that by assigning a purely medical meaning to disability, the focus is on treating the condition “rather than ‘treating’ the social processes and policies that constrict disabled people’s lives”.

In contrast to the medical perspective, the social model requires the removal of barriers for disabled individuals (Davis, 2006; Shakespeare & Watson, 2001). This is based on the premise that, according to the original definition of the social model, “Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society” (Oliver, as cited by Shakespeare, 2006, p. 197). This aligns with the conception of disability outlined in the New Zealand Disability Strategy, which explains that disability is “something that happens when people with impairments face barriers in society; it is society that disables us, not our impairments, this is the thing all disabled people have in common” (Ministry of Social Development, 2016, p. 12).

The social model has been criticised in some circles (see, for example, Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2011; Davis, 2006; Shakespeare, 2006; Shakespeare & Watson, 2001; Thomas, 2004). Much of this criticism is based on the perception that the social model “denies the impact of impairment on disability” (Thomas, 2004, p. 577). Despite these criticisms, the social model provides a valuable lens, particularly for educators, through which to view disability. This model demands that teachers (and indeed teacher aides) ask themselves how their classrooms and their practice may be contributing to the disablement of their learners. The social model asks what educators can do to break down the barriers to participation and learning (Macartney & Morton, 2013). Like the shift from *needs* to *rights*, social conceptions of disability prompt teachers and teacher aides to consider not what is wrong with the student, but what may be wrong with the environment and teaching practice.

Diverse students, inclusive classrooms

It has been argued that the term *special needs* embodies a deficit view which characterises students as dependent and a demand on resources (Rutherford & MacArthur, 2018; Sayers, 2018). Similarly, medical perspectives have

framed disability as a problem emanating from the individual, rather than from societal (or classroom) barriers (Macartney & Morton, 2013; Ministry of Social Development, 2016). Inclusive practice² aims to disrupt these problematic discourses by responding to the diversity of *all* learners, rather than labelling and targeting specific groups of students. As Spratt and Florian (2015, p. 90) explain, inclusive practice prioritises avoiding marginalisation in the classroom community and includes any and all learners, not just those with disabilities, as they “may be excluded or marginalised by the processes of schooling”. This aligns with a definition provided by the New Zealand Ministry of Education (2018b): “Inclusive education is where all children and young people are engaged and achieve through *being present, participating, learning and belonging*”.

There is some concern that “disability has got lost in the morass of diversity” (Wills, Morton, McLean, Stephenson, & Slee, 2014, p. 2). Graham and Slee (2008) also raise concerns suggesting that inclusion will remain problematic unless educators think critically about this ‘norm’ that those on the outside are expected to be included into. Those who hover around the periphery of the norm are the “so-called target groups for inclusion—disabled children, learning disabled children, disruptive or disordered children, ESL [English as a second language] children, disadvantaged and at-risk children, and Indigenous children” (Graham & Slee, 2008, p. 282). Therefore, in order for true inclusion to occur, preconceived notions of what is normal may require a radical overhaul. Despite this wariness, inclusive practice is strongly supported both internationally (Ainscow, 2007; Slater & Chapman, 2018; Spratt & Florian, 2015) and in Aotearoa (Macartney & Morton, 2013; Ministry of Education, 2018b; Ministry of Social Development, 2016; Rutherford & MacArthur, 2018; Wills & Rosenbaum, 2014). It aims to value diversity, uphold students’ rights and puts the onus on educators to respond to the needs of all students, rather than reaching only the students who fall within the ‘normative centre’.

This raises questions regarding the role of the teacher aide in inclusive classrooms. Teacher aides were historically viewed as “an invaluable resource for busy teachers who suddenly find a ... disabled student in their classrooms” (Clegg, 1987, p. 34). Inclusive practice in education now aims far

² Also referred to as inclusion, inclusive pedagogy, inclusive education or inclusive classrooms.

beyond what Rutherford (2008, p. 59) referred to as “tokenistic measures such as [disabled students] merely sitting at the back of a classroom filling in the day with a teacher aide”. In a similar vein, Booth and Ainscow (2002) explain that when lessons are adapted and planned to support the participation of every student there is less need for individual support. This means that in inclusive settings, teachers and teacher aides work together to support *all learners* rather than the teacher teaching the ‘mainstream’ learners and the teacher aide being responsible for those who fall outside of this mainstream. Florian (2010, p. 26) supports this idea, with the suggestion that:

A new beginning for special education is in reimagining the use of support: it is the ways that teachers respond to individual differences during whole class teaching, the choices they make about group work and how they utilise specialist knowledge that matters. Bringing about this culture shift is necessary work.

As inclusive education evolves, discussion turns to how this reimagining of support may look for teacher aides.

Teacher aide best practice

Teacher aides were introduced to the Aotearoa classroom in order for increasingly diverse students to be able to take part (Rutherford, 2008). As educators move towards more inclusive models, teacher aides should expect to be seen not as what Giangreco (2013, p. 94) refers to as a proverbial “Band-Aid”, but as a valuable tool for reducing the “barriers to learning and participation” (Booth & Ainscow, 2002, p. 4). As Broer et al. (2005, p. 428) suggest, inclusive practice goes beyond “merely placing students in general education classes and providing a [teacher aide] for support”. This invites the question of how teacher aides can be used most effectively to facilitate inclusive practice. The following section provides a synthesis of the recommendations made in existing literature on how teacher aide practice can align with inclusive practice and support learners of varying diversities.

Recommendations for teacher aide inclusive practice

There are two main recommendations that have emerged from existing literature on teacher aide inclusive practice in New Zealand. The first is that the teacher aide ought to be viewed as an *aide to the teacher*. In order to achieve this, schools must encourage and enhance collaborative practice between teachers and teacher aides (Deuninck, 2015; Kalsum, 2014). This can

be achieved through setting aside time for teachers and teacher aides to communicate formally, allowing teacher aides to contribute to planning for students' learning and fostering respectful, positive relationships between colleagues (Deuninck, 2015; Kalsum, 2014; Rutherford, 2008).

Additional to this recommendation is that the teacher aide assumes the role of an *aide to the teacher* rather than an *aide to the student*, whilst avoiding one-on-one contexts between the student and the aide (Ferguson, 2014; Rutherford, 2012; Tutty & Hocking, 2004; Ward, 2011). It is important to note that just one of the 18 teacher aide participants in Rutherford's (2008) original study experienced this kind of practice consistently. The most persistent barrier obstructing this more inclusive model was not the fault of the teacher aide, but of teachers who were unwilling to respond to the diversity of their students and to *presume competence* in every student (Biklen & Burke, 2006; Rutherford, 2012). Presuming competence is a key component of inclusive practice. This involves teachers (and teacher aides) holding high expectations for all students, regardless of their differences. In these contexts, student agency is expected, and participation is a given (Biklen & Burke, 2006).

A decade on from Rutherford's (2008) initial findings, it remains unclear whether Aotearoa teacher aides are working under collaborative, *aide to the teacher* models, or whether *one-on-one* models remain standard practice for teacher aides. As Ward (2011, p. 7) proposes:

Careful consideration needs to be given to how the teacher aide can primarily support the teacher, rather than the student ... In this way strategies for including the student and avoiding dependence on one adult can be created, with greater opportunities for the teacher to work with the student while the teacher aide supports others.

This highlights the need for an investigation into how (or whether) teachers and teacher aides are working collaboratively in Aotearoa classrooms to support students of varying diversities.

The second recommendation for to emerge from the literature is the promotion of students' social interaction and independence. Inclusive practice ensures that all students have a sense of belonging (Ministry of Education, 2018b) and are not isolated from their teachers and classmates (Ward, 2011 see also; Malmgren & Causton-Theoharis, 2006). A number of recommendations for how teacher aides can promote social interaction

between learners and encourage independence have been made. This includes avoiding teacher aides' withdrawal of students from class and the separating of students from their peers (Ferguson, 2014; MacArthur & Kelly, 2004; Ward, 2011). Classroom layout such as seating arrangements should promote social interaction, not segregation (Ward, 2011). Finally, cooperative learning should be encouraged; students ought to rely first on their peers as *natural supports*, rather than on the teacher aide (Ward, 2011).

Causton-Theorharis (2009) provides practical steps for *fading* additional adult support, suggesting first and foremost that lessons should be modified to cater for the varying abilities of learners. Like Ward (2011), Causton-Theorharis (2009, p. 39) suggests that teacher aides should not have a permanent seat next to a particular student in the classroom as this "indicates to everyone in the room that the student needs help" and contributes to unnecessary dependence. It is suggested that teacher aides promote independence by providing only "partial-assistance", modelling,³ using non-verbal cues and "deliberately stepping back" (see also Eggen & Kauchak, 2013; Radford, Bosanquet, Webster, Blatchford, & Rubie-Davies, 2014; Sharples, Webster, & Blatchford, 2015).

There is an emerging body of research which provides suggestions for teacher aide practice aimed at encouraging social interaction and independence both from NZ (Ferguson, 2014; MacArthur & Kelly, 2004; Rutherford, 2012; Ward, 2011) and overseas (Causton-Theorharis, 2009; Sharples et al., 2015; Webster et al., 2011). However, as aforementioned, the ways teacher aides encourage social interaction and student agency are yet to be a key focus of NZ research into teacher aide practice.

Summary and research aims

Students who find themselves in constant close proximity to a 'supportive' adult are at risk of being distanced from their teachers and peers. Without collaboration with teachers who promote an "all in" inclusive approach (Rutherford, 2008), well-meaning teacher aides can find themselves tipping

³ Modelling is a deliberate pedagogical technique where the teacher physically demonstrates the skills and steps that are required to complete a given task. The teacher might 'think aloud' in order to demonstrate the thinking processes involved in the task. They may also produce an exemplar for students to refer to during this process.

the balance from helping to hindering (Giangreco, 2013). As *special education* has shifted to *inclusive education*, so too has the role of the teacher aide in NZ classrooms.

Therefore, the aim of this research is to examine how teachers and teacher aides perceive the role of the teacher aide (and the practices associated with these roles) in supporting diverse students in Aotearoa classrooms. Questions in support of this aim include:

- 1) Broadly, how does the role of the teacher aide facilitate inclusive practice?
- 2) Specifically, what do teacher and teacher aide perspectives on the role of the teacher aide reveal about how teacher aides facilitate independence and social interaction for students?
- 3) What conditions potentially contribute to isolation and dependence for students receiving teacher aide support?

In order to address these aims, the following chapter presents methods for gathering and analysing the perspectives of teachers and teacher aides.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

As Tutty and Hocking (2004, p. 7) suggest, “Asking teacher aides what is important, and listening to their stories of how it is, will allow a more enlightened perspective on what is occurring and why”. In line with Tutty and Hocking’s (2004) ideal, a qualitative interview and survey-based study will provide teachers and teacher aides with the opportunity to contribute valuable insights into how they perceive the role of the teacher aide in supporting diverse students in Aotearoa classrooms. This chapter first establishes ethical considerations, followed by details of participant recruitment, rationale and design for web-based surveys (phase one) and one-on-one, semi-structured interviews (phase two). This is followed by a discussion of techniques for analysis and of cultural considerations including aspects of the Māori worldview, Te Ao Māori.

Ethical considerations

Respect, virtue and truth are placed at the centre of research ethics for education (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Punch & Oancea, 2014). Researchers are compelled to determine what is morally right and to actively minimise harm throughout the research process (Punch & Oancea, 2014). The following section outlines how these principles were considered throughout this project, including how informed consent was obtained and how confidentiality was addressed, in accordance with Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants (Massey University, 2015).

Informed consent

This project aimed to protect participants firstly by offering detailed information to participants (see Appendix A: Information sheet for participants). Initial consent to invite teachers and teacher aides to participate in online surveys and interviews was requested from school principals via email. Crucial to these email requests was informing principals of exactly what they and their staff were consenting to should they wish to take part, as outlined in the subsequent sections on sampling for phases one and two.

The first page of the web-based survey provided relevant information regarding the nature of the research, the contact details of the researcher and a statement explaining that the study was deemed ethically low risk along

with assurances that no personal information was to be collected as part of the survey (see Appendix B: Teacher aide survey instrument and Appendix C: Teacher survey instrument). Participants were then informed of the approximate time the survey would take to complete, followed by a statement explaining that by selecting 'I accept', participants were providing consent for the data they provided to be used as part of the study. Participants were also given the option to decline and were thanked for their interest in taking part.

Interview participants were contacted via email prior to meeting in-person. They were provided with an information sheet outlining the nature of the research and exactly what was requested of them should they consent to taking part in an interview (see Appendix A: Information sheet for participants), along with a copy of the interview consent form (see Appendix D: Interview consent form). It was important that this information was sent to interviewees in weeks prior to the interview, providing them with the opportunity to fully consider their involvement in the research and to consent or decline without the researcher present. Participants were given the opportunity, as aligned with the Code of Ethical Conduct, to "decline to participate or to withdraw from participation without penalty of any kind and without having to provide reasons" (Massey University, 2015, p. 15). Interviewees were given the option to sign the consent form and submit it electronically, or to receive a printed copy of the consent form to sign prior to the interview.

Anonymity, confidentiality and the "small connected community"

Anonymity and confidentiality were crucial components of this project as assurances of privacy are seen as critical for enabling participants to speak frankly and honestly, providing the most detailed and accurate information (Creswell, 2012). This was especially important given that research into teacher aide practice has tended to reveal problematic aspects of the role (see, for example, Rutherford, 2012). For this reason, no personally identifying information such as name, location of school or contact details were required as part of the survey. This did, however, result in survey responses being unable to be directly followed up on. Several of the subsequent interviewees indicated they had taken part in the survey, yet it remained impossible to discern which responses were theirs given the anonymous nature of the survey.

Teacher and teacher aide interviewees needed to trust that the information they provided, however sensitive, remained confidential. Confidentiality takes on particular importance for research in school settings, as schools and their networks are part of what Damianakis and Woodford (2012) describe as a “small connected community”. In such communities, confidentiality can easily be breached. This occurs when characteristics such as gender, number of years in service or place of employment are published alongside pseudonyms. The use of direct quotations can have a similar effect. Therefore, researchers need to be keenly aware of any personally identifying information revealed by quotes and other contextual details regarding participants. In order to maintain full confidentiality for participants in the report writing of this project, the following steps were taken:

- No identifying information (such as name and place of employment) were recorded as part of the web-based survey;
- Pseudonyms were used in place of interviewees’ real names and other identifying information (such as place of employment, gender or number of years in service) were not published alongside quotations;
- Direct quotations from interviewees and survey respondents were used sensitively and any identifying information was changed or omitted;
- Assurances of confidentiality were made to all participants prior to and during the research process.

Once the foundations of ethical research were set out, participant recruitment, rationale and design for surveys and interviews could take place.

Phase one: Web-based surveys

Surveying through the use of questionnaires is a versatile way to gather broad and overarching information on participants’ perspectives on the role of the teacher aide and inclusive practice. A key advantage of questionnaires is that they can alleviate the “social desirability bias” associated with interviews (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Razavieh, 2010). When the researcher is present, the participant may inadvertently provide answers that they feel will please the researcher. Online questionnaires are able to be completed privately, increasingly the likelihood of honesty from participants. Despite these advantages, questionnaires are limited in that the researchers cannot spontaneously inquire further into participants’ responses (Menter, Elliot, Hulme, Lewin, & Lowden, 2011). To address this, face-to-face interviews

were conducted (as detailed in phase two) to complement and further examine issues that had limited scope within the context of the questionnaire.

