

NEMP Probe Study Report

The effects of teacher perceptions on adopting a
new role.

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ABSTRACT

In order to gather assessment data at a national level the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) employs practicing teachers to work as teacher administrators. These teachers spend a week training for this role and then work over a five week period in at least five different schools, implementing assessment tasks in specified curriculum areas.

This research investigates the perceptions of a group of teachers as they assume this new role, which requires changes in their interactions with students, teachers and other educational professionals. Data for this study was collected through a series of questionnaires, interviews and journal entries. The data revealed that although their training helped them with many aspects of their new role, some issues, such as working collaboratively with a partner, being flexible and transforming new knowledge into practice, caused difficulties for many teachers. The data indicated that perceptions of a role can affect the success with which a new role is adopted. These findings may have implications not only for NEMP but also for other professional development programmes that require teachers to take on new roles.

INTRODUCTION

Many educational projects require teachers to make sustained changes to their pedagogical practices. Teachers' work becomes more complex as it shifts and diversifies in response to such things as incorporating educational technology, changing student needs, school restructuring, demands of a National Curriculum (Hargreaves: 1994, 6). This often requires teachers to take on a new role in order for the school to implement such things as: incorporating different technologies; collaborative teaching methods; meeting the needs of students in culturally, linguistically or ability diverse settings; implementing Ministry of Education directives, such as the numeracy project. In some situations, the way that teachers interact with students needs to change, in order to incorporate these new pedagogical approaches (Wasley: 1994). It is therefore beneficial for both schools and teacher education agencies to know about the effect of teacher perceptions when adopting a new role and to consider strategies to assist in successful implementation of that role. This is because changes can have repercussions for a teachers' sense of identity in regard to how it is reconstituted and represented over time, as they incorporate new pedagogies and make sense of their work (Cooper & Olsen: 1996). Although research has investigated issues around the adoption of new practices, little work has been done on teachers' perceptions of the changes in their role and the effect that their perceptions have on adopting a new role (Lundeberg & Levin: 2003, 24).

The extent that new ideas are incorporated into a teacher's knowledge and pedagogy depends significantly on their prior beliefs. It is acknowledged that people bring their personal schema to the process of learning; this schema is formed through prior experiences, values, sociocultural history and perceptions of the situation (Lambert: 2002, 81). Kennedy (1997) cited in Raths and McAninch (2003, vii) has suggested that teachers undergoing professional instruction come to the task with a variety of beliefs that act as filters in their learning process; as new ideas are introduced, they are weighed

against existing understandings. If the new ideas are too different to the teachers' current beliefs, they will be resisted or rejected. Thus, while teachers view professional development as an essential component of their teaching practice, new learning is not always incorporated successfully.

An example of this is the research done by Alison Gilmore (1999) on the "Professional Development of Teachers through the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP)". It identified teachers who had attended the same training programme but who interpreted and responded to their training in different ways, producing inconsistencies when implementing the role they had been trained for. This was a problem, as in order to collect high quality assessment data, NEMP requires consistent application of the administration process. Consequently, it is important that administration techniques are embraced by the teacher administrators and requirements of the role are made overt.

In another study, Smylie (1988) examined the "relative importance of different aspects of the organisational contexts of schools and classrooms and various teacher psychological states to explain variation in individual teacher outcomes related to the enhancement function of staff development" (pp. 4). He found that when deciding whether to adopt new knowledge and skills teachers were likely to rely on knowledge, beliefs and perceptions related to their own practice. These perceptions are constructed through their prior classroom experiences and interactions with teaching colleagues (pp. 24). Therefore, it seems important to acknowledge the effects of teacher perceptions on the assimilation of new learning and identify factors that impact on changing those perceptions in order to enhance the acceptance and integration of a new technique or role.

Teachers also have perceptions about their own learning needs in regard to professional development. Creighton and Johnson (2002) conducted a study on teachers entering leadership roles in education. Frequently, the challenges that they faced during the first year in their new role were far removed from their expectations. Although they managed to deal with the various incidents and issues that occurred, it "was not without much difficulty, stress, confusion and sleepless nights" (pp. 158). Comments such as, "If only I were provided an opportunity to practice a bit before being thrown into the actual performance field of the job", (pp. 158) were a commonplace response. Their work lead them to posit the idea that in order to perform a complex role effectively there was a need to have opportunities to practice certain procedures and strategies before being required to execute them in the 'real' environment. They cite examples of a variety of roles, for example, medical students, sports teams, orchestras, the military, who have a 'practice field' in which they get to slow things down, try out moves, procedures and strategies before they are placed in the situation 'for real'. All these practice fields exist in a safe environment with opportunities for making mistakes that serve to enhance learning and cultivate new beliefs (pp. 161).

Professional Development activities that support adoption of new practices

Teachers take on different roles in education for such reasons as accepting an educational administration role or because they need to adopt a different pedagogical practice. How effectively teachers are able to adjust to these new roles is affected by their perceptions of

the role and their previous experiences. There is a need therefore, to look at the aspects of professional development that support the alignment of previous and new understandings about teachers' roles.

The research done by Creighton and Johnson (2002) highlights the need for professional development providers to find ways of engaging teachers in activities that enable a harmonious transition from one role to another. They need to respect teachers' prior knowledge, beliefs and perceptions. Previous research would suggest that this is rarely the case. Goodlad (1990) embarked on a five year study that detailed the conditions and circumstances of teacher education in the United States. Through surveys, interviews and observations of teacher training institutions he found that the preparation for the teaching role was often dull, formulaic and fragmented, providing insufficient time and opportunities to connect theory and practice. He noted that teachers need abundant opportunities to reflect on their own experiences, deepen their understanding of subject content and gain a wider repertoire of pedagogical practices in order for them to develop an understanding of their role.

Other researchers investigating the preparation programmes for teachers moving into an educational administration role have also criticised the accepted ways that educational institutions have generated and transmitted knowledge (Crowson and McPherson, 1987: 48). Mulkeen and Tetenbaum's (1990) study on educational training institutions found that the dominant mode of instruction continued to be lecture and discussion in a classroom setting, based on the use of a text (pp. 20). As a consequence, there has been a "deepening recognition that the knowledge base employed in preparation programmes has not been especially useful in solving real problems in the field" (Murphy and Forsyth, 1999, 15). The clinical aspects of preparation programmes were noticeably weak. Sergiovanni (1989) noted that the pervasive anti-recipe, anti-skill philosophy that pervaded many training programmes for educational administrators resulted in many gaps in their knowledge base: an almost complete absence of performance-based programme components, a lack of attention to practical problem-solving skills and a neglect of practical intelligence (pp. 17). It has been consistently reported that the best way to improve training in preparation programmes would be to improve instruction that fosters the development of job-related skills.

Griffiths, (1998) noted that when assuming a new role, supervised practice could be the most critical phase of the preparation period (pp. 17). Bartell (1994) surveyed 2,500 people on the content and structure of educational administrator preparation programmes and professional development experiences. From the concerns identified by her respondents she asserted that practice-orientated, problem-based approaches to prepare candidates for a new role held the greatest promise for the future. Several studies on teacher education have also suggested that to reduce dissonance for learners when they are entering a new role that challenges their beliefs and perceptions, it is important that they get the opportunity to engage in structured practice situations so that the knowledge presented to them may be observed and reflectively examined in relation to their prior perceptions (Lampert & Ball, 1999; Richardson & Kile, 1999). They found that the elements that seemed to make a difference in shaping new beliefs and changing

perceptions were: providing a practical experience that was well coordinated with the propositional knowledge imparted, and watching and discussing relevant video scenarios.

Other research by McGee (1980) has corroborated these findings. He looked at a group of teachers undergoing in-service training. He found significant changes towards desired behaviours occurred when the training systematically focused on sensitising teachers to a particular skill, provided practice experience based on the theoretical content and was subsequently followed up by opportunities for review and feedback. Programmes that dealt with new skills in a more general way, without building in systematic practice, did not cause teachers to alter their beliefs and behaviour.

As well as structured practice situations, there is a need for other components to be included in the professional development programme that support the adoption of new skills and ideas. The use of feedback has been identified as an essential component of instruction based on participation (Shaw, et al 1980: 12). Other people, including members of the training group, can tell an individual how his/her behaviour appears to them and this can enable the individual to identify any weaknesses and receive 'the kind of information that one ordinarily fails to see or hear'. Providing opportunities to think about and discuss a practice situation allows participants to reflect on and improve their learning. In a study completed by Nathan Linsk and Kathleen Tunney (1997) on the use of simulated learning experiences for training social workers, they demonstrated that trainees found learning in practice simulations developed confidence in receiving feedback, which in turn helped to transform their learning. Trainees valued the feedback from their peers and from the course facilitator. They also felt that being an observer of role play was almost as valuable as playing a role; it helped them to understand the process involved with implementing the theory and content of their learning, thus providing the most experiential learning possible outside of the actual clinical situation.

However, to be meaningful, the timing of feedback is important. Tillema (2000) conducted a study on two groups of teachers, one who engaged in comprehensive theoretical reflection prior to engaging in a practice teaching session and one who was immersed in a teaching practice prior to the reflective seminar. The first group changed beliefs quite dramatically during the initial theoretical session but were found to move back toward their prior understandings and perceptions during the practical session. The second group began to change perceptions during the practice experience, and continued to change in the desired direction during the subsequent theoretical feedback and reflection period. Tillema (2000) concluded that reflection and feedback after practice had a positive effect on changes in beliefs, whereas reflection prior to practice did not ground belief changes in practice, making them unstable.

Another component that has been found useful to include in professional development for teachers required to change roles is that of watching and discussing relevant videos. Richardson and Kile (1999) have found that watching and discussing video scenarios seemed to make a difference in shaping new beliefs and changing perceptions. The rationale behind the use of using video scenarios in learning situations is to bring theory and practice together, by presenting a visual, moving picture of a real situation along with

guiding information and participant discussion (Richardson and Kile, 1999: 134). Video can convey many contextual details of a situation, thus presenting a more authentic picture. It allows the viewer to see the subtle, and non verbal aspects of teacher-student interactions that are not available through verbal or written media (Brophy, 2004: 299). They have also shown that discussing relevant video scenarios can be beneficial for learners when they are entering a new role that challenges their beliefs and perceptions (1999:121-136). They report on work done by Risko, Yount and McAllister (1992) with students on an undergraduate teacher education course. Video cases were used throughout a semester teaching programme on a Remedial Reading course. It was found that the course participants discourse patterns demonstrated “active engagement and generative learning” (pp. 40), as spontaneous connections between the viewed scenarios and prior experiences were made. The connections were not linear connections as might be found during a lecture format and often demonstrated a metacognitive awareness of key points without the information being made explicit by the lecturer. Their findings led them to believe that experiences provided through viewing video tapes may help students to acquire mental models of authentic situations, enabling them to understand the meaning of events and preparing them for entering a similar situation themselves (pp. 48).