Web-based survey: Distribution

The questionnaires were distributed using Qualtrics, a web-based survey application. Qualtrics is a tool which “makes it easy to build, design, and share surveys of varying complexity for research purposes” (Massey University, 2018). Web-based survey tools are well suited for research of this type as they can gather extensive data quickly and take advantage of today’s ever-present web use (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A web-based survey has the ability gather data on, for instance, teachers’ and teacher aides’ views of the role of the teacher aide. It was also used to provide information regarding the frequency of teacher aides’ work alongside classroom teachers to support the whole class, the frequency of their work with students in one-on-one contexts and teacher aide qualifications and training (see Appendix B: Teacher aide survey instrument and Appendix C: Teacher survey instrument).

Web-based survey: Participant recruitment

Firstly, schools were selected and contacted based on the following requirements:

- 1) They ranged in location from cities, towns and rural locations in both the North and South Island;
- 2) They ranged in decile rating from 1 to 10;
- 3) They were public, mainstream schools; and,
- 4) They had a website which displayed the above information as well as the contact details of the principal.

A total of 18 schools were selected based on these criteria. Permission to send the two web-based survey links (one for teachers and one for teacher aides) to participants was sought from principals via email. This email included an outline of the project along with details of ethical approval and examples of survey questions. The email also included links to the two web-based surveys for principals to forward on to their staff should they wish to participate. A total of ten principals replied to the email request and explained that they would invite their staff to participate in the survey. It is not known how many principals may have forwarded the survey links on to participants without replying to the initial email.

Web-based survey: The sample

As illustrated in Table 1, a total of 37 participants (teacher aides $n = 14$; teachers $n = 23$) from NZ primary and intermediate schools took part in the online surveys. While names and other identifying information such as the location of schools were not collected, information such as decile rating of schools and years of experience was collected. Although the survey request was sent to schools ranging in decile, the majority ($n = 32$) of survey respondents reported that they came from schools with a high decile rating (decile 7 to 10). A total of 12 survey participants had up to five years' experience, while the remainder ($n = 25$) had more than five years' experience in their respective roles.

Table 1: Survey participants' school and classroom contexts

	TEACHER AIDES (N=14)	TEACHERS (N=23)	TOTAL (N=37)
EXPERIENCE			
0–2 years	4	1	5
3–5 years	1	6	7
More than 5 years	9	16	25
YEAR LEVEL			
0–4	3	12	15
5–8	3	9	12
All	8	2	10
DECILE			
1–3	1	0	1
4–6	2	2	4
7–10	11	21	34
NO. TEACHERS WORKED WITH			
Multiple	13	N/A	13
Mostly with one teacher	1	N/A	1
HOURS			
Part time	9	0	9
Full time	5	23	28

Web-based survey: Design

The aim of the web-based survey was to gauge how participants viewed the role of the teacher aide and the frequency at which teacher aides worked with individuals, small groups of students and whole classes. In addition, the survey aimed to establish how often teacher aides worked with students in the classroom and how often they withdrew students to work outside classrooms. Participants' use of guidelines for teacher aide inclusive practice

was also measured (see Appendix B: Teacher aide survey instrument and Appendix C: Teacher survey instrument).

Ary et al. (2010) provide a framework for posing, reviewing and revising questions when designing a questionnaire, which informed the survey design process. Under this framework, attempts were made to reduce biases and assumptions within questions to ensure that participants were not led to a pre-specified answer (Ary et al., 2010; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). For instance, the question, *how have you used the Ministry guidelines in your practice?* assumed that the respondent had applied the guidelines and that they had found the guidelines practical. In order to reduce these presuppositions, the question was rephrased and extended to four separate questions, as shown in Figure 1.

<p>Are you aware that the Ministry of Education has published materials for supporting effective teacher aide practice? [Yes/No]</p> <p>Have you seen either of these resources? [Images of materials used as visual prompt]</p> <p>To what extent have the modules influenced your practice as a teacher aide?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Not influential</i> 1 2 3 4 5 <i>Very influential</i></p> <p>[Optional] Provide an example of how you have used what you learned from the modules in your practice:</p>

Figure 1: An example of revised survey questions

The third question in Figure 1 utilises a Likert scale on which participants rate the extent of influence. Likert scales are a valuable tool for quantifying participants' attitudes and enabling comparisons across participants (Punch & Oancea, 2014), and in this context, they allow participants to demonstrate the guidelines' level of influence on a simple numerical scale. Following this question, participants have the option to provide an example of how they apply the guidelines in practice, or to expand on and clarify their response. This request was optional, as it is crucial that questionnaires are reasonable in length for participants (Ary et al., 2010; Punch & Oancea, 2014). The benefit of combining a Likert scale with an open-ended response means that easily quantifiable responses can be supplemented with rich qualitative data in a way that is manageable for participants.

An additional component of the survey design process was ensuring that the meaning of the questions was clear and contained minimal use of technical language (Menter et al., 2011; Pallant, 2016). Questions were posed in a deliberately informal yet clear style. For instance, the question for teacher aides, *how frequently are you required to help with 'teacher jobs' (such as marking, classroom displays, etc.)?* used the phrase 'teacher jobs' in a colloquial style which captures the idea of "non-instructional" tasks that teacher aides may undertake when they are not working directly with students (Giangreco, 2013).

The above examples demonstrate how deliberate steps were taken to *a)* reduce biases and assumptions, *b)* ensure questions were clear and manageable, and *c)* phrase questions in a conversational yet clear style, in order to measure participants' responses with accuracy.

Web-based survey: Pilot testing

Pilot testing enhances the quality of surveys as it enables the researcher to "iron out the confusion" (Pallant, 2016, p. 9) before surveys are distributed *en masse*. Feedback from participants involved in pilot testing can also provide a valuable opportunity to further reduce biases and leading questions and to address any technical issues. The survey was tested on two teachers and a teacher aide who were not part of the sample. The resulting changes included, for instance, allowing more space for open-ended answers and modifying the title of the survey to more accurately describe the content. An average response time of ten minutes was also recorded as part of the pilot surveying. This meant that survey participants were able to be provided with an estimate of the time it would take them to complete the survey.

Phase two: Interviews

Interviews can be a powerful way of gaining understanding of situations, perceptions and experiences through conversation (Ary et al., 2010; Punch & Oancea, 2014). The semi-structured interview approach was well suited to exploring the role of the teacher aide and gaining insights into perspectives on the role of teacher aides in relation to inclusive practice. This process moved beyond the confines of the online survey by exploring specific topics deeply and covering the dynamics of the interactions that teacher aides have with both teachers and students. Interviews also allowed the unique opportunity for teacher aides to be heard, given there are very few existing

studies which consider the perspectives of Aotearoa teacher aides. The work of teacher aides, as Tutty and Hocking (2004, p. 8) found, is often “physically and emotionally demanding”, yet at times goes unrecognised. Inviting teacher aides to take part in interviews gives them recognition and an opportunity for their valuable perspectives to be heard.

Interviews: Participant recruitment

Principals were contacted with requests for teacher and teacher aide interviews based on the following requirements:

- 1) Principals had responded via email to the initial survey request with interest in the research;
- 2) Principals were from Wellington and Hawke’s Bay regions (for logistical purposes) in both rural, town and city locations; and,
- 3) Principals were from schools ranging in decile rating from 1–10.

Five principals responded to the interview requests, stating that either themselves or a member of their staff (such as the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), Deputy Principal or Lead Teacher) would gauge interest from teachers and teacher aides in taking part in interviews. Some principals and school leaders provided a schedule of interviews while others provided the contact details of volunteers, so they could be contacted in order to arrange a time to meet. Most interviews took place in school staff rooms and classrooms, while a small number took place in cafés and participants’ homes.

Interviews: The sample

As illustrated in Table 2, six teachers and eight teacher aides volunteered to be interviewed. While interview requests were sent to schools ranging from decile 1 to 10, as with the survey responses, the majority of participants came from decile 7 to 10 schools. Experience in the profession ranged from two to 22 years for teacher aides and five to 18 years for teachers. Both the teacher and teacher aide interviewees worked with students ranging from five to 13 years of age. Two of the teacher aide interviewees worked in *single-cell* classrooms with one teacher, and four teacher aides worked in *hub*

*environments*⁴ with multiple teachers. Two teacher aides worked in both hub and single-cell classrooms. Four of the teacher interviewees worked in single-cell classrooms and two worked in hubs.

Table 2: Interview participants' school and classroom contexts

	TEACHER AIDES (N=8)	TEACHERS (N=6)	TOTAL (N=14)
EXPERIENCE			
0–2 years	1	0	1
3–5 years	2	1	3
More than 5 years	5	5	10
YEAR LEVEL			
0–4	4	3	7
5–8	3	3	6
All	1	0	1
CLASSROOM TYPE			
Single-Cell	2	4	6
Hub	4	2	6
Both	2	0	2
DECILE			
1–3	0	1	1
4–6	0	0	0
7–10	6	7	13
NO. TEACHERS WORKED WITH			
Multiple	8	N/A	8
Mostly with one teacher	0	N/A	0
HOURS			
Part time	3	0	3
Full time	5	6	11

Interviews: Design

Interviews were conducted in-person and in a one-on-one context. Digital audio recording was used as the primary means of recording interview data. Audio recording is an effective way of obtaining a verbatim record of interviews whilst being less distracting than copious written notes and not as invasive as filming equipment (Ary et al., 2010). Written notes were made immediately after each interview to record key ideas that arose during the

⁴ Single-cell classrooms generally have one teacher and one group of approximately 20–30 students in one room. Hub environments (also known as Innovative Learning Environments or Modern Learning Environments) are generally composed of interconnected, open-plan spaces. Hubs tend to have multiple teachers and large groups of approximately 80–100 students.

interview. These notes were expanded on later as the audio recordings were played back. As part of this process, transcripts were made of salient sections of dialogue.

The interviews adopted a semi-structured format based on a set of guiding questions and flexible discussion prompts which could be adapted to respond to different participants and situations (Punch & Oancea, 2014). This style was ideal for exploring participants' perspectives on the role of the teacher aide and inclusive practice, as there are many facets to this topic. The questions tended to be posed and rephrased in response to participants' conceptions of the teacher aide role and their beliefs around inclusion, rather than taken from an inflexible list of pre-designed questions.

This questioning approach was characteristic of the 'funnelling' technique (Minichiello, Aroni, & Hays, 2008), as participants were initially prompted with general questions followed by more specific prompts as interviews unfolded. For example, teacher aide interviewees were initially asked, *in your view, what is the role of the teacher aide?* This broad question yielded a wide range of responses and suggested to participants that there was no specific answer with the use of clause *in your view*. Following this, probing questions were used to glean more specific information. However, Smith and Osborn (2015, p. 35) warn against posing narrowly focused questions of this type during the outset of the interview as they can "produce data biased in the direction of the investigator's prior and specific concerns". It was crucial that leading questions were avoided during interviews as this risks pressuring participants to provide answers that have been implied in the question (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Smith & Osborn, 2015).

Interviews: Pilot testing

As Ary et al. (2010, p. 439) state, "Careful listening is crucial to successful interviewing, and one of the most difficult skills to develop is to know when to be silent and when to interject the next question ... listen more, talk less, and ask real questions". These "difficult skills" were practiced during pilot interviews with a teacher and a teacher aide who were acquaintances and not part of the sample. Valuable reflections resulted from these pilot interviews. For instance, it was found that interviews can inadvertently begin prior to the audio recording device being switched on. Therefore, when it came to 'official' interviews, audio recording began immediately, with the device placed to the side where it was not distracting. Pilot testing also proved the

importance of *wait-time* as feedback from pilot interviewees suggested I needed to provide *time to think*. These insights from pilot testing proved highly valuable for the formal interview process.

Data analysis

The survey and interview results were analysed using a thematic approach, supplemented by frequency statistics and basic crosstabulations using Microsoft Excel. As shown in Figure 2, the online survey results, interview recordings and interview notes became the *raw data* for this approach.

The thematic approach applied to both the survey and interview data was based on two sources for qualitative research approaches. The process for building a thematic framework proposed by Ritchie, Spencer and O'Connor (2003) was followed in order to identify initial themes and concepts. The data were labelled with initial ideas and then sorted into various categories in Microsoft Excel. These data were then synthesised, meaning similar ideas were merged together and assigned themes. Charts were then made to demonstrate linkages and hierarchies across the themes (see Appendix E: Interrelated role types and overlapping themes). This process was supplemented by Creswell's (2012) similar approach for *describing and developing themes from the data*, which requires that the research questions are revisited in order to develop themes aligned with the initial research aims. This practice of referring back to the research aims throughout analysis proved particularly valuable as it provided boundaries to the analysis of the abundant survey and interview data. Figure 2 depicts the constant revisiting of the research aims as well as how the two approaches to thematic analysis converged in order to uncover the themes present in the survey and interview data.

Analysing survey results

The primary technique of analysis for the survey results involved assigning specific themes to the open-ended response types. Secondary techniques involved applying frequency statistics to closed-ended answer types such as demographic information and yes/no answers. Quantitative data collected from Likert scales were used to confirm the themes assigned to the qualitative data. For instance, if a survey respondent indicated they spent 'most of their time' teaching small groups of students on the Likert scale *and* they discussed teaching small groups of students in their open-ended response, then the

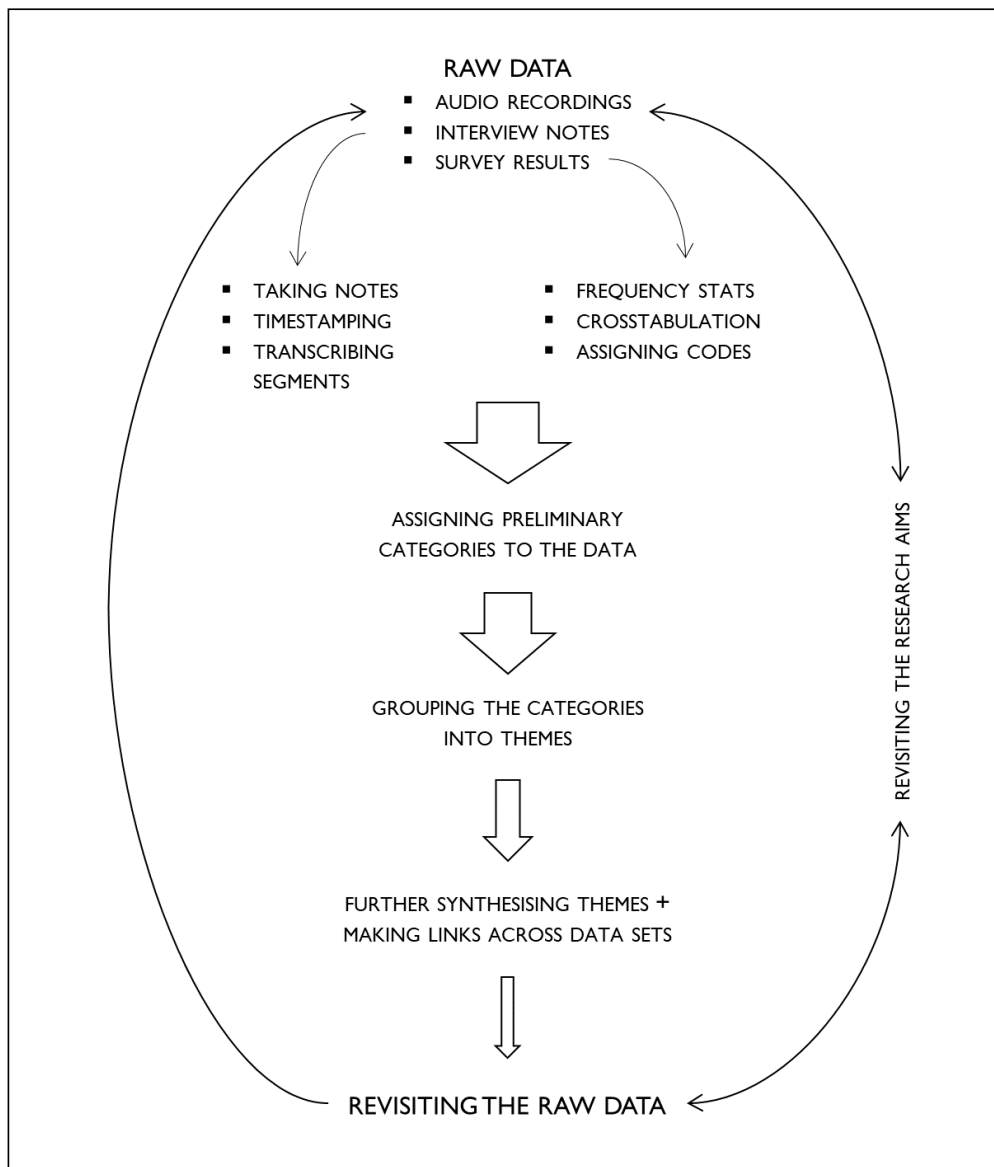


Figure 2: My approach to analysis from raw data to themes and categories

‘teaching small groups’ theme could confidently be assigned to their response.