Summary

Teachers are often required to participate in professional development that requires them to incorporate new pedagogical practices that challenge their beliefs and perceptions of their role. These perceptions can affect the degree to which new knowledge and practice is successfully incorporated. Research has suggested that in order for professional development programmes to prepare teachers for assuming a new role it is necessary that they acknowledge teachers’ initial perceptions. In order to shape new beliefs and influence behaviour training needs to provide: systematic, practical experience based on the theoretical content; relevant feedback to encourage reflection; the opportunity to view video scenarios in order to bring theory and practice together.

BACKGROUND TO NEMP TRAINING

In New Zealand the National Education Monitoring Project requires approximately 100 teachers every year to take on a new role of implementing an assessment programme in five schools. It is therefore valuable to the Project to identify the successful aspects of the training programme as well as aspects that could be improved.

Each year NEMP gathers assessment data, in order to get a broad picture of the educational achievement of representative samples of New Zealand students (Crooks & Flockton: 2006). To assist in this process, teachers are employed as teacher administrators for a period of six weeks. They work in pairs, in five schools, spending a week at each school. Assessment data is gathered through the administration of a range of NEMP assessment tasks. In each school they work with a group of twelve students. To gain the knowledge of how to do this, the teachers spend the first week on a training

course providing the background to the NEMP project, the assessment tasks, the approaches used to gather data and the technology used in delivering and recording the assessment tasks.

The tasks are administered to individuals and groups of four students. Each student is engaged with the assessment tasks for about four hours over the week. In order to elicit as much detailed information as possible, the teachers question students so that they demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding in a variety of learning areas. NEMP collates this data and the analysis is made available in annual reports, providing information for educators on how well the overall national standards in education are being maintained and where improvements might be needed.

The teacher administrators play a pivotal role in the successful implementation of the project. Their knowledge of school systems is essential when working in different school settings as it enables them to manage their assessment schedule within the confines of a school timetable. They must communicate productively with other educational professionals and have an understanding of events that teachers and students are engaged in throughout the day that will impact on their work. NEMP particularly looks for teachers who can establish a positive rapport with students from a variety of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, in a short space of time. The teacher administrators need to embrace the aims and the methodology of NEMP.

In the training week, teacher administrators are made familiar with the assessment tasks and the four approaches to implement those tasks. They are provided with information on the background of NEMP, which includes the aims of the project and NEMP's philosophy of assessment. Teachers attend sessions that inform and instruct on the four assessment task approaches and the use of the computer and video technology integral to implementing and recording the tasks. Each session focuses on one particular aspect of the administration process. The tasks are explained through instruction and demonstration, with reference to a comprehensive task manual that details the equipment needed for each task and the accompanying script for communicating the task to students. Procedures for dealing with the technology, organisation of paperwork and contacting schools are demonstrated with reference to an administration manual. In each session, teacher administrators are given an opportunity to ask questions pertaining to aspects of their role. They are also given hands-on time with task equipment and technology equipment, in order to become familiar with the administration and set-up of the tasks. The hands-on sessions are usually informal, with teacher administrators working with their partner and familiarising themselves with the tasks by reading through the script pertinent to each task. In some instances, a teacher administrator will model the implementation of a task in an individual or group assessment situation, using other administrators in the role of 'student'. By the end of the training week, administrators should be able to piece together individual aspects of their role in order to form a complete picture of what the administrator role entails. The degree to which they can achieve this will affect the perceptions of their role, the way in which they implement their role and the quality of the assessment data they collect. The teachers' background experiences and the expectations that they bring to the administration role, along with the

quality and content of the training process that they undergo, need to combine to make the teacher an effective administrator of assessment tasks for NEMP.

As was mentioned earlier, work by Alison Gilmore (1999) suggested that some teachers were not consistent in the way that they administered tasks. Although effort is put into training teachers to become effective NEMP administrators, there has currently been no investigation into how teachers perceive their role as administrators and if they understand the purpose and requirements of the administrator role. Previous research has suggested that teacher perceptions influence the acquisition and incorporation of new knowledge into practice. This research seeks to ascertain the affect of teacher perceptions on their ability to adopt a new role successfully. Research questions were formulated to enable the study to investigate the initial perceptions of teachers when applying for the role of teacher administrator and how these change as they: undergo their training; work on the task of administrating; participate in the task of marking the data collected, in order to establish if and how performance is affected by perception. The effect of teacher's perceptions on their ability to adopt a new role successfully is also an important consideration for schools and teacher educators who often require teachers to take on a new role in order to implement new pedagogical practices.

Research Questions:

- How do teachers initially perceive the role of teacher administrator?
- How does NEMP administrator training affect these initial perceptions?
- How does the administrating process affect teacher perceptions of their role?
- Does observing other teacher administrators, whilst marking NEMP assessment data, affect the teacher's perception of the administrator role?
- What does NEMP require from the teacher administrator?
- How can any discrepancies between the requirements of the administrator role and the preparation for this role be resolved?

The impact of teachers' perceptions on their ability to assimilate aspects of this new role is difficult to quantify. However it is possible to ascertain the initial perceptions of teachers when assuming a new role and monitor their perceptions as they participate in the training process, and again when they implement this role. This research offers insights into the changing perceptions of a group of teachers and addresses the implications and challenges that arise for trainers when preparing teachers to assume a new role or adopt a different approach to their teaching practice.

METHODOLOGY

This research collected data from the 2005 cohort of teacher administrators. It utilised a series of questionnaires, interviews and journal entries in order to elicit information about initial and subsequent perceptions of the teacher administrator role. It focused on interpreting teachers' changing perceptions as they developed their skills and knowledge of their role during the training process and throughout their time working in their new

role. Throughout this process teachers were asked to reflect on their changing perceptions and identify any information or skills they felt would enable them to perform more effectively in the new role.