Once themes were assigned to each of the open-ended survey responses, frequency statistics were applied to establish the rate at which each of the themes occurred and to compare participants within each survey and across the two survey types (i.e., teacher and teacher aide surveys). Basic crosstabulations were performed using Excel’s *pivot table* function in order to establish the level of interrelatedness between the varying themes and

categories. For instance, this technique was used to establish how the reported roles of the teacher aide were related and which roles were more likely to be related when compared to others. Similar techniques were applied to the categories and themes as they emerged from the interview data.

Analysing interview data

As shown in Figure 2, notes were made to summarise the audio recordings and segments of the recordings were transcribed. Given time constraints, the audio recordings were not transcribed in their entirety. Notes and transcriptions underwent a thorough review in order to identify emerging themes and recurrent ideas (see Ritchie et al., 2003). Figure 3 demonstrates how themes were assigned to the words spoken by interview participants.

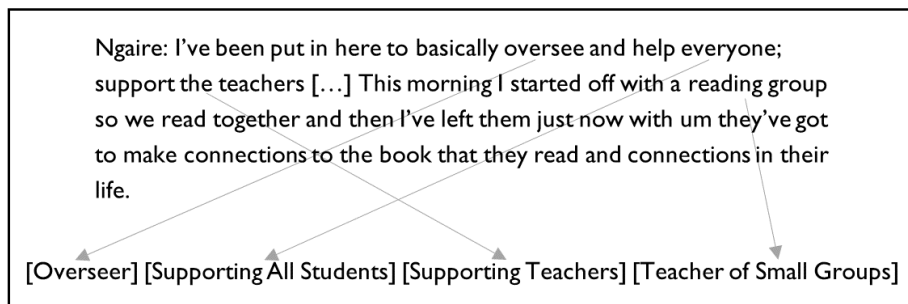


Figure 3: Process of assigning preliminary categories

Ritchie et al. (2003, p. 222) highlight the importance of describing the emerging themes “in terms that stay close to the language and terms used in the data set”. This ensures that the analytical process is grounded in the data and not distracted by existing theories, which ought to be called upon later.

Finally, the survey data (in the form of frequency statistics, basic crosstabulations and emerging themes) were combined with the interview data (in the form of transcriptions, notes and emerging themes) and compiled into a framework. Within this framework, themes were grouped according to broad categories. Linkages and hierarchies between themes were identified, in order to gain an understanding of how participants perceived the role of the teacher aide in the classroom and the position of the teacher aide in relation to inclusive practice (see Appendix E: Interrelated role types and overlapping themes).

Cultural considerations

Respecting and valuing Te Ao Māori is crucial for any research conducted in Aotearoa New Zealand. Researchers and other practitioners in the field of education have a duty to uphold the principles of partnership, participation and protection which are enshrined in the Treaty of Waitangi. Māori perspectives can be incorporated into the research process, making a valuable contribution to research in education (Bishop, 1999).

Table 3: Examples of te reo usage in the online survey and during school visits

TE REO EXAMPLE	MEANING (IN CONTEXT)
Ngā mihi	Used to show gratitude for participants' contribution to the research
Kaiako	Teacher
Kaiako kaiāwhina	Teacher aide
Kura	School
Tamariki	Child/Children
Kōrero	Used here to describe 'quick chats' with students and conversations between students
Whānau	Used to describe how with close and respectful relationships, teachers, teacher aides and students can be a family
Waiata	Traditional song used in this context as a positive affirmation and to bring everyone in the classroom together
Hui	Meeting/Assembly/Gathering
Karakia	Similar to waiata, used to be thankful and set a positive tone for the day
Mana	Used to describe both an internal sense of self-worth and, externally, as a sense of respect and status for teacher aides and students.

Te reo Māori was used throughout the online survey, examples of which are demonstrated in Table 3. This usage was reviewed by two educators with knowledge of te reo me ona tikanga [Māori language and traditional practices]. A small number of survey responses ($n = 6$) included the use of te reo Māori, suggesting that these participants may have felt welcome to use te reo when responding to the survey, given that the language was used in the survey questions. For instance:

Teacher Aide Survey 14: When child's wairua [spirit] is respected and protected then they will feel safe to take risk then their mana [self-worth] will grow.

A survey question also asked whether teacher aides incorporated any specific techniques into their practice when supporting Māori students in order to

acknowledge that teacher aide practice with Māori students may offer additional perspectives. Te reo Māori was also used where appropriate during interviews, as words such as mana and whānau are encoded with rich meanings that are not always fully expressed in English. This is demonstrated in Table 3.

When visiting schools, I took part in cultural practices and was mindful of doing this respectfully. I was invited to visit classrooms and staffrooms (not for research purposes) where I took part in karakia (traditional prayer) and waiata (song). I was thankful to be familiar with the waiata, *Purea Nei*, which is about facing the elements and sweeping doubts away. I was greeted by students and staff in te reo and responded using te reo. Although this study was not conducted using Māori research methods, and was conducted in English-speaking settings, steps were taken (albeit small) to acknowledge that Te Ao Māori can and should have a presence in any Aotearoa research context.

Summary

In order to examine teacher and teacher aide perspectives on the role of the teacher aide in relation to inclusive practice, informed, voluntary consent was carefully obtained whilst considered measures for confidentiality were taken. Although specific Māori research methods were not used, steps were taken to acknowledge Te Ao Māori and, in particular, Māori language. Web-based surveying was conducted alongside a series of semi-structured interviews with teachers and teacher aides. Survey and interview data were analysed using thematic analysis and supplemented with frequency statistics and basic crosstabulations, the results of which shall be presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of survey and interview analyses, towards addressing the aim of examining how teachers and teacher aides perceive the role of the teacher aide and the implications of this for inclusive practice.

Teacher aide roles (and the practices associated with these roles) can serve to facilitate students' sense of autonomy, self-worth and social interactions.

Conversely, these perceived roles and the associated practices can contribute to isolation, dependence and feelings of stigma for students. These implications shall be evaluated in Chapter Five: Discussion. It is first necessary to present the teacher and teacher aide perceptions of the teacher aide role.

Survey participants are referred to using numbers (e.g., Teacher Survey 11 or Teacher 5) and interview participants' names were replaced with pseudonyms. Table 4 lists participants' pseudonyms and classroom contexts; other potentially identifying information is excluded to ensure confidentiality.

Table 4: Interview participants' pseudonyms

	PSEUDONYM	YEAR LEVEL	CLASSROOM TYPE
TEACHERS	Jo	5–8	single cell
	Erina	0–4	single cell
	Eva	5–8	single cell
	Sam	0–4	single cell
	Mia	5–8	hub
	Riley	0–4	hub
TEACHER AIDES	Alex	all	hub
	Ngairé	0–4	hub
	Anita	0–4	both
	Sarah	5–8	hub
	Siobhan	0–4	single cell
	Kim	5–8	both
	Pita	0–4	single cell
	Val	5–8	hub

Perceptions of the role of the teacher aide

The role of the teacher aide was perceived by participants as varied, changing and context-dependent across both survey and interview data. A total of 14 themes emerged from participants' descriptions of the teacher aide role, as shown in Table 5. Themes were assigned to each participant's set of data and each theme was counted only once per participant. The majority of interview participants (i.e., 10 of 14) and survey participants (i.e., 23 of 37) mentioned more than one theme, demonstrating the degree of interrelatedness. These themes fell under four categories or *roles*:

- 1) The teacher aide as an *aide to the teacher* (a phrase used by the Ministry of Education, 2014);
- 2) The teacher aide as a *co-educator*;
- 3) The teacher aide as a *student aide* (a phrase used by Rutherford, 2008)—*in class*;
- 4) The teacher aide as a *student aide—outside class*.

Table 5: Emergent themes from participants' perspectives

ROLE	THEME	SURVEYS (N=37)	INTERVIEWS (N=14)	TOTAL	
1	'Freeing up' the teacher	7	2	9	
	Running programmes	9	7	16	
	Playground supervising	4	4	8	
	Admin. assistance	11	3	14	=47
2	'Additional teacher'	4	2	6	
	Overseeing	5	3	8	
	Teaching small groups	4	3	7	=21
3	Nurturing	1	4	5	
	Individual learning and behaviour support	22	5	27	=32
4	Teaching 'low achiever'	3	5	8	
	Managing 'difficult behaviour'	4	4	8	
	Calmness and concentration	8	1	9	
	Saving embarrassment	1	2	3	
	Advocating	0	2	2	=30

Table 5 provides the total number of participants who mentioned each emergent theme, showing, for instance, that the most commonly occurring theme was that of the teacher aide as an *individual learning and behavioural*

support for students. Table 5 also shows the total number of mentions for each category or *role*. The most commonly mentioned role of the teacher aide was no. 1, the *aide to the teacher*. This was followed by no. 3 *student aide (in class)* and no. 4 *student aide (outside class)*. The least commonly mentioned role was no. 2, that of the teacher aide as a *co-educator*.

It is also important to note that almost none of the survey participants and none of the interview participants had used either of the Ministry of Education (2014, 2017, 2018a) guides for effective teacher aide practice. One teacher aide survey respondent had used the online guide and one had used the workbook modules. One teacher aide commented that they were familiar with the modules, yet they could not find a teacher who would have time to work through the modules with them. There appeared to be no relationship between teacher aides' use of the Ministry guidelines and their perspectives on the teacher aide role.

The teacher aide as an aide to the teacher

The teacher aide role as an *aide to the teacher* was a common theme across almost all of the survey and interview data and intersected with each of the other perceived roles. That is, almost every participant saw at least some aspect of the teacher aide role as an *aide to the teacher*. This role manifested in a number of different ways.

A small proportion of both survey and interview participants suggested that the teacher aide supported the teacher by 'freeing them up' so teachers could work with individual students who benefitted from one-to-one support. Several suggested that teacher aides were a support for teachers through 'running programmes'. That is, teacher aides would withdraw individual students or groups of students from class to teach specific skills using pre-planned programmes, such as the Perceptual Motor Programme (PMP; see Appendix F: Programmes administered by teacher aides). Several participants suggested teacher aides also support teachers by providing playground supervision during break times and completing administrative tasks for teachers.

Others spoke generally of how a key role of the teacher aide was to 'support' the teacher. For instance:

Ngair: I want to take the pressure off the teachers ... The biggest part of my job, making me happy, is knowing that I'm taking the stress away from the teachers.

Teacher Survey 18: From my perspective, the teacher aide's role is to provide support for the teacher, so that the teacher can best meet the needs of the children in the class.

The above responses and the following examples demonstrate the ways in which participants perceived the role of the teacher aide as an *aide to the teacher*.

Aiding the Teacher: 'Freeing them up'

A small proportion of teacher aides explained that part of their role was to allow teachers to work with students who benefitted from one-on-one support, with some further suggesting that teachers were better qualified to work with individual students compared to teacher aides. Pita, a teacher aide interviewee, spoke about a shift from being there to support individual students to allowing the 'qualified' teacher to work with individuals:

Pita: They changed the way they worked us so we used to be with target children, although over the last few years it became, "we want you actually to work with these groups so the teachers, that are qualified, can give the extra support to those children" ... so [I] get to work with everybody.

Pita's response demonstrates how teacher aides would 'free up' teachers to work with individual students by supervising other groups of students within the class, as is also evident in the following survey responses:

Teacher Survey 3: [The teacher aide] frees up time for us to spend quality time with target children.

Teacher Aide Survey 4: [The role of the teacher aide is] to support teachers by taking group activities with students so they can give one on one time with students who need it.

These responses exemplify how teacher aides were seen to support teachers by allowing them to work with individual students in busy classrooms where teachers may not usually get "one on one time" with students.

Aiding the teacher: 'Running programmes'

A number of participants explained that teacher aides would also assist teachers by running programmes to develop students' skills in, for instance, literacy, numeracy, perceptual and motor skills, social skills and oral language. These programmes were pre-planned by teachers or run using instructions from agencies outside the school. Programmes implemented by teacher aides included: Steps to Literacy, Jolly Phonics, PMP, Socially Speaking, Talk to Learn, Audio-Visual Achievement in Language Literacy and Learning (AVAILLL) and Tape Assisted Reading (see Appendix F: Programmes administered by teacher aides).

Kim, a teacher aide interviewee, explained how she supported a student with a pre-planned programme provided by an optometrist:

Kim: I've been working with one individual boy ... he went to the optometrist and they gave him some exercises to do so you have a chart ... Yeah, hand-eye coordination. So that's been really interesting. We did that for two weeks every single day and then the programme said, "Do it not only with your hands but with your feet".

Kim's programme, as with the others in this category, was pre-planned. This prescribed format allows teacher aides to administer programmes with a clear set of instructions, without having to plan for themselves. As explained by Alex, a teacher aide interviewee, "Because Steps [to Literacy] is so structured I don't have to do too much of making it up in my head". These examples show that teacher aides assisted teachers by implementing programmes for students so that students could take part in supplemental academic, physical or behavioural exercises whilst teachers continued with their regular class lessons.

Aiding the teacher: Playground supervision and administrative assistance

It was also reported in both surveys and interviews that teacher aides would support teaching staff by assisting with playground duties and administrative tasks. Playground duties consisted of supervising groups of children during play and also intervening with specific children for targeted behaviour support. Administrative tasks included photocopying, laminating, displaying students' work on walls, marking students' work and, in one case,

assisting with report writing. Anita, a teacher aide interviewee, explained that she was able to support teachers by completing administrative tasks:

Anita: But I don't mind doing a bit of a mix even if the teacher says, "Oh I've got this photocopying I need done". I'll just do it because I feel like that I'm supporting them by doing something they would have to find time to do.