Applications for the role of teacher administrators were submitted by March 1. From these applications, ninety six teachers were selected. Half of these were trained in August and administered tasks to Year 8 students. The others were trained in October and administered tasks to Year 4 students. The teachers participating in the research had all applied for the position and can be assumed to be motivated to undergo training for this role. The teachers came from a variety of school cultures, from all around New Zealand. They taught or had taught at a variety of age levels in the primary system. The teachers came from a range of teaching experience, from less than five years to more than twenty years.

Once NEMP had selected the teacher administrators for the 2005 cycle of assessment, a questionnaire was sent out to all the teacher administrators. The questionnaires used in this research are included in Appendix A. The first questionnaire ascertained information on the teachers' prior knowledge and understanding and expectations of NEMP and their role as teacher administrator. During the two training weeks, several teachers from each group volunteered to complete an interview about their perceptions of the administrator role. This interview was recorded, transcribed and analysed. On completion of their training week all teachers were asked to complete a second questionnaire to see if changes had occurred in their understanding of the role of teacher administrator.

Both groups of teachers spent five weeks working with students in a variety of schools. Whilst working as an administrator, the teachers that were interviewed were asked to keep a reflection journal, so they could monitor their perceptions of their role. At the end of the five week period of assessment a third questionnaire was sent out to all teacher administrators, to gather data on their perceptions of their role, after they had completed their administration period.

A number of NEMP staff were involved with the training of the teacher administrators: the co-directors of NEMP coordinate the training process and work directly with teachers during the training week. NEMP also have other personnel who facilitate the training process; one of these is contracted by NEMP in the role of 'visiting teacher' for a year, the others are permanent staff members. One of the directors of NEMP, the visiting teacher for 2005 and two permanent member of the NEMP team were asked to participate in an interview before the training process began, in order to ascertain the requirements that NEMP had for their teacher administrators. Further interviews took place after each training week, once video tapes from the first administration week had been viewed, in order to establish if there were any changes to, or conflicts of the expectations of the teacher administrator role for NEMP staff. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed.

In January 2006, some of the data from the 2005 NEMP assessment cycle was marked. Often, teachers who have worked as administrators during the collection of the data,

apply to work as teacher markers. Part of the marking process requires the markers to watch videotaped activities of students working on assessment tasks. Teacher markers then grade performances against set criteria. The videotapes show the teacher administrators explaining the assessment tasks and working with students in order to obtain detailed data. Markers view a variety of teacher administrators, all of whom participated in the training process. Teacher administrators who chose to be part of the marking process were identified and asked to participate in a further questionnaire and interview, after their marking week. Their perceptions of the administrator role after completing the marking process were recorded and analysed.

The Grounded Theory approach was used to gather and analyse the information provided through the questionnaires, interviews and reflection journals. The systematic collection and analysis of data generated from the research enabled the conceptualization of fundamental latent patterns occurring in the research situation, enabling generation of theory (Glaser, 2003: 189). Patterns in the responses emerging from the questionnaires and interviews, along with anecdotal evidence given by the teacher administrators during the various stages of their learning and application of their role were noted. Concepts indicated by the data were used to guide the analysis of information. Theories were then generated from the analysis of emerging patterns, to explain the data. The theories derived from the data were verified through comparison with literature from previous research. Collectively they describe the tensions and challenges faced by the teacher administrators and how those administrators perceived, interpreted and translated their new role into practice.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following section provides an analysis of the information obtained from interviews, questionnaires and journal entries, grouped into common themes and issues as they arose. The first two sections report on the reasons for teachers wanting to work as a teacher administrator and their initial perceptions of this role. These included the skills they felt they needed to work as a TA and the skills they brought to the position that they felt were important. Their perceptions of the role and the importance of various skills were then analysed at the end of the training period and at the end of administrating. Subsequent sections deal with aspects of the administrator role that teachers had not realised were important, but became so as they worked in their role. These included: the need for flexibility; the importance of developing a positive collaborative working relationship with their partner; the importance of constructive feedback during the training and administration process. Teachers also suggested ways that would better prepare them to understand and implement the administrator role. The final section discusses teacher markers perceptions of the administrator role. Comments from NEMP staff on these themes were integrated.

Comments made by teachers and NEMP staff were coded in the following way:

TA4 - interview with Year 4 teacher administrator

TA8 - interview with Year 8 teacher administrator

TAJ - journal entry from teacher administrator
TM - interview with teacher marker
NEMP - interview with National Education Monitoring Project staff

1.0 Reasons for becoming a teacher administrator

Figure 1 shows teachers’ reasons for applying to become a teacher administrator. Some people had been administrators on previous occasions and wished to repeat the experience; some had colleagues or friends that had worked as teacher administrators and had recommended the experience to them. For some teachers, NEMP provided an opportunity for them to visit and observe other students in other schools. Having the chance to be out of regular classroom work in order to revitalise oneself, or consider other career opportunities were also significant reasons. The majority of teachers chose to train to be an administrator because they were interested in one or more of the curriculum areas being assessed. They perceived the role would provide professional development opportunity in assessment of those curriculum areas.

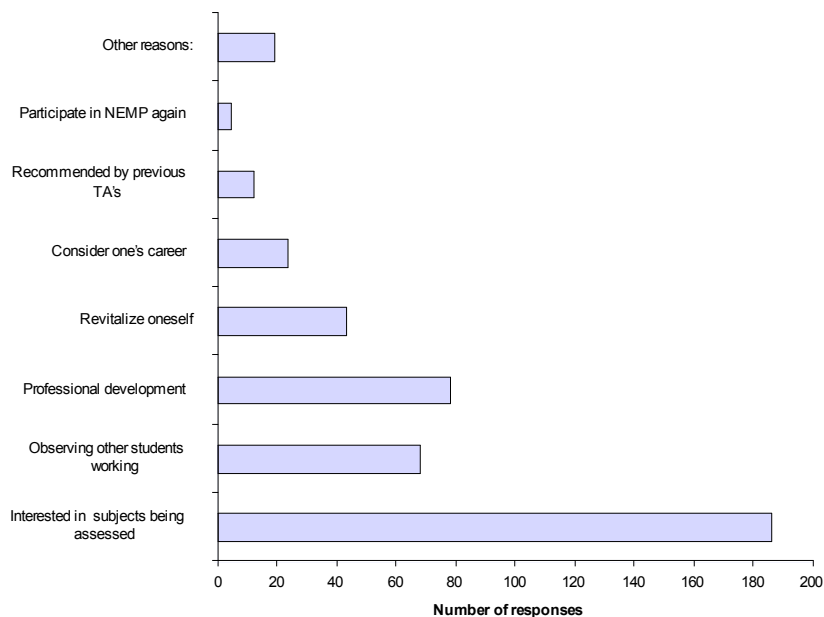


Figure 1: Reasons (one or more) for becoming a teacher administrator

1.1 Teachers’ initial perceptions of the teacher administrator role.

The reasons teachers gave for becoming a teacher administrator provided insight as to how they perceived the opportunity of working in the administrator role. This section examines in more detail the skills they perceived to be necessary in this role. In the first questionnaire completed before commencing the administrator training programme,

teachers perceived that the most important skills for a teacher administrator were to have the ability to develop a good rapport with students and to be organised in order to work efficiently. They identified that being a good listener to children was also important and recognised that an ability to follow instructions would be beneficial to the role. These ideas formed the teachers' initial perceptions of the administrator role. These initial perceptions are represented in Figure 2.

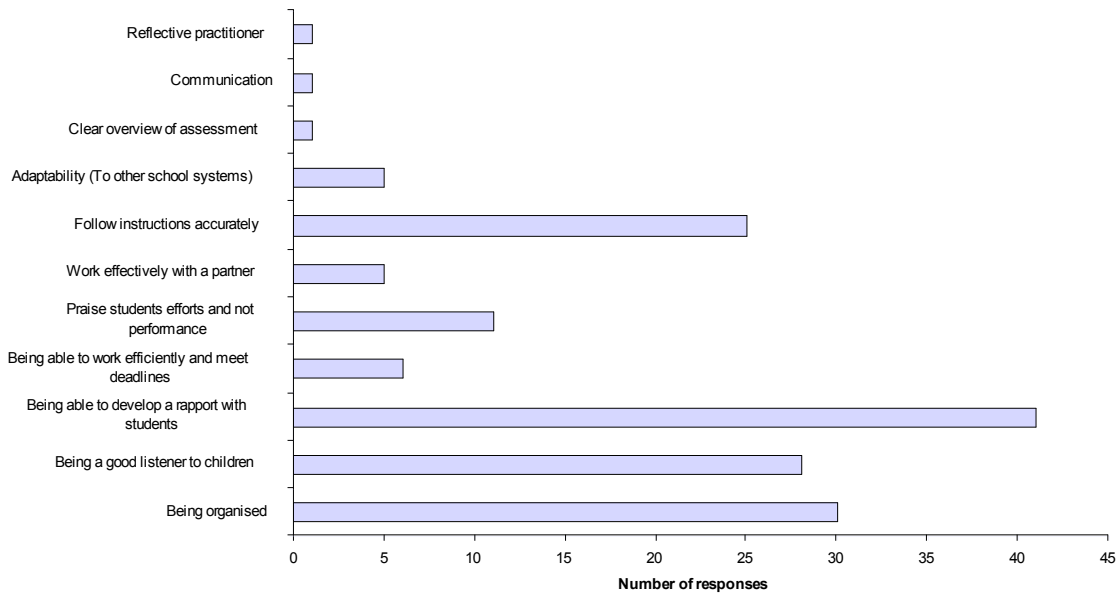


Figure 2: Teacher's initial perceptions of the two most important skills required for teacher administrator role

Teachers were also asked to identify the skills that they felt they brought to the administrator role. Most teachers thought that they brought with them organisational skills and the ability to relate well to students and to work well with other people. The skills that they brought with them which they identified as being important also serve to reflect their initial perceptions and beliefs about the requirements of the administrator role. This information is represented in Figure 3.