By doing practical tasks, such as creating teaching resources and putting up displays of students' work, teacher aides said they were enabling the teacher to spend more time with students, as exemplified by the following survey response:

Teacher 7: [Teacher aides assist the teacher by] doing practical tasks for teachers that free them up to focus on teaching.

Similarly, teacher aides would support teachers by providing supervision in the playground during break times:

Teacher Aide 3: I supervise one child in the playground at morning tea and one lunchtime (3.5 hours per week) to ensure there are no adverse interactions with others. Supervise a small group two lunchtimes each week for same reason, also to support positive interactions for them all.

Most often, this was to support specific students with their interactions with other students. Teacher aides were perceived as supporting teachers by 'freeing them up' to work with individuals, running programmes, assisting with administrative tasks and undertaking playground supervision. This differed from the teacher aide as a *co-educator*, as illustrated in the following section.

The teacher aide as a co-educator

Co-educating was the least commonly mentioned role of the teacher aide. Themes associated with this role type included the *teacher aide introduced as an additional teacher* regardless of whether or not they were funded to support particular students. Teacher aides in the *co-educator* role would oversee entire classes, supporting students as needed, alongside the class teacher. These teacher and teacher aide participants also said they would work alongside one another during small-group teaching sessions and instruct a range of students with varied needs and abilities.

Co-educating: Introduced as an additional teacher

Ngaire, a teacher aide interviewee, spoke about having been introduced to students as part of the teaching staff rather than as an assistant to individual students. All students were instructed to regard her in the same way that they regard their other three teachers: "They were told right from the start, 'there's four teaching staff in this hub; you are to be respectful to each one'".

According to Ngaire, there was no difference in status between teachers and teacher aides in the classroom.

Erina, a teacher interviewee from a different school to Ngaire, had similar sentiments. She was mindful of introducing the teacher aide to the class as a person who was there to help every student, just like the teacher:

Erina: I've made it really explicit that in my classroom [the teacher aide] is here as a teacher and [she] and I work together. She's not here for one person. She's here for the class just like I am here for the class.

This idea of viewing the teacher aide as *co-educator* and introducing them to students as such was present in a small number of teacher survey responses. Teachers spoke of teacher aides as working in partnership with teachers to support the whole class, rather than as a support person for specific students:

Teacher Survey 6: I do not view them as a teacher aide but more as part of the team. Often our teacher aide will take small groups and takes on the role of Learning Coach alongside the rest of the team.

Teacher Survey 13: [The teacher aide] works with small groups (not specifically targeted to any particular children). This includes overseeing a literacy programme on computers, supporting groups in independent work, assisting teachers as needed too. We don't think of her as a "dogsbody" or anything like that, she is very valued.

Each of these responses demonstrate how teachers who are working with teacher aides in *co-educating* situations tend to hold the teacher aide in high regard, viewing them as of the same status as teachers, and accordingly, commanding the same level of respect for teacher aides from students. Ngaire, having been introduced as an additional teacher and given similar responsibilities to teachers went on to state, "I suppose the job is pretty much the same as the teacher's apart from all the planning and the meetings". This invites the question of what did the practice of *co-educating* look like during teaching sessions?

Co-educating: Overseeing the class and teaching small groups alongside teachers

Participants suggested that teacher aides as *co-educators* would move around or *roam* classrooms. Alongside teachers, they would ‘check-in’ with all students, stopping to give extra teaching to any students who needed it, whether this be for extension, encouragement or additional instruction. Teacher aides under this model explained that they would not ‘hover’ around those students who tended to require additional instruction or scaffolding. For instance, as Ngaire explained, “I’ve been put in here to basically oversee and help everyone, support the teachers. Yes, I do have groups, but the idea was that I wouldn’t be given, like, the lower achievers”.

As well as overseeing the class, Ngaire would teach groups of students during small-group teaching sessions, for example, teaching reading skills and introducing a follow-up activity just as her teaching colleagues would: “This morning I started off with a reading group so we read together and then I’ve left them just now with um they’ve got to make connections to the book that they read and connections in their life”. By teaching small groups in the classroom at the same time as the other teachers, Ngaire was able to work with a variety of students and was further portrayed to the students as an additional teacher or educator.

Similarly, teacher interviewee Erina gave the example of how both she and the teacher aide would *roam* the classroom during writing lessons, checking in with all students and making subtle gestures such as eye contact if she wanted the teacher aide to check-in with particular students:

Erina: For writing, both of us would roam. I would say [to the teacher aide], “This is what we’re doing, this is our WALT, this is our WILF”⁵ and give her the pen, because we worked in a certain colour pen, and she’d go ‘round and we’d have tables, “You have those two tables, I’ll have these two tables”.

Interviewer: So, it doesn’t matter who’s sitting at them?

Erina: No. I don’t have table groups, so children can choose where they sit. Sometimes I would do an eye contact if I want [the teacher

⁵ WALT (We Are Learning To...) and WILF (What I’m Looking For...) are references to the learning intentions and success criteria for the lesson.

aide] to go to someone in particular. She'll see that and she'll know. Or we'll have a conversation before school and I'll say, "Can you please make sure you touch base with so-and-so?"

Erina's explanation demonstrates how she would teach in tandem with her teacher aide colleagues. Together they would both work with all students, consciously aware of not singling anyone out.

While the *co-educator* role was not the most commonly perceived role of the teacher aide, some key characteristics of the role could be gleaned from the data. Teacher aides as *co-educators* tended to be introduced to students as additional teaching staff, they would oversee the whole class alongside teachers and would teach small groups of students whilst not being *attached* to specific individual students. The teacher aide as a *student aide* was, however, the most commonly reported role of the teacher aide in this study and is the subject of the following section.

The teacher aide as a student aide (in class)

In contrast to the teacher aide as a *co-educator*, many interview participants and survey respondents viewed the teacher aide as a support for individual students, in other words a *student aide*. These students were described as having, for instance, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), developmental delay and general learning and behavioural differences. They are referred to here as individual students, given they often find themselves supported by the teacher aide individually, rather than as part of a group. Teacher aides were described as taking on this role in a number of ways. Some saw teacher aides as nurturers for students who needed "that bit of extra loving" (Ngaire) while the majority described teacher aides as being there to manage behaviour and provide instruction for specific students.

Aiding the student: Nurturing

While Ngaire explained that she was moving away from being "tagged to specific students" and towards "overseeing everyone", she still saw much of her position as nurturing particular students who she saw as finding school more difficult than other students:

Ngaire: [I give] just a day-to-day confidence boost, you know, "Hey look I did this, Ngaire!" just to get like a pat on the back and just um

to know that they're doing a good job and, however hard it is for them, that they are trying. They really want to please. They want to please the teachers, the teacher aides, they just need that reassurance. One of my main attributes for these kids is just reassurance.

According to Ngaire, she was there to provide recognition and aroha to students who needed 'extra'. These perceptions were similar to the following survey response:

Teacher Aide Survey 3: [The teacher aide role is] To nurture, love and support all children but specifically those who struggle academically and emotionally. To give extra attention.

These examples demonstrate that some teacher aides felt they were there to provide reassurance and emotional support for individual students. This differed from providing learning and behavioural support for individuals, which was the most commonly perceived role of the teacher aide across all of the data.

Aiding the student: Learning and behaviour

The majority of participants across both the survey and interview data saw teacher aides as a learning and behaviour support person for individual students. A number of participants suggested teacher aides were there to enable "the most needy or difficult students" (Teacher Survey 11) to have access to the learning or to manage students whose "behaviour is on the seesaw" (Teacher Aide Survey 4). This, in some cases, was said to allow teachers to spend more time with other students; as teacher interviewee Sam suggested, "It just frees me up so I can be with the rest of the class". This is in contrast to previous mentions of 'freeing up', where the teacher aide allows the teacher to support students in a one-on-one context.

Val, a teacher aide interviewee, explained that her role was to assist an individual student in completing their classwork each day. This was perceived by Val as challenging. She managed by developing a range of strategies such as a "first, then, next..." reward system for persuading the student to complete "bits of writing". Val also felt she was in charge of keeping the student from disrupting teachers and classmates:

Val: It was just me and him pretty much from 9 'til 3 every day because he would not comply and would not get involved with anybody and so that was really hard ... you felt a real massive um

responsibility just to keep him even so that the kids were safe. And that the teachers then wouldn't get anxious and it's just really hard ... he can just go off and you have people going, "But what triggered him?"

Val felt responsible for keeping the student's behaviour "even". Teachers were not consistently assisting with the student's day-to-day learning and behaviour, but would be there to ask, "What triggered him?" after challenging behaviours had occurred.

Anita, a teacher aide from a different school, was also responsible for the learning and behaviour of an individual student. Her role was to have the student come out from under a table each day and write a sentence:

Anita: I was supporting a child to yeah get him engaged in the classroom and things like that ... Once you got work out of him he was obviously quite capable but just sitting there and trying to get him to write a sentence or um yeah he loved to draw but even just getting him out from under the table to sit with the class was a challenge.

The student would not acknowledge teachers, yet after spending time with him and getting to know him, Anita was able to have a conversation with the student and engage him in some learning activities, "I could actually get him talking to me and he would do some work ... I would just talk to him a lot and ask him lots of question and he eventually got past the 'no' and the single word". By spending time with the student and getting to know him, Anita was able to communicate with the student who would not speak to other adults.

Alex, a teacher aide interviewee, shared a similar experience where she was tasked with helping individual students with their learning and was expected to modify tasks so that students were capable of completing them.

Alex: The plan perhaps doesn't quite fit the children that you've got and you've got to think, "OK she's not getting fractions so what can I do for her? Because I can't let her just sit here feeling demoralised because everyone else has got it so how can I help her?" And it is a little bit of that thinking on your feet, um yeah.

In this scenario, Alex's role was to take the task and adapt it on the spot to make it accessible for the student. Sometimes, the task was so difficult for the

student that even with Alex's help, the student was not able to experience success.

The experiences of Val, Anita and Alex being responsible for the learning and behaviour of individual students was a common experience, according to the teacher aide participants in this study. Sam, a teacher interviewee, discussed reasoning behind attaching the teacher aide to a particular student within the context of a writing lesson:

Sam: If it was me doing it then I wouldn't have any time for any of the other 27 kids [without the teacher aide]. I had to make a choice between either [the student] works today and that just means I have to leave everybody else.

According to Sam, the student's learning was dependent on the presence of the teacher aide, and without the teacher aide the rest of the class would miss out. In each of the above cases, the teacher aide was seen as a support for individual learners while the teacher was responsible for the 'majority' of the class. The teacher aide was left responsible for those individuals on the periphery. This situation shared similarities with the final role of the teacher aide as perceived by participants in this study, the *student aide (outside class)*.

The teacher aide as a student aide (outside class)

A number of interviewees and survey respondents explained that the teacher aide role was largely about withdrawing particular students from class activities. This type of withdrawal is distinct from the practice of teacher aides taking students out of class to 'run programmes', as described under the *aide to the teacher* category. This type of withdrawal is different because it appears that the same individual students (rather than varied groups) are being withdrawn because of learning and behavioural 'difficulties' (rather than for purposeful, skills-based tasks). The instruction that teacher aides are providing to these students is largely "off the cuff" (as in, for instance, Siobhan's case) rather than pre-planned and well-structured as in the case of 'running programmes'.

Several of these participants suggested students were withdrawn from class by teacher aides because classwork was too difficult. A number of participants also explained that students would need to be withdrawn from class when their behaviour was seen as too disruptive for the classroom.

Additionally, many explained that particular students needed to be taken out of the classroom because they had difficulty concentrating, particularly due to noise (often in hub environments). In some instances, it was explained that students were withdrawn from class to escape from the embarrassment of requiring extra adult support in front of peers. In a very small number of cases ($n = 2$), teacher aides explained that they would also become advocates for students who were separated from their classmates.

Aiding the student: Withdrawal for learning and behaviour

Kim, a teacher aide interviewee, spoke of “taking the student out” because it was like “teaching a year one” in a senior class. Kim would collect the student from his classroom and take him to a different room to work on both literacy and numeracy tasks because the class difficulty level was “too hard”. There was no planning involved for these one-on-one lessons. Together, the teacher aide and student would read or write about anything that seemed interesting on the day. According to Kim, the student would spend much of the school day with the teacher aide, and the teacher aide was responsible for his learning.

Sarah, a teacher aide from a different school to Kim, worked with a group of students outside the classroom. Although not working in a one-on-one context, Sarah’s students were similar to Kim’s, as she described them as being those “of lower ability that are struggling in the classroom”. Sarah would work with these students for most of the school day, every day, because the regular classroom programme was “just too far above their level”. Sarah was responsible for teaching both literacy and numeracy skills to these students as, she explained, “no one really wants them in their lessons, so they go to me, so we hang out together”. She went on to explain that some days the withdrawal scenario could become “just too much for everybody”, as the students would argue with each other and fight over equipment.

Siobhan described similar circumstances. She explained that she would walk into the classroom and the teacher would “hand over” a particular student to her because the student was seen as too difficult to stay in the classroom with their peers:

Siobhan: Sometimes it’s just “have this kid” because [the teacher] doesn’t want them in the class, “take them out”, you know? ...
Sometimes [the student’s] been a bit disruptive and they don’t want

them in the classroom, other times they just want to have time without them.

Siobhan would then take the student for a walk outside and ask them about how their day was going and what they would like to do. Siobhan explained she would often find that the student would be upset and “playing up” because of negative interactions with other students in the class.

According to these teacher aides, some teachers would transfer responsibility for the learning and behaviour of particular students over to the teacher aides, believing that these students were best removed from the class environment as they were either “of lower ability” or too “disruptive”. In some cases, this would lead teacher aides to become advocates for students.

Aiding the student: Advocating

A small number of teacher aides saw themselves as advocates for the students that they withdrew from classrooms. These teacher aides talked about building close relationships with students and, at times, coming to know students at a deeper level than their teachers. These teacher aides suggested that the teachers of these students would blame challenging behaviours on disruptive students rather than considering potential problems with the classroom environment.

Siobhan offered an anecdote about working with an individual student in the corridor outside the classroom when a group of students were spotted visiting the rest of the class to recruit contestants for a talent show. Siobhan explained that she knew this student was creative and would be keen to sign up for the talent show, so she allowed the student to go back into the classroom:

Siobhan: [The visitors] wanted to know who wanted to do it and because she's very arty and artistic she thought, “I'm going to do something, I'm going to do this” so out of her own free will she got up, and I thought, “That's fine” and she opened the door and the teacher said, “What do you think you're doing?” and she said, “Oh I want to put my name down” and [the teacher] said, “Well you don't know what this is about, go back and sit down [with Siobhan]” and she came back out and said, “I'm sure that's what it is because my friend's and I want to do it together” and I said, “I'll talk to her after if you like” and she got quite upset and I didn't think it was handled particularly well. I felt uncomfortable. I could sort of see where [the

teacher] was coming from but I could more see where the student was coming from.

Siobhan explained that having to speak to teachers on the student's behalf was a common occurrence. She knew students well and understood their needs, taking it upon herself to communicate these needs to teachers. Siobhan felt sympathetic towards students when they were "left out" of class activities.

Val also found herself becoming an advocate for students. Similar to Siobhan, she saw herself as having a closer relationship with a student than his teachers, who saw the student as difficult and needed him removed from the classroom when his behaviour became disruptive:

Val: Because those relationships weren't great with his teachers it was really hard. And that's why I had to be even more of his advocate because whenever he kicked off they didn't want him there.

Val would try to explain the student's behaviour to his teachers and would try to have the student's needs met:

Val: You become the children's advocate, you know, and you want to make sure they're getting everything that they need because, you know, you're (in some cases) that child's only point of call and you know so much about them. If you can't speak up for them, who else is going to?

Teacher aides such as Siobhan and Val knew students well and understood the reasons behind what was seen by teachers as 'disruptive behaviour'. These teacher aides would act on the student's behalf, communicating needs to teachers and showing manaaki [care/protection] when students felt left out or misunderstood.

Aiding the student: Providing a calm space and saving embarrassment

When prompted to explain the reasoning behind teacher aides' withdrawal of students from their classrooms, several teachers and teacher aides explained that this was in order to provide a calm space which promotes concentration. A small number of both teacher and teacher aide participants suggested the reason for withdrawal was to save students from the embarrassment of receiving support from teacher aides.

Noise and distraction were said to be barriers to learning for particular students. In order to encourage focus, students were removed from the classroom environment and taken to a quieter space to complete their work, helping “certain students calm down and de-stress” (Teacher 1). This was particularly common in hub environments, as evident in the following examples:

Teacher Survey 3: [Withdrawal happens] If the student is particularly anxious or distracted within the hub environment.

Teacher Survey 10: We are in an ILE and for students who need specific support, this environment can be tricky for them to concentrate in so they work in a break out space.

Alex: [The hub is] quite challenging because it’s quite noisy ... I find they are able to focus a lot better in a quieter space. ... there is no doubt that they get more done in a quieter space ... some of the children, I know, would relax when they were [withdrawn], they would physically relax.

These examples demonstrate that according to these teachers and teacher aides, noisy classroom or hub environments can leave students finding it “difficult to concentrate” (Teacher 9) and even stressful.

In some cases, students requiring teacher aide support would need to be taken out of the classroom to save them from the embarrassment of receiving extra assistance in front of their peers, particularly for students who were year five (aged nine) and above. For instance:

Teacher Survey 10: At year 7/8 level some students can also feel whakamā [embarrassed] when they need extra support so they prefer to work away from the group.

This idea of saving students from embarrassment was also discussed by teacher aide interviewee Alex, who explained that some students were aware that they were doing different activities to other students and were worried about their peers noticing. By providing assistance with the task, Alex was aware she was drawing more unwanted attention.

Alex: Those children are very conscious that they are doing something different from the others so being able to provide them

with individual support but in that communal environment is quite challenging.

Val described a similar situation where students were told they would be working with the teacher aide in the hub instead of being withdrawn. Val explained that the students became worried about being watched by their peers and uncovered as different or struggling:

Val: Some of the girls especially were not happy with it, not happy that they were in general public and they go, "Oh but people will be watching".

These perspectives from teachers and teacher aides demonstrate that the students whom teacher aides work with tend to be very conscious of how they are perceived by peers and wish to avoid receiving extra attention in front of others.

Summary

With aims of examining how teachers and teacher aides perceive the role of the teacher aide and the implications of this for inclusive practice, this chapter has reported the findings of both survey and interview analyses, illustrating the four perceived roles of the teacher aide. These are: *a) the teacher aide as an aide to the teacher, b) the teacher aide as a co-educator, c) the teacher aide as a student aide (in class) and d) the teacher aide as a student aide (outside class)*. Each of these roles has implications for teacher aide inclusive practice, a practice which promotes students' sense of autonomy, self-worth and social interactions with peers. Conversely, these perceived roles and their associated practices can contribute to isolation, dependence and feelings of stigma for students. These implications shall be evaluated in Chapter Five: Discussion.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Everyone has a right to an education (United Nations, 2017) and every young person has the right to experience learning alongside their peers, building friendships and constructing learning together (Ministry of Social Development, 2015; Pickering, 2018). Equally, every young person has the right to be provided the tools for gaining independence and the resulting attributes of self-motivation, resourcefulness and resilience, as set out in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). Practices that enable independence and social interaction are inherently more inclusive as they avoid isolating and stigmatising students. The roles and practices of teacher aides have implications for student experiences of independence, interaction, stigma and isolation, yet it is teachers who are the agents of inclusive practice for teacher aides.

The participants in this study shared their perspectives on the roles and practices of the teacher aide. These were categorised into four interrelated role categories: the *aide to the teacher*, the *co-educator*, the *student aide (in class)* and *student aide (outside class)*. This chapter uses these perceived roles as lenses through which to evaluate teacher aide inclusive practice and the ways in which teachers and teacher aides support diverse learners in Aotearoa classrooms.

Setting the conditions for teacher aide inclusive practice

Before evaluating each of the perceived roles to explore how inclusive practice is facilitated, it is necessary to discuss the ideal conditions for teacher aide inclusive practice. Rutherford (2008) proposed an “everybody in” context for inclusion. Within this context, teachers take responsibility for ensuring that all students, regardless of differences, are given the opportunity to participate, interact and achieve together. These teachers also plan approaches to learning that allow all students to access the curriculum. Practices of this type are similarly proposed by Booth and Ainscow (2002), as they explain that when tasks are designed in a way that allows the learning to be accessible to every student, there is less reliance on additional adult support in the classroom (see also Egilson & Traustadottir, 2009). This suggests that it is the teachers, rather than teacher aides, who are the agents of teacher aide inclusive practice. Most often, teacher aides are well-meaning

practitioners (Tutty & Hocking, 2004) who strive to ‘do right by’ students (Rutherford, 2011). Their ability to act inclusively, however, is often at the whim of the teachers they work with.

Factors such as school culture, school management and funding certainly influence teacher aide inclusive practice (see, for instance, Deuninck, 2015; Rutherford, 2008). However, it is important to note that in this study, teacher aides tended to have different experiences of inclusive practice even within the same school, depending on which classrooms they entered and which teachers they worked with. This demonstrates the significant impact individual teachers have over teacher aide practice. For instance, teacher aide interviewee Siobhan stated the following, with regard to visiting different classrooms: “I can sort of feel the atmosphere and other classes you go in and you just feel naturally welcome and I think it’s the vibe that the teacher sets”. Inclusive teachers set the conditions, or indeed the *vibe*, for an “everybody in” classroom where teachers and teacher aides work together to support all students (Rutherford, 2008).

The teacher aide as a co-educator: Facilitating inclusive practice

Participants perceived the teacher aide as a *co-educator* much less than the three other role types. However, the practices associated with this role were *most aligned* with inclusive practice. As *co-educators*, teacher aides were regarded as high-status members of the school community, oftentimes introduced to classes as an “additional teacher” or “learning coach”. Teachers shared their lesson planning with teacher aides who would conduct small-group teaching sessions with students of a broad range of abilities. As explained by participants, these group teaching sessions would occur in the classroom or hub with all class members involved in group activities. Teacher aides as *co-educators* would also oversee the whole class, alongside the teacher, roaming and checking-in with a variety of students as needed.

Rutherford (2008) suggests this “everybody in” approach does not result in compromising the support for students with disabilities; rather, the responsibility to support students with disabilities and other diversities is shared equally between the teacher and teacher aide (see also Causton-Theoharis, 2009; Malmgren & Causton-Theoharis, 2006; Sharples et al., 2015). Under this model, the teacher and teacher aide are aware of being “invisibly

present” (Rutherford, 2008, p. 210) for those students who may require additional adult support.

It may be argued that teacher aides are unqualified to work as a *co-educator* alongside the classroom teacher. However, as Webster et al. (2011) question, what makes a teacher aide more qualified to work as the sole instructor for students who potentially require the most nuanced and skilled teaching practices? The following sections on *co-educating* discuss how this practice can be more inclusive for all students, including those the teacher aide is traditionally employed to support.

Co-educating: Sharing the responsibility and avoiding ‘singling them out’

According to participants’ perspectives, teacher aides as *co-educators* work in partnership to avoid situations where students can become vulnerable to isolation and stigma. Teacher participants in these contexts tended to discourage the practice of assigning the teacher aide to ‘support’ the same specific students during each lesson. It is important to note that this practice occurred even when teacher aides were employed based on funding allocated for one student. Teachers believed that by enabling the teacher aide to oversee the entire class or conduct small-group teaching sessions they were indirectly helping students who had been allocated funding for teacher aide support, as lessons would run more smoothly with two adults in charge. These findings are supported by recommendations from a recent UK report, *Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants* (Sharples et al., 2015). Sharples et al. (2015) explain that by overseeing the class, teacher aides can reduce teacher stress by easing the workload and minimising class disruption.

In the *co-educator* scenario, teachers and teacher aides were mindful of outing students as “Other” (Graham & Slee, 2008; see also Borrero, Yeh, Cruz, & Suda, 2012) or making students feel “singled out” (Ferguson, 2014). Students who receive constant ‘help’ may end up feeling as if they do not belong with their classmates who do not appear to require as much assistance (Broer et al., 2005; Ferguson, 2014). To avoid drawing unwanted attention to students, teachers and teacher aides can assist a variety of students whilst sharing responsibility for supporting students who benefit from one-on-one instruction. This is “set up” by the teacher, as teacher interviewee Erina explained:

Erina: I set up the classroom in a way that either I'm taking children or [the teacher aide] is taking children. So it is not saying, "OK you're isolated". Everyone sort of knows they're going to have a turn with someone. That's quite important for me. It's not that like, "OK, you go out with [the teacher aide] over there".

Like Rutherford's (2008) "everybody in" interpretation of teacher aide inclusive practice, teacher aides as *co-educators* can work in collaboration with teachers and avoid drawing attention to the same students who can become stigmatised by being seen as requiring constant 'help' from adults.

Co-educating: Facilitating social interaction and independence

Erina's mention of avoiding isolation is an important consideration for inclusive practice as teacher aides can contribute to isolation in a number of ways. Teacher aides are often found seated beside students in order to provide constant 'help', consequentially thwarting peer interactions as students feel they cannot converse naturally in constant close proximity of adults (Giangreco & Doyle, 2007; Malmgren & Causton-Theoharis, 2006). By taking on the *co-educator* role, teacher aides are more likely to "deliberately stand back" (Ward, 2011), providing students with the space they need to interact with peers (Malmgren & Causton-Theoharis, 2006). This is vital for students as they cultivate friendships, develop communication skills and find a sense of belonging (Broer et al., 2005; Pickering, 2018). Equally important is students' ability to construct knowledge together as part of a social learning process (Eggen & Kauchak, 2013; Malmgren & Causton-Theoharis, 2006; see also Vygotsky, 1978).

This practice of stepping back is similarly crucial for encouraging independence in students. By not being 'tagged' to particular students, teacher aides as *co-teachers* are also able encourage students to attempt tasks without unnecessary help. As teacher aide interviewee Pita explained, her role was not to "take over" and "cut and paste" for individual students, but to oversee and support all class members. This allows students to develop these skills through making mistakes, problem solving and relying on peers for support first. Building independence in students was a priority for Pita, who stated, "I'm pretty good at not taking over: build the confidence, support the need, promote independence — that's my tagline". Pita further explained that the teacher she worked with was crucial to enabling this practice as their junior classroom was built on a foundation of self-management. This teacher

and teacher aide worked together to maintain a culture of independence, encouraging students to *a*) primarily rely on peer supports (or what Ward, 2011, refers to as, *natural supports*); *b*) make use of models that clearly demonstrate how to complete tasks; *c*) use checklists; and *d*) use 'sentence starters' as prompts when unsure how to start. By making independence a priority and teaching self-management strategies, there is less reliance on one-on-one adult support (Causton-Theoharis, 2009; Radford et al., 2014; Sharples et al., 2015).

Co-educating: Teacher aides assigned high status

A final key characteristic of the *co-educator* role and thus teacher aide inclusive practice is the high status assigned to teacher aides. Ngaire's perspectives demonstrate how, for instance, teachers saw her as a respected member of the teaching staff and introduced her as such to students. Because of this, Ngaire had mana, explaining that the students saw her as a "learning coach" rather than a "P.A." for teachers or students. Students in Ngaire's class did not need to feel stigmatised when receiving help from the teacher aide as she possessed the social capital which Bourke (2009) suggests is often not assigned to teacher aides.

This practice of regarding teacher aides as high-status staff members is not only more inclusive towards teacher aides but also for students, as stigma is less likely to be attached to receiving support from a highly valued and respected adult (Bourke, 2009; Ferguson, 2014; Giangreco, Edelman, Broer, & Doyle, 2001). Teachers and school leaders must reflect on what they are doing to show respect towards and raise the status of teacher aides and accordingly the students they work with. By respecting and upholding the mana of teacher aides, the mana of the students they work with can also be respected and upheld.

Co-educating: A summary

The results of this study show that by regarding the teacher aide as a *co-educator*, the responsibility for all learners is shared between the teacher aide and the teacher. It is the teachers who are the agents of inclusive practice in their classrooms. Teachers and teacher aides can work in partnership, overseeing the class and teaching small groups whilst remaining "invisibly present" (Rutherford, 2008) for students who benefit from one-on-one support. This enables students to interact with peers and build independence, two key competencies of the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of

Education, 2007). The *co-educator* role is more inclusive as it means students are less likely to be “singled out” (Ferguson, 2014) or “velcroed at the hip” (Ward, 2011) of a teacher aide. Rather than recommending more training for teacher aides to work with students in one-on-one contexts (or what Giangreco, 2013, refers to as a “training trap”), training should aim at providing teachers and teacher aides with the skills to work in *co-educating* contexts.

Under the *co-educating* model, teachers are also able to provide one-on-one instruction to students with disabilities and others who benefit from this type of instruction. This is also characteristic of the *aide to the teacher* role, demonstrating the interrelated nature of the various roles perceived by teachers and teacher aides. How (or whether) the *aide to the teacher* role facilitates teacher aide inclusive practice in the context of this study is the subject of the following section.

The teacher aide as an aide to the teacher: Inclusive? It depends...

Almost every interviewee and survey respondent in this study described the role of the teacher aide as, at least in some capacity, ‘to assist the teacher’. Perspectives on how teacher aides assisted the teacher were varied, and as argued in this section, were not always conducive to inclusive practice. Multiple researchers from NZ (Ferguson, 2014; Rutherford, 2008, 2012, 2014; Tutty & Hocking, 2004) and abroad (Broer et al., 2005; Gerber et al., 2001; Giangreco, 2010) advise that teacher aides are best viewed as an *aide to the teacher*. However, whether this facilitates teacher aide inclusive practice depends on how the *aide to the teacher* role is enacted in the classroom. Teacher and teacher aide perspectives can shed valuable light on exactly how this support for teachers is carried out and how this affects students.

Aiding the teacher: Enabling the teacher to work with individuals

Similar to the *co-educator* role, some participants ($n = 9$) explained that the primary role of the teacher aide was to assist the teacher by ‘freeing them up’ for one-on-one instruction. Teacher aides would generally enable this by supervising the rest of the class, whilst the teacher worked with an individual student. This practice of ‘freeing up’ the teacher was viewed as highly valuable, resulting in qualified teachers spending time with students who benefited from individualised and potentially more complex instruction. As teacher interviewee Jo explained:

Jo: Although teacher aides might have experiences and everything, they may not have the same skillset that the teacher does, and the teacher definitely could be offering different one-to-one than what a teacher aide could. And sometimes teacher aides will only go off of what the teacher has instructed them to do, whereas, a teacher might do more if they were doing it themselves; [with the teacher aide responsible for one student] those 'teachable moments' can be missed.