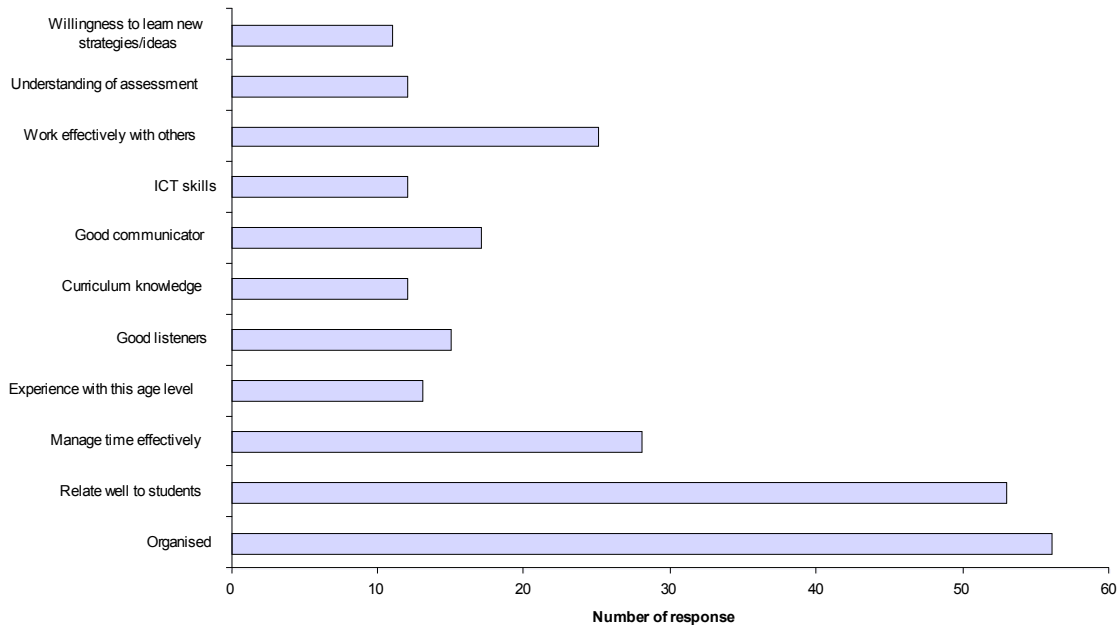


Figure 3: The skills teachers identify that they bring with them to the teacher administrator role

When Figure 2 and Figure 3 are compared it appears that relating well to students, in order to develop a good rapport with them, and being organised were identified as being important skills required for the teacher administrator role and skills that most teachers recognised they brought with them to the role. Although teachers rated working effectively with others as an important skill they brought with them, they did not perceive this to be as important in the administrator role. Being a good listener to children was identified as being an important skill for the administrator role. Although some teachers recognised it as a skill they brought with them to the role, many others did not. This possibly showed an awareness of the skills that teachers felt that they needed to gain to be effective teacher administrators. Teachers perceived the ability to follow instructions accurately to be significant for implementing the administrator role. However, it was not identified as a skill that teachers brought with them to the role. . This may also have been something they felt they needed training in.

In their initial interview, all NEMP staff identified that having a good rapport with students was crucial to performing well in this role and that being well organised was essential for administering the tasks efficiently. This corresponded with the skills that teachers brought with them to the role and with teachers’ initial perceptions of important skills required. NEMP staff also included the importance of developing a good rapport with colleagues. Teachers perceived that this was a skill they brought with them (Figure 3) but did not put much emphasis on it for the administrator role (Figure 2).

NEMP 1: We’re looking for teachers that can establish good rapport with colleagues and with children...that have good relationships... that’s high in the rankings. Another factor is that they can work methodically and efficiently; as you know, NEMP is a very well defined packaging of procedures and so on, and in order to

maintain high levels of consistency at a national level of gathering information, that's quite important.

Having knowledge of the curriculum areas they were involved with and an interest in assessment in those areas was also a factor for NEMP staff.

NEMP 1: That they've got an interest in the subject areas that we're assessing. We don't expect them to be specialists, but we expect them to have a...a healthy interest in curriculum...and, well most teachers do really, but most years you'll find a teacher's got a particular interest...in other words, that there is some motivational factor there that's related to the curriculum, as part of their reason. Also, their interest in developing their understanding about assessment.

The majority of teachers chose to train to be an administrator because they were interested in one or more of the curriculum areas being assessed. They perceived the role would provide professional development opportunity in assessment of those curriculum areas (Figure 1). These initial perceptions of teachers corresponded to the requirements of NEMP.

One member of the NEMP staff also identified patience as a key requirement and another member thought that flexibility was vital.

NEMP 2: Well, probably the most important is the way they work with students. That they've got an encouraging, positive approach with a student, that's especially important to get the best out of them. Also, that they are patient. Organisation is quite a thing. It's a big issue to get through all the tasks in a certain time, you need to be really highly organised.

NEMP 4: They need knowledge in curriculum focus areas. They must be people who can cope with changing environments... an ability to work with others.

1.2 Skills teachers feel they need to learn during the training week.

The previous sections discussed how teachers initially perceived the administrator role. It identified the skills that teachers perceived they had which they considered would be necessary to implement that role. This showed some differences between what they felt were important skills for teacher administrators and the skills that they brought with the. This section deals more explicitly with the skills that teachers perceived they *needed to learn* during the training week in order to be prepared for the administrator role. However, the skills that they identified in this section were not the ones that the previous section suggested may have been raised. When completing Questionnaire 1, before commencing the training, teachers were asked to identify these skills. The skills they felt they most needed to develop during this week were:

- the ICT skills needed to administer and record the assessment process

- familiarity with the assessment tasks

A number of people noted that they needed to develop their organisational and time management skills. A few people felt that they needed to develop the skills of working collaboratively with a partner. This information is shown in Figure 4. These skills identified were based on teacher's prior knowledge of the administrator role. Teachers' prior knowledge seemed to be informed by the teacher administrator job specifications contained in the NEMP application pack. In some instances this prior knowledge may have been influenced by talking to other teachers who had previously worked as a teacher administrator.