Jo explained that as a trained teacher with deep knowledge of the curriculum, assessment and teaching strategies, she was better qualified to work with students in a one-on-one capacity. While teacher aides bring valuable experience and skills, they cannot be expected to have intimate knowledge of the teaching syllabus and pedagogy, especially given there are no training or qualification requirements in order to be employed as a teacher aide (Careers NZ, 2018). This idea is supported in the literature on teacher aide inclusive practice (see, for instance, Broer et al., 2005; Gerber et al., 2001; Webster et al., 2010). For example, Broer et al. (2005) stressed that teachers should have more involvement with disabled and other diverse students, as well-meaning teacher aides can place too much focus on *task completion* rather than *learning* in one-on-one contexts (see also Sharples et al., 2015). By supervising the rest of the class whilst the teacher works with individuals, these students can receive the valuable time with qualified teachers that they deserve.

Aiding the teacher with admin: Does this contribute to inclusion?

An additional way that teacher aides assisted teachers was through completing administrative tasks and 'teacher jobs' such as photocopying, laminating, marking and organising teaching resources. As Giangreco (2010) explains, assistance of this type is valuable as it creates time for teachers to work directly with students. Most teacher aide participants spoke positively about completing administrative tasks. For instance, teacher aide interviewee Sarah remarked that helping out is just "the culture of the school" and that "the principal would do the same mundane, crummy jobs as me". Sarah explained that there was no sense of hierarchy at her school and, therefore, the teacher aides were not treated like "hired help". According to Sarah, this meant that "the kids are really open and see you as another adult in the school; you belong to the school and they'll come to you". This example demonstrates how with a school culture of everyone, including the principal, 'mucking in', teacher aides may be less likely to be viewed as the "hired help"

at the bottom of the hierarchy, even if they are helping teachers by completing “mundane” tasks.

However, not all teacher aide interviewees shared this experience. Ngaire spoke having a previous experience where a teacher would “give me all the rubbish jobs and kind of did take advantage ... it actually got to the point where I was more her P.A. than working with the children”. Ngaire felt that there was an unreasonable amount of administrative work and tidying, which the teacher was not willing to undertake herself, resulting in Ngaire feeling devalued. If teacher aides are merely seen as what Teacher 13 described as a “dogsbody”, then what message does this send to students who are expected to work with teacher aides? As previously mentioned, appreciation and respect for teacher aides is extremely important not only in terms of upholding the mana and dignity deserved by teacher aides, but for the mana and dignity of the students they work with.

As Giangreco (2010) explains, non-instructional tasks such as preparing materials or helping students with personal care should be acknowledged as valuable contributions. When teacher aides perform these duties, they make time for teachers to work with the students who need them the most. By doing so, as Giangreco (2010, p. 7) further explains, “We affirm the dignity of students ... and challenge the unhelpful culture of hierarchies”. If teacher aides assist teachers by completing non-instructional tasks, then teachers can be ‘freed up’ to focus on teaching; however, it must be implemented in a way that is respectful towards teacher aides.

Aiding the teacher by running programmes: Does this contribute to inclusion?

While it is ideal that all students remain in the classroom with their peers, it is evident that students are often withdrawn from class to take part in programmes which aim to provide them with a range of skills. Teacher aides assist teachers by facilitating these programmes, which involve teaching a range of academic, physical and social skills (see Appendix F: Programmes administered by teacher aides). Teacher interviewee Erina, for instance, was aware that her junior students would benefit from targeted phonological awareness instruction. Several researchers claim that this type of ‘skills-based’ instruction is essential for literacy teaching, as some students will not develop adequate literacy abilities without explicit phonological and phonemic awareness training (Moats, 2010; Pressley & Allington, 2014; Tunmer & Chapman, 2007). Knowing this, Erina worked closely with teacher aides to

implement a pre-planned phonological awareness programme with a variety of students to supplement the class literacy programme. Erina was mindful of ensuring this programme was implemented in a purposeful and structured manner, ensuring that teacher aides were confident running the programme. Webster et al. (2011) stress the importance of preparation and training for teacher aides in these contexts, citing studies that suggest teacher aides can have a positive impact on student progress when interventions are guided and well-planned (see also Giangreco, 2010).

The idea of teacher aides withdrawing students from class may appear exclusionary. However, teachers and teacher aides in this study took deliberate steps to avoid isolating and stigmatising students who took part in these programmes. For instance, Erina ensured that the majority of her class “had a turn” at taking part in the phonological awareness programme. Similarly, teacher interviewee Jo explained that the teacher aide now ran a social skills programme with *every* student, rather than just “those who struggle”. Teacher aide participants such as Anita and Alex were acutely aware of how withdrawing students from class can isolate them socially, therefore, they would make sure to withdraw students in groups and encourage them to interact. Anita described allowing students to “bring a buddy” when she took them out of class to ensure they were not completely isolated from peers.

While it may seem exclusionary to withdraw students from classrooms, teacher aides can play a valuable role in supplementing class teaching by implementing structured and well-guided programmes for students (Giangreco, 2010; Webster et al., 2011). Deliberate steps can be taken to ensure that students are not left feeling isolated and stigmatised when withdrawn from class. This way students can think, “When is it going to be my turn?” (Pita) rather than “that fear of missing out” (Alex) when working with the teacher aide.

Aiding the teacher: A summary

To summarise, many argue that the role of the teacher aide as an *aide to the teacher* rather than as an *aide to the student* is more inclusive (Broer et al., 2005; Giangreco, 2010; Rutherford, 2008; Sharples et al., 2015; Webster et al., 2011). The majority of participants in this study saw at least some aspects of the teacher aide role as an *aide to the teacher*. However, there are conditions that need to be set in order to implement this in an inclusive way. For instance, if

teacher aides are to be completing administrative tasks and ‘teacher jobs’, this needs to be done in a way that does not compromise the status of the teacher aide. Additionally, if teacher aides are to support teachers by running programmes with students, deliberate steps must be taken in order to avoid ‘singling out’ individuals. When teacher aides are seen as the primary instructor for particular students, these students can find themselves feeling isolated and stigmatised. Additionally, they can end up receiving the majority of instruction from the teacher aide. These practices shall be addressed in the following section.

The teacher aide as a student aide: A problematic role

The *teacher aide as a student aide* role was divided into two subcategories: *a) student aide (in class)* and *b) student aide (outside of the class)*, the latter resulting in students being withdrawn from class on a regular basis and completing tasks in isolation from teachers and classmates. The *student aide* role featured strongly across both the survey and interview data, demonstrating that ten years on from Rutherford’s (2008) initial findings, teacher aides are still finding themselves becoming primary instructors for students who fall outside the “normative centre” (Graham & Slee, 2008; see also Webster et al., 2010). How the *student aide* role leads to problematic outcomes can be viewed as a self-perpetuating cycle of contributing factors, as demonstrated in Figure 4. Each of the factors is discussed in the following section.

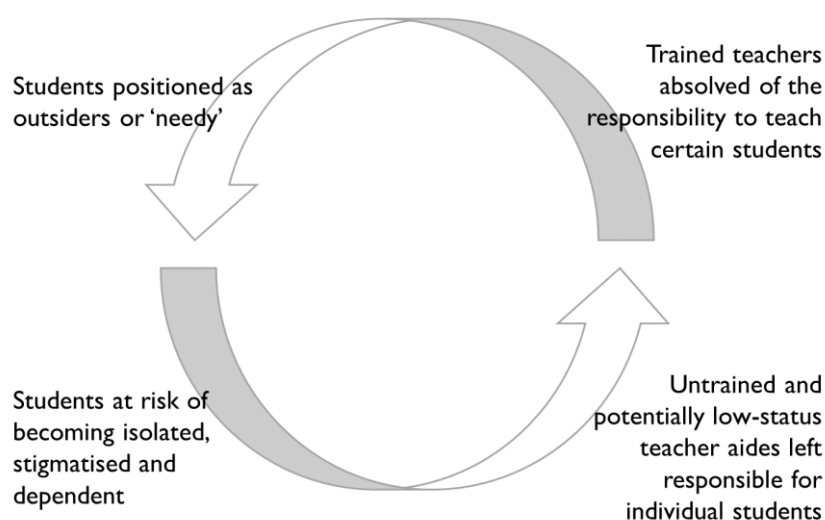


Figure 4: Cycle of problematic outcomes for students and teacher aides

Funding structures perhaps serve to reinforce the *student aide* role, given teacher aides most often receive the majority of their wages based on funding that has been ‘tagged’ to students who have been identified as requiring additional resources. Funding for students *should* and *must* be allocated to the students who need it. However, questions must also be raised over whether allocating a teacher aide budget for specific students contributes to teacher aides and these students being bound together by an invisible tether of funding (see Deuninck, 2015; Rutherford, 2008).

Students positioned as outsiders

When teacher aides are viewed as *student aides* or *aides for individuals*, students are at risk of becoming outsiders and seen as “needy”, as in the following survey response:

Teacher Survey 11: [Teacher aides] are valuable front-line staff in a school. They are underpaid for what they do, which often includes working with the most needy or difficult.

Teacher 11 first expresses appreciation for teacher aides, even acknowledging that they deserve better pay. However, despite this appreciation, much of Teacher 11’s language reinforces deficit perceptions of diverse students, particularly in their use of the words *needy* and *difficult*, which can portray students as burdensome and may result in lowered expectations (Florian, 2010; Rutherford & MacArthur, 2018; Sayers, 2018). The metaphor *front-line* frames teaching of students as a *battle* rather than an *opportunity*, neglecting the more inclusive approach of recognising students’ value and competence (Biklen & Burke, 2006). Students who are framed as “needy” or “difficult” can become both metaphorical and physical outsiders in their own classrooms.

This was demonstrated in teacher aide interviewee Sarah’s case, for instance, as she stated that her role was to instruct a group of “low achieving” students each day because “no one really wants them in their lessons”. This finding mirrors those of Rutherford (2008) who found instances of disabled students positioned as outsiders by teachers who prioritised teaching the rest of the class. This inequitable practice deprives students of spending time with their teachers and classmates, and potentially diminishes their mana or self-worth by showing students that their teachers do not feel they have the capacity to teach them.

Trained teachers absolved of responsibility

As Rutherford (2008, p. 213) notes, “Some teachers want aides, knowing that their presence will excuse them from dealing with certain children”. When viewed as *student aides*, teacher aides tend to be left responsible for those students who require “extra support”, as evident in the following survey response:

Teacher Survey 9: The classroom teacher works with all pupils in either whole class or group work, while the Teacher Aide assists pupils needing extra support either in or out of the classroom.

This survey response leads to the question of whether those who need “extra support” are included as part of what was described as the “whole class” or whether they are a separate entity to be taken care of by the teacher aide. Dedicated teacher aides are oftentimes left responsible for the teaching of and caring for students who are at risk of missing out on spending “quality time” (Teacher Survey 3) with their teachers “who are qualified” (Teacher aide interviewee Pita). A number of teacher aides in this study experienced teachers relinquishing responsibility for students, whilst teacher aides were left responsible for adapting tasks and keeping students’ behaviour “even” (as in Val’s case). Teacher aides further explained that teachers were rarely available to reflect on practice or discuss planning, with some teachers even being “unapproachable” (as in Siobhan’s case).

These practices unjustly leave the dedicated yet largely untrained teacher aides working with students who require the most “nuanced and careful” teaching practices (Causton-Theoharis, 2009, p. 37). Webster et al. (2011, p. 15) support this claim, suggesting that a mistaken assumption exists wherein fewer pedagogical skills are required for teaching students with disabilities and other diversities, whereas, “if anything, a higher level of skill is needed”. Therefore, the following questions must be raised: why are unqualified (and arguably underpaid) teacher aides modifying tasks for and primarily instructing students? Why are teacher aides responsible for students who require specific teaching practices in order to enable them access to the curriculum and wider school experience? Teacher aide interviewee Kim attempted to answer these questions by recounting a conversation she had with a group of “low-achieving” students whom she was asked to provide, albeit unplanned, mathematics teaching:

Kim: The conversation I had with one boy, he said, "I don't want to be here Kim". I said, "I know you don't but it's not my choice for you to be in here, the teacher makes that decision, and why are you in here?" and one of the other kids said, "Because we don't understand [maths], Kim".

Perhaps the most pertinent question is why are some teachers unwilling, or indeed, unable to modify their practice in order to enable all students access to learning alongside their classmates? In order to enable teacher aide inclusive practice, teachers need to be equipped with the tools for adapting their teaching methods to enable all students access to learning and achievement alongside their peers.

Students left vulnerable to stigma, isolation and dependence

Under the *student aide* model, students are at risk of becoming stigmatised, isolated and dependent. As Broer et al. (2005, p. 425) explain, receiving constant teacher aide support is not "socially valid". Students risk appearing to their peers as requiring "mothering" and can find it difficult interacting naturally and establishing friendships within the presence of an adult (Broer et al., 2005). This was commented on by teacher aide interviewee Ngaire as she recalled an interaction between herself and a student whom she was asked to "shadow" in the playground. In a moment of frustration, the student abruptly turned to her and said, "How do you think it feels for me having you breathing down my neck all the time?". Although this student initially appeared to benefit from behavioural support, the "excessive proximity" (Giangreco, 2013, p. 98) of the teacher aide, through no fault of her own, may have obstructed the course of the student's friendship-building and peer-interaction.

Such "excessive proximity" can lead to dependence in students (Giangreco, 2013). Teacher aide interviewee Val discussed this issue at length, explaining that a student she was assigned to assist had received teacher aide support since starting school. He was now in his last year of primary school and would continue to wait for assistance before attempting tasks independently and would, for instance, "spend the whole time wanting [the teacher aide] to read to him because he can't read". Val felt that while she put her own strategies in place in order to reduce this "learned helplessness", it was teachers who needed to manage classrooms in ways which enable students to experience achievement in tasks that are of an optimal difficulty level.

Teacher aides risk contributing to students' reliance on adult support through, for instance, "over-prompting and spoon-feeding" (Sharples et al., 2015, p. 19), yet it remains teachers who are the agents of facilitating student independence and consequently inclusive practice.

Finally, teacher aide participants in this study suggested that students tend to feel stigmatised when they are 'singled out' for requiring extra support, aligning with previous research (see, for instance, Ferguson, 2014; Ward, 2011). Teacher aide interviewee Siobhan illustrated the thoughts she suspected were running through students' minds when teacher aides entered the classroom: "Why am I getting this attention? Maybe because every time I see Siobhan I think, 'Oh I've got to go and do this now, I've got to be singled out'". It is especially stigmatising when teacher aides have been assigned a lower status in the staff hierarchy (Bourke, 2009). As Siobhan went on to state, "Some teachers are really inclusive and other ones you walk through and they won't even acknowledge you ... There is still that old 'you're just a teacher aide' attitude from some people". When teacher aides are not granted the same respect as teachers, carrying what Giangreco (2013, p. 98) refers to as a "devalued status", students are more likely to become *whakamā* or embarrassed when working with the teacher aide. This practice contrasts with the teacher aide as a *co-educator* model, where teacher aides are regarded with a high status and are introduced to students as an additional teacher or learning coach. In light of these findings, a series of recommendations can be made for facilitating teacher aide inclusive practice.

Recommendations for facilitating teacher aide inclusive practice

Figure 5 illustrates how teacher aide inclusive practice may look for teacher aides, teachers and students in Aotearoa classrooms as a result of the findings of this study. The following recommendations are proposed in order to facilitate teacher aide inclusive practice:

- 1) Teachers recognise themselves as agents of inclusive practice, taking responsibility for enabling all of their students to access the curriculum and achieve together. Teachers and school leaders must be trained on how to cater for the diversity of students in their school communities.
- 2) Teachers introduce teacher aides to students as a *co-educator* or *learning coach* rather than an *aide to individual students*, regarding them with high status/*mana*.


- 3) Time is allocated for teacher aides to meet regularly with teachers to reflect on practice and plan ways to enable students to interact with peers and encourage student independence. Using teacher aides' paid time for planning and reflection is invaluable for the students who receive funding for teacher aide support.
- 4) The teacher aide nurtures and supports all students and is not solely responsible for one individual student. This does not mean compromising support for disabled students and those whom the teacher aide is 'funded' to support; it means taking deliberate steps to avoid isolating the student and creating a partnership of responsibility between the teacher and the teacher aide.
- 5) The teacher aide may run specific programmes to promote social, physical and academic skills, however, these programmes must be structured, meaningful and pre-planned by teachers and other professionals, and run with a variety of students.

Teachers must recognise themselves as agents of inclusive practice and take responsibility for each of their students. In order to enable this, it is important that teachers receive adequate training both prior to and throughout their teaching careers on how to cater for the diversity of their students and enable every student to learn and achieve alongside their peers. Although existing research on the role of the teacher aide recommends further training for teacher aides (e.g., Kalsum, 2014), it is equally important that teachers and school leaders are trained on how best to work with teacher aides in order to ensure inclusive practice. Referring to the Ministry of Education (2014, 2017, 2018a) guidelines for effective teacher aide practice would be highly beneficial for school leaders, teachers and teacher aides. Making these materials more readily available for schools is necessary, as almost all participants in this study were unaware of them.

INCLUSIVE PRACTICE WITH TEACHER AIDES

TEACHER AIDE/KAIAKO KAIĀWHINA

- Works as a co-educator alongside teachers, supervising the class and instructing small groups
- Confidently runs pre-planned, meaningful programmes with a range of students
- Nurtures and supports all students and is not solely responsible for an individual student



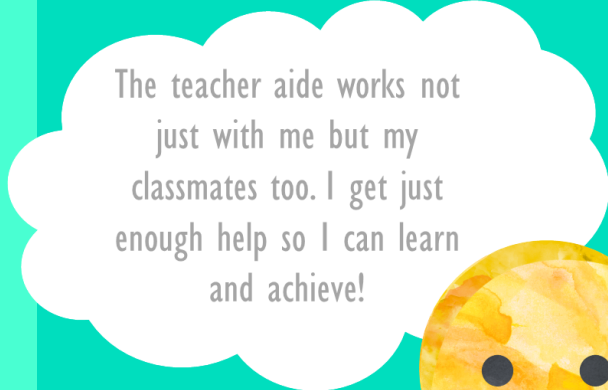
I am well regarded by staff and students – responsibility for students is shared with teachers

TEACHER/KAIAKO

- Takes responsibility for all students, ensuring that learning is accessible for everyone
- Introduces the teacher aide respectfully to students and regards the teacher aide with high status/mana
- Meets with the teacher aide regularly to reflect and plan
- Together with the teacher aide, enables students to achieve independently, reducing their reliance on adults
- Together with the teacher aide, facilitates social interaction between students

STUDENT/TAMARIKI

- Relies firstly on peer supports and an adapted curriculum
- Sees the teacher aide as a highly respected 'learning coach' for all students



The teacher aide works not just with me but my classmates too. I get just enough help so I can learn and achieve!



Figure 5: Recommendations for inclusive practice with teacher aides

Summary

Four teacher aide roles have emerged from the perspectives of the teacher and teacher aide participants in this study. Each of these roles, and their associated practices, have significant implications for inclusive practice. When regarded as *co-educators*, teacher aides are able to be positioned as high-status members of the school community who, like teachers, assist all students and are keenly aware of cultivating independence and social interaction between learners by providing the right amount of support. When regarded as *aides to teachers*, teacher aides can enable teachers to spend valuable time with students who benefit from one-on-one instruction by assisting with 'teacher jobs' or supervising the rest of the class, provided the class is 'set up' for independent learning. Teacher aides can also support teachers by running programmes with students, however, it is crucial these are well-planned and implemented with a wide range of students. By regarding teacher aides as *student aides*, whether in or out of the classroom, students are at risk of being 'singled out', isolated from peers and dependent on help from adults. It is vital that teachers are not absolved of the responsibility to cater for all students due to the presence of a teacher aide who can feel tethered to the student they are funded to assist.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

“She’s beautiful but she makes me carry my own stuff”
— a student’s response after being asked what
they thought of their new teacher aide

I return to these quite charming remarks which led me to ask the broad question of how do teacher aides facilitate inclusive practice? More specifically, what do teacher and teacher aide perspectives on the role of the teacher aide reveal about how teacher aides facilitate independence and opportunities for social interaction? And conversely, what conditions potentially contribute to isolation and dependence for students receiving teacher aide support?

The findings of this research reveal that, according to the perspectives of New Zealand teachers and teacher aides, the roles assigned to teacher aides have a series of implications for inclusive practice. School leaders must examine the roles they assign to teacher aides and the practices associated with teacher aide roles in their schools and classrooms. This involves ensuring that teacher aides are not viewed as the sole mechanisms for instructing and caring for students with disabilities and other differences. Most importantly, it must be acknowledged that it is teachers, rather than teacher aides, who are the agents of inclusive practice in Aotearoa classrooms. By adapting their practice to ensure that learning and achievement is possible for every student in their class, the need for one-on-one teacher aide support can be reduced.

By positioning teacher aides as *co-educators*, teachers and teacher aides can work together to avoid isolating students both physically and metaphorically from their teachers and peers. When tethered solely to one student as a *student aide*, teacher aides are at risk of becoming surrogate teachers, resulting in classroom teachers becoming absolved of the responsibility to teach *all* students. The teacher aide can act as an *aide to the teacher*, providing valuable time for teachers by assisting with administrative tasks, ‘classroom jobs’ and playground duties. However, they should not be seen as *personal assistants*, especially if they are also to work with students as part of *aiding the teacher*. It is crucial that teacher aides are regarded as high-status members of the school community, as by upholding the mana of teacher aides, the mana of the students they work with is also upheld. Teacher aides can also offer valuable support for teachers by running programmes with students, provided that

these programmes are pre-planned, well-structured, meaningful and implemented with a wide range of students.

A number of recommendations for further research can be made in order to develop and expand on the issues raised and address the limitations of the study:

- 1) This thesis is about exploring the ways teachers and teacher aides can work together to support a diverse range of students, yet it does not include the voices of students themselves. Further research into student perspectives on the role of the teacher aide and their associated practices would provide valuable insights into how teachers and teacher aides can work together to best support students and enable them to achieve. Schools leaders, SENCOs, whānau and members of the wider school community would also offer valuable perspectives.
- 2) Such insights may also arise from in-class observations. This thesis has given a small number of teachers and teacher aides the opportunity to share their stories and offer valuable perspectives. Observations of teacher aide work *in situ* would provide deeper insights into teacher aide practice to complement the perspectives shared through interviews and surveys.
- 3) The schools involved in this study varied in size and spanned rural, town and city locations. However, the schools tended to be of a high decile rating. Lower decile schools may offer differing perspectives on teacher aide roles and practices.
- 4) This study focussed on primary and intermediate schools. Data from secondary schools would also provide insight into this growing area of research.
- 5) This thesis did not aim to carry out comparisons across groups, for example, in years of experience, year levels taught or types of classroom environment. Comparative work of this kind would be a useful topic of further investigation.

Every young person has a right to experience success in learning alongside their peers at school. Teacher aides have been viewed as *student aides*, becoming people who are relied on in order for students to take part in learning, yet at the same time they risk inhibiting student's opportunities to gain autonomy and interact with peers and teachers. Teachers and school leaders must examine how teacher aides can work more closely alongside

teachers rather than so closely with individual students. They must work to elevate the status of teacher aides and consequently the students teacher aides may support. Perhaps the most fitting message of this thesis comes from the words of teacher interviewee Siobhan, who said:

Siobhan: [Everyone] should be able to participate and be included in everything that's going on, feel part of the class ... Every child is important and special and just because people have different needs or wants it doesn't mean to say they should be taken away from, not saying 'the norm', but from the rest of the class and what they are doing. Give them a chance.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together Towards Inclusion

Kia ora and thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and considering my request for participation in this research project. Having worked as both a teacher and a teacher aide, my research seeks to explore teacher and teacher aide perspectives on how they work together towards inclusion in Aotearoa classrooms. This fulfils part of the requirements for a Master of Education through Massey University.

In order to gain an understanding of teacher and teacher aide perspectives, I am conducting an online survey followed by a series of one-on-one interviews with both teachers and teacher aides in Aotearoa schools. I invite you to contribute to this project by taking part in a confidential interview where we will discuss perspectives on either your role as a teacher aide or your involvement with teacher aides in the classroom. Interviews will be approximately 20 minutes in length and recorded electronically. The results of this research will be used for academic purposes. Audio recordings and any transcriptions made will be disposed of one year after the completion of this research. Your rights as a research participant are presented below.

Thank you once again for considering participation in this research.

Ngā mihi,
 Claire Chittenden

Participant's Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any time;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings on request when it is concluded.

If you have any questions regarding this project, please contact:

Claire Chittenden
 Postgraduate Student – Institute of Education
 (+64) [REDACTED]
 (+61) [REDACTED]
Claire.Chittenden@Burgmann.act.edu.au

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This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researchers named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researchers, please contact:

Prof Craig Johnson
 Director - Research Ethics
 (+64) 6 356 9099 ex. 85271
humanethics@massey.ac.nz

APPENDIX B: TEACHER AIDE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Teacher Aide Survey | 2018

Kia ora and thank you for showing interest in taking part in this survey.

This research aims to explore teacher/kaiako and teacher aide/kaiako kaiāwhina perspectives on how they work together to support students in Aotearoa classrooms, fulfilling part of the requirements for a Master of Education through Massey University.

The information you provide will be treated with confidentiality throughout the process of this research. You will not be required to provide any personally identifying information.

Should you have any questions regarding this research, please contact:
Claire.Chittenden@Burgmann.act.edu.au

The following survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. By clicking 'I accept', you are providing consent to take part in this survey and to have your responses recorded and used for research purposes.

I accept

I decline

Skip To: End of Survey If Q1 = I decline

Page Break

Q2 How many years' experience do you have working as a teacher aide/kaiako kaiāwhina?

- Less than 1 year
 - 1 - 2 years
 - 3 - 5 years
 - More than 5 years
-

Page Break

Q3 Which year level do you work with? (You may select more than one option)

- Years 0 - 3
 - Years 3 - 6
 - Years 6 - 8
-

Page Break

Q4 What is the decile rating of your school/kura?

- Decile 1 - 3
 - Decile 4 - 6
 - Decile 7 - 10
-

Page Break

Q5 In your current role, do you work mostly with one teacher/kaiako or do you work with multiple teachers/kaiako?

Mostly with one teacher/kaiako

Multiple teachers/kaiako

Page Break

Q6 In your current role, do you work on a part-time or a full-time basis?

Part-time (Up to 24 hours per week)

Full-time (25 hours or more per week)

Q7 How would you briefly describe your role as a teacher aide/kaiako kaiāwhina?

Page Break

Q8 In your view, what does an inclusive classroom look like?

Page Break

Q9 Do you incorporate specific techniques into your practice to support Māori students/tamariki?

Yes

No

Q10 [Optional] If yes, please provide an example:

Page Break

Q11 When visiting classrooms, what percentage of your time do you spend on the following:

Helping with 'teacher jobs' (such as marking, classroom displays etc.):

Working with a group of students/tamariki: _____

Working with an individual student/tamariki: _____

Working alongside the teacher/kaiako to support the whole class: _____

Total: _____ (must sum to 100)

Page Break

Q12

Working Outside the Classroom

	Never	Sometimes	About half the time	Most of the time	Always
How often do you work with one student outside the classroom?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How often do you work with groups of students outside the classroom?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q13 [Optional] If you are required to work with students/tamariki outside the classroom, what is the main reason for this?

Page Break

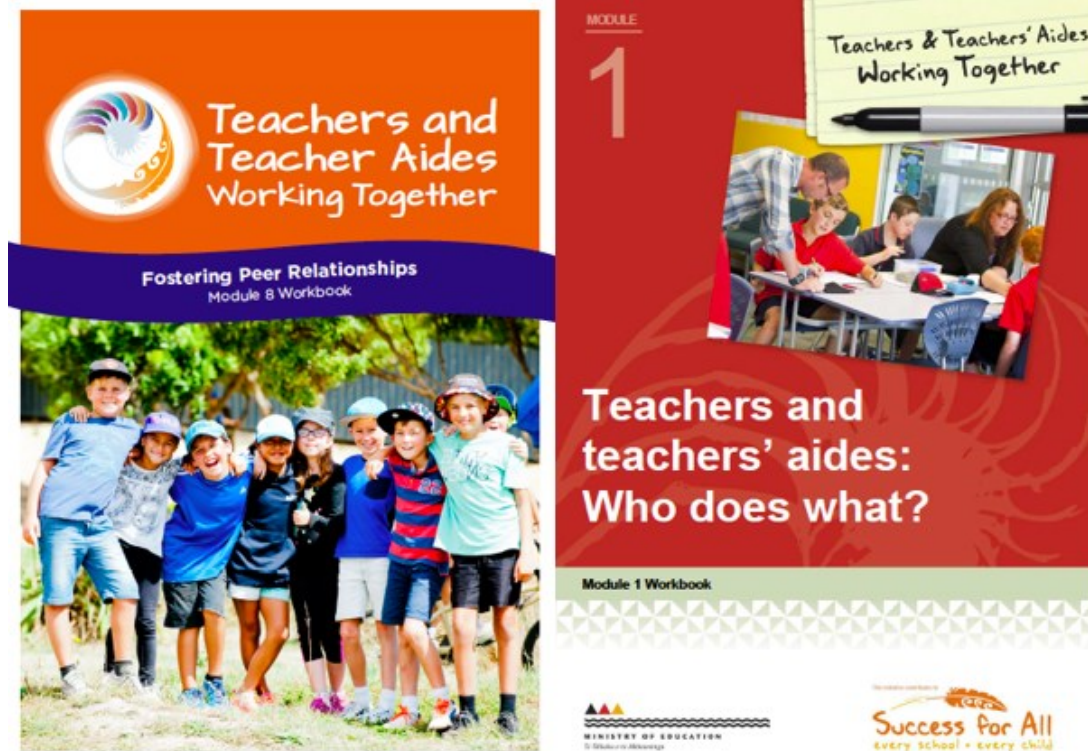
Q14 Are you aware that the Ministry of Education has published materials for supporting effective teacher aide practice?

Yes

No

Page Break

Q15
Modules



Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together Modules 1 and 8 - Ministry of Education

Are you familiar with the *Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together* modules?

- Yes
- Somewhat familiar
- No
-

Home > Guides > Supporting effective teacher aide practice

Supporting effective teacher aide practice


Specifically about Learning support team

Inclusive Education | Current guide: Supporting effective teacher aide practice

The teaching, learning and teacher aides is integral to...
 This guide helps school lea... providing the support that their roles.
 The roles, responsibilities, a... recommended in this guide... research. Content will be m... intermediate schools, and i... contexts.
 NB. The terms teacher aide and TAs are used interchan... language used by schools.