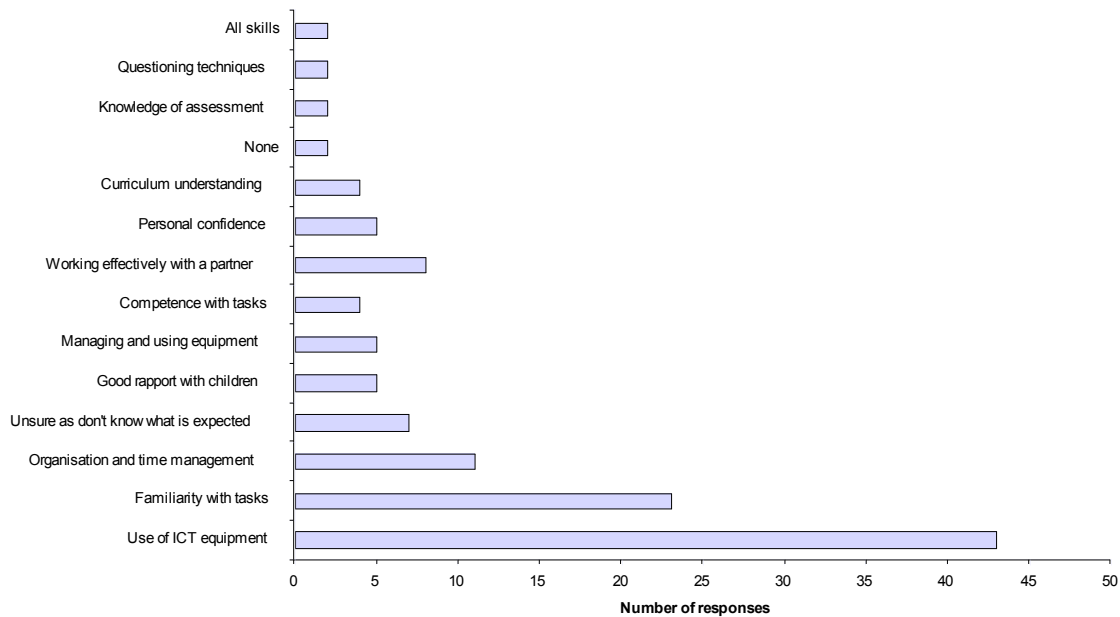


Figure 4: Teacher perceptions of the skills (one or more) they needed to learn during training

The NEMP staff identified that confidence to implement the assessment programme effectively was the aim of the training programme and this included:

- the need for the teachers to develop an understanding of the NEMP process
- knowledge of the NEMP tasks and resources and how to use the manuals
- Knowing how to facilitate the assessment process
- ICT skills in order to be competent with the equipment.
- the skills needed to get the best responses from students

It seems that before entering the training programme, consistent with the expectations of NEMP staff, teachers perceived the most important skills that they needed to learn was the use of ICT equipment and knowledge of the NEMP tasks and resources. However, at this stage, teachers did not place an emphasis on a need to develop an understanding of the NEMP process, and knowing how to facilitate the assessment process in order to get

the best responses from students. These skills and understandings were seen by NEMP staff as being necessary to implement the assessment programme effectively. Teachers did identify ‘following instructions’ as being a necessary skill for implementing the administrator role, as indicated in Figure 2. However, they did not include it in the skills they brought to the role as shown in Figure 3, and they did not perceive it to be a skill they need to learn during the training week. The teachers had perceptions about their own learning needs. However, previous research by Creighton and Johnson (2002) has suggested that it is not until teachers are actively engaged in a new role do they realise that there are components and challenges that were not part of their expectations of the role and not perceived as a learning requirement. Their findings lead them to posit the need for a safe practice field to enable learners to get a feel for the role and make mistakes, which serve to enhance learning and cultivate new beliefs. The discrepancies noted between teachers’ perceptions of what they needed to learn to implement their new role and the requirements of that role seem to corroborate the findings from Creighton and Johnson’s (2002) study.

1.3 The skills and ideas or understandings that teachers learned during the training week.

After identifying teachers’ perceptions of what they needed to learn in Section 1.2 it was necessary to consider what were the important skills they perceived they did learn during their training. At the end of the training week teachers were asked to complete a second questionnaire. In this questionnaire they were asked to identify the most important skills and ideas or understandings that they had learned during the training week. The skills and ideas or understandings identified were:

- to follow instructions (“stick to the script”)
- to be organised with the equipment
- the use of ICT
- to praise student effort and not their performance
- to work in a facilitating role and not a teaching role

Figure 5 shows this information.

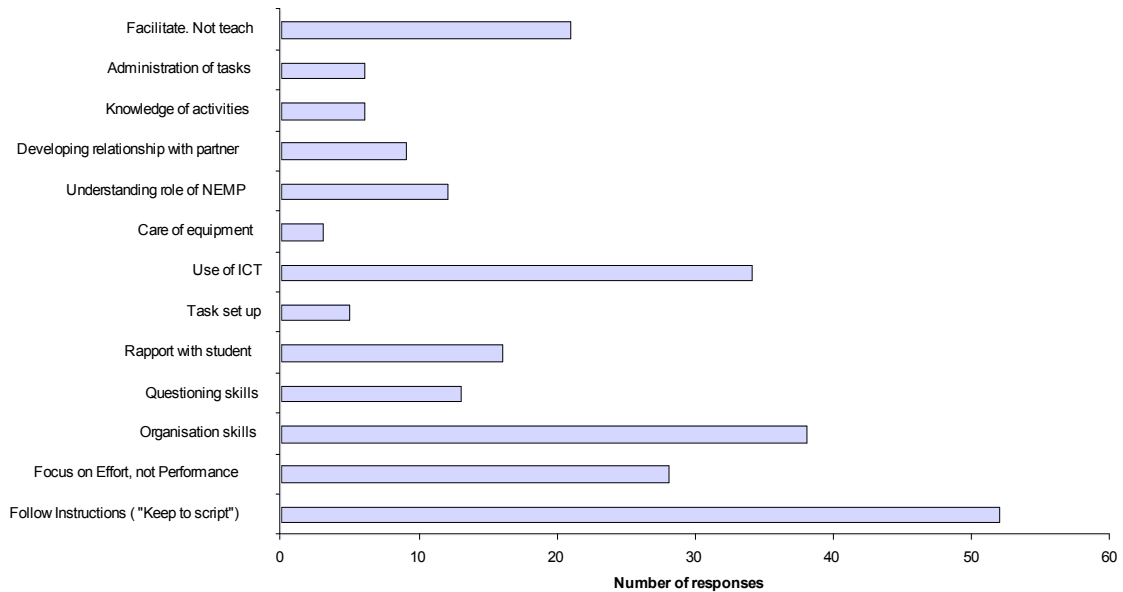


Figure 5: The three most important skills and understandings learnt by teacher administrators identified at the end of the training week

At the end of the training period, teachers' comments demonstrated that they had incorporated some understanding of the NEMP process into their perceptions of the administrator role:

TA8-8: Being organised, in terms of being prepared; know what you are doing – delivery of the tasks for example. Being enthusiastic and making the students feel welcome and at ease.