Reviewing how teacher aides can support learning and wellbeing and improve attainment throughout the school

Teacher aides can have a positive impact on student confidence, behaviour, self esteem, and motivation, and on teacher workload, job satisfaction, and stress levels.



Teacher aides can positively contribute to teaching and learning when they have the support they need to be effective in their roles and responsibilities.
 Video source: Ministry of Education, teacher aide effective practice (NZ)
 Closed captioning available in player

Show video

SUGGESTIONS AND RESOURCES

Close

- Review expectations in the light of current research and the needs of your community
- Meet with teachers and teacher aides and gain an understanding of current teacher aide roles and responsibilities

Strategies

1 Reviewing how teach... and wellbeing and in... the school

Includes: Expectations Respo...

Supporting Effective Teacher Aide Practice Online Guide - TKI, Ministry of Education

Are you familiar with the *Supporting Effective Teacher Aide Practice* online guide?

- Yes
- Somewhat familiar
- No
-

Q19

Use of the Online Guide

	I have not used the guide	The guide is not useful	The guide is somewhat useful	The guide is very useful
To what extent has the online guide been useful for your practice as a teacher aide?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q20 [Optional] Provide an example of how you have used the online guide in your practice OR explain why it was not useful for your practice:

Page Break

Q21 Have you received any other qualifications or training towards your role as a teacher aide?

Yes, please specify:

No

End of Block: Default Question Block

Ngā mihi - Thank you for your time.

You have made a valuable contribution to this research.

Your response has been recorded and you may now close your browser.

APPENDIX C: TEACHER SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Teacher Survey on Teacher Aides | 2018

Kia ora and thank you for showing interest in taking part in this survey.

This research aims to explore teacher/kaiako and teacher aide/kaiako kaiāwhina perspectives on how they work together to support students in Aotearoa classrooms, fulfilling part of the requirements for a Master of Education through Massey University.

The information you provide will be treated with confidentiality throughout the process of this research. You will not be required to provide any personally identifying information.

Should you have any questions regarding this research, please contact:
Claire.Chittenden@Burgmann.act.edu.au

The following survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. By clicking 'I accept', you are providing consent to take part in this survey and to have your response recorded for research purposes.

I accept

I decline

Skip To: End of Survey If Q1 = I decline

Q2 How many years' experience do you have working as a teacher/kaiako?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 - 2 years
- 3 - 5 years
- More than 5 years

Page Break

Q3 Which year level do you teach?

- Years 0 - 3
- Years 3 - 6
- Years 6 - 8

Page Break

Q4 What is the decile rating of your school/kura?

- Decile 1 - 3
- Decile 4 - 6
- Decile 7 - 10

Page Break

Q5 How would you briefly describe the role of the teacher aide/kaiako kaiāwhina?

Page Break

Q6 In your view, what does an inclusive classroom look like?

Page Break

Q7 How many hours of teacher aide/kaiako kaiāwhina support do you receive per week in your classroom?

- 0 hours
- Up to 2 hours
- Up to 5 hours
- Up to 10 hours
- Up to 15 hours
- Full-time support

Skip To: End of Survey If Q7 = 0 hours

Page Break

Q8 Do the teacher aides/kaiako kaiāwhina you work with incorporate specific techniques into their practice to support Māori students?

Yes

No

Q9 [Optional] If yes, please provide an example:

Page Break

Q10 When supported by a teacher aide/kaiako kaiāwhina in your classroom, what percentage of time does the teacher aide/kaiako kaiāwhina spend on the following:

Helping with 'teacher jobs' (such as marking, classroom displays etc.):

Working with a group of students/tamariki: _____

Working with an individual student/tamariki: _____

Working alongside you to support the whole class, helping students/tamariki as needed: _____

Total: _____ (must sum to 100)

Page Break

Q11

Teacher Aides Working Outside the Classroom

	Never	Sometimes	About half the time	Most of the time	Always
How often do teacher aides work with one of your students outside the classroom?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How often do teacher aides work with groups of your students outside the classroom?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q12 [Optional] If teacher aides/kaiako kaiāwhina work with students outside your classroom, what is the main reason for this?

Page Break

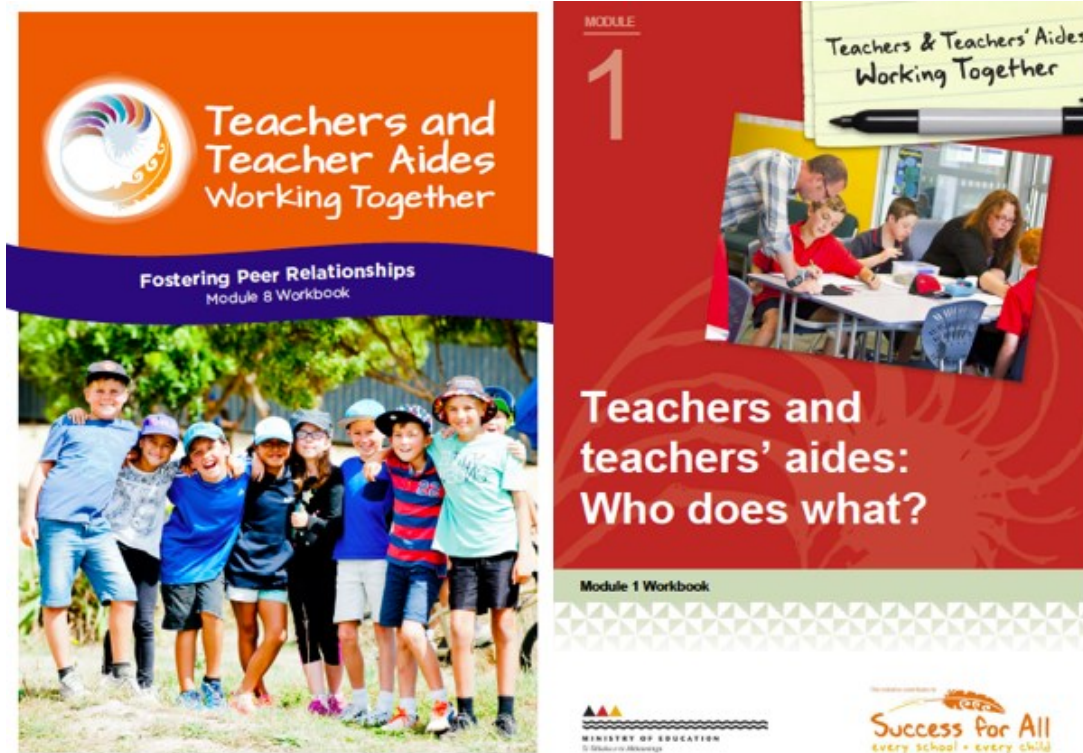
Q13 Are you aware that the Ministry of Education has published materials for supporting effective teacher aide practice?

Yes

No

Page Break

Q14
Modules



Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together Modules 1 and 8 - Ministry of Education

Are you familiar with the *Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together* modules?

- Yes
- Somewhat familiar
- No
-

Q15

Use of the Modules

	I have not used the modules	The modules are not useful	The modules are somewhat useful	The modules are very useful
To what extent have the modules been useful for your work with teacher aides?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q16 [Optional] Provide an example of how you have used the modules in your practice OR explain why the modules were not useful for your practice:

Page Break

Q17

Online Guide

Home > Guides > Supporting effective teacher aide practice

Supporting effective teacher aide practice

Specifically about Learning support team

Inclusive Education | Current guide: Supporting effective teacher aide practice

The teaching, learning and teacher aides is integral to This guide helps school lea providing the support that their roles.

The roles, responsibilities, and recommended in this guide research. Content will be m intermediate schools, and i contexts.

NB. The terms teacher aide and TAs are used interchan language used by schools.

Reviewing how teacher aides can support learning and wellbeing and improve attainment throughout the school

Teacher aides can have a positive impact on student confidence, behaviour, self esteem, and motivation, and on teacher workload, job satisfaction, and stress levels.

Teacher aides can positively contribute to teaching and learning when they have the support they need to be effective in their roles and responsibilities.

Video source: Ministry of Education, teacher aide effective practice (NZ)

Closed captioning available in player

Show video

SUGGESTIONS AND RESOURCES

- Review expectations in the light of current research and the needs of your community
- Meet with teachers and teacher aides and gain an understanding of current teacher aide roles and responsibilities

Strategies

Reviewing how teaching and wellbeing and in the school

Includes: Expectations Respo

Supporting Effective Teacher Aide Practice Online Guide - TKI, Ministry of Education

Are you familiar with the *Supporting Effective Teacher Aide Practice* online guide?

- Yes
- Somewhat familiar
- No
-

Q18

Use of the Online Guide

	I have not used the guide	The guide is not useful	The guide is somewhat useful	The guide is very useful
To what extent has the online guide been useful for your work with teacher aides?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q19 [Optional] Provide an example of how you have used the online guide in your practice OR explain why it was not useful for your practice:

End of Block: Default Question Block

Ngā mihi - Thank you for your time.

You have made a valuable contribution to this research.

Your response has been recorded and you may now close your browser.

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

**Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together Towards Inclusion**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

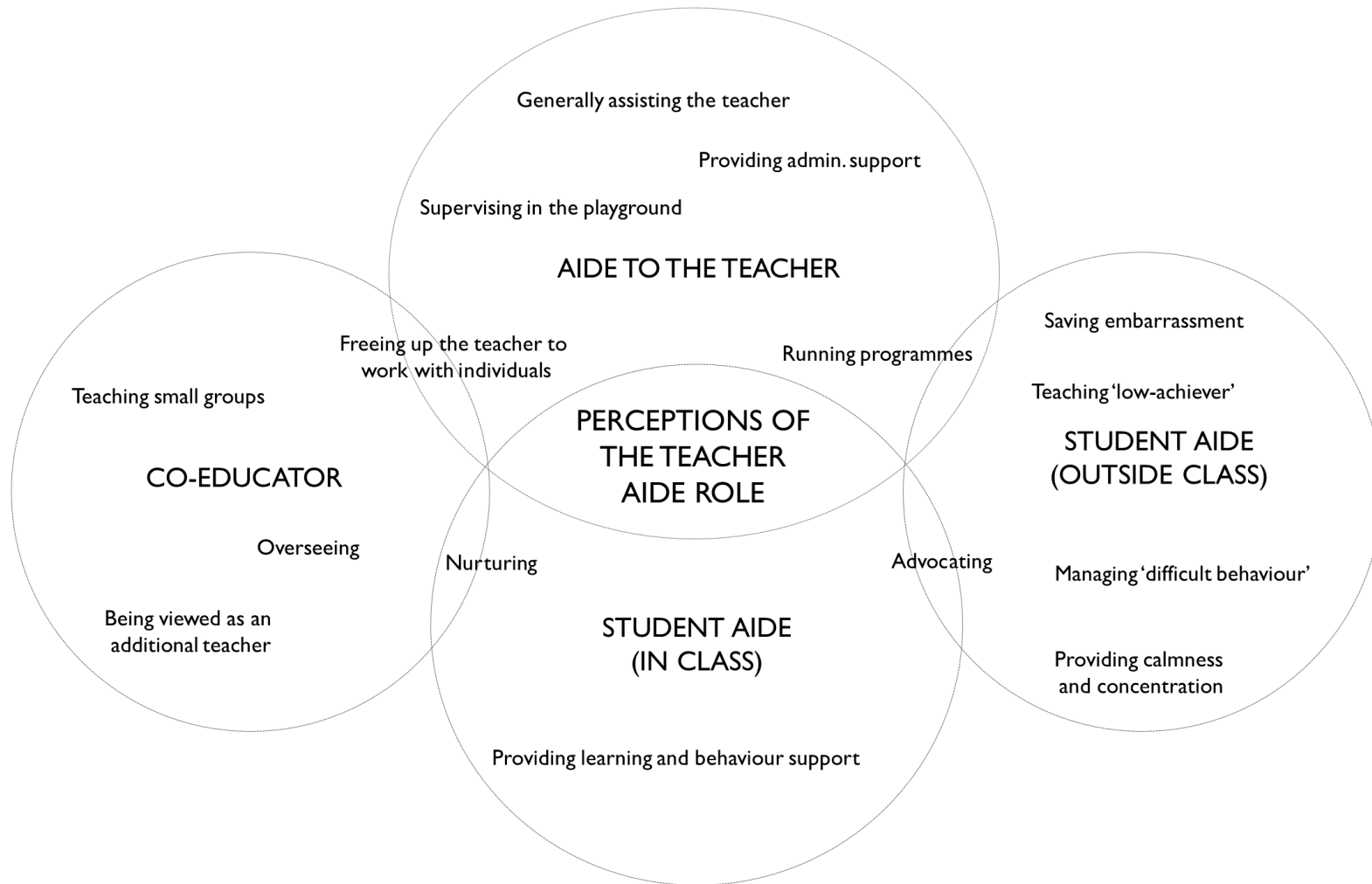
I agree/do not agree (please circle) to the interview being sound recorded.

By signing this form, I am agreeing to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet (please enter your name and signature below):

Signature: **Date:**

Full Name – printed

APPENDIX E: INTERRELATED ROLE TYPES AND OVERLAPPING THEMES



APPENDIX F: PROGRAMMES ADMINISTERED BY TEACHER AIDES

Steps to Literacy—Also referred to as ‘Steps’, this is a web-based tool based on literacy acquisition research aimed at improving vocabulary, comprehension and verbal reasoning. Steps is a research-based programme uses assessment to calibrate an optimal difficulty level for each user, meaning teachers, tutors, parents and teacher aides can administer the programme with a wide range of students (The Learning Staircase, 2018).

Jolly Phonics—A research-based, systematic programme which explicitly teaches phonological and phonemic awareness (i.e., focussing on letter-sounds rather than the alphabet) to develop early reading and writing skills using hands-on approaches. The programme requires training but can be administered by teacher aides (Jolly Learning, 2018).

Perceptual Motor Programme (PMP)—This programme claims to improve children’s perceptions of their bodies and the space around them as well as improving motor skills such as balance and coordination through sequenced physical activities. The programme requires training but can be administered by teacher aides (Moving Start, 2018).

Socially Speaking—A programme for teachers (developed by a speech-language therapist) aimed at developing relationship and communication skills for primary-aged students. The programme is accompanied by a board game designed to promote skills in listening, turn taking, asking questions and conveying emotions (Socially Speaking, 2018). This board game can be coordinated by teacher aides with a range of students.

Talk to Learn—A curriculum-embedded oral language intervention aimed at exposing children to classroom language and aiding practising using language and developing vocabulary. Talk to Learn is highly structured and is implemented by teachers or teacher aides in regular small-group sessions (Van der Wal, De Candole, & De Vries, 2001).

Audio-Visual Achievement in Language Literacy and Learning (AVAILL)— This is a research-based literacy programme for older primary and intermediate students (ages 9 and above). The programme aims to improve comprehension, reading fluency, spelling, vocabulary and attitude

towards reading by requiring students to pay close attention the subtitles of films and answer questions based on the subtitles (Literacy Innovators, 2018).

Tape Assisted Reading Programme (TARP)—Within this programme, students listen to audio-recordings of books as they read the corresponding text. The programme can be administered by teachers or teacher aides and aims at improving reading comprehension and confidence. However, there is some debate over whether the TARP results in improved decoding skills (see, for example, Greaney, 2012; Langford, 2001).