TA8-5: Trying to divorce myself from the teacher role and be a facilitator. Trying not to teach, just encourage them to think. I'll have to be careful with that. It will upset the results that come through by leading the children in certain directions instead of letting them follow their own direction and what their own thoughts are. You want to find out what they think instead of what you think they should think. That could damage the results more than anything else.

TA4-7: Important to be consistent...to say things in the proper way for it to be valid. Make sure children feel comfortable so that you get the most out of it. Make sure the equipment is working. Make sure you keep records accurately so that data is worthwhile and usable.

Figure 5 shows that being organised with the assessment resources and the use of ICT equipment were identified as important skills learnt. These skills were both included in teachers' perceptions of what they needed to learn, as demonstrated in Figure 4.

The majority of responses in Figure 5 indicated that following instructions was one of the most important understandings they thought they learnt during training. As discussed in Section 1.2, this was not perceived by teachers as a skill that they needed to learn (Figure

4). However, nor did they identify it as a skill they brought with them to the role (Figure 3). This suggested that it was a surprising feature for them when learning about being an administrator. Teachers also acknowledged that they were required to change their role from that of a teacher to that of a facilitator in order to implement the administrator role (Figure 5). Teachers' perceptions of what they needed to learn did not include developing this skill (Figure 4). Other skills and understandings that were not included in teachers learning needs were focusing on effort and not performance of students and developing an understanding of the role of NEMP. Both of these were included as important things learnt during training, as shown in Figure 5. None of these skills were identified as ones which teachers brought with them to the role. It would seem from the results shown in Figure 5 that NEMP training provided teachers with an understanding of these new aspects of the administrators' role.

However, research suggests that it is important to acknowledge the effects of teacher perceptions on the assimilation of new learning. It is necessary to identify factors that impact on changing those perceptions in order to enhance the acceptance and integration of a new technique or role (Smylie, 1988). NEMP requires teachers to change their behaviour in order to integrate their new role. Teachers have to become facilitators; they have to focus on students' efforts and not their performance; they have to follow instructions accurately. Studies have indicated that in order to make significant changes towards desired behaviours, training should be systematically focused on sensitising teachers to a particular skill, and provide practice experience based on theoretical content, followed up by opportunities for review and feedback (McGee 1980).

1.4. Teachers' perceptions of the most important skills at the end of training

After looking at the skills and understandings learnt by teachers during their training, discussed in Section 1.3, it was necessary to look at how NEMP administrator training affected teachers' perceptions of the role. Their responses to the second questionnaire confirmed that having a good rapport with students and being a well organised person were the most important skills for successful administration. Teachers retained their initial perceptions about the administrator role. This is shown in Figure 6.

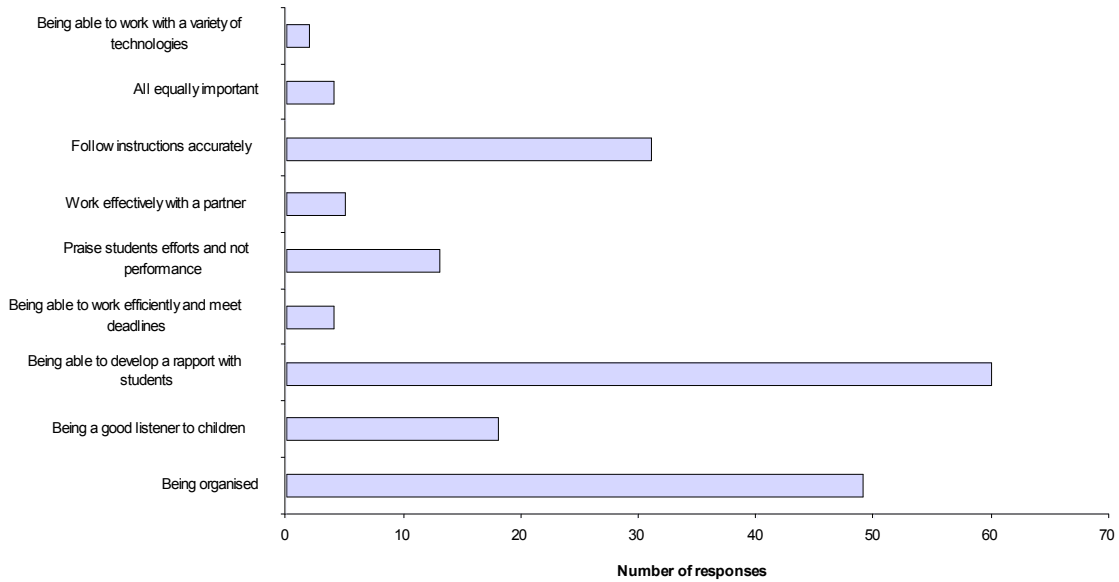


Figure 6: The most important skills for successful administration perceived by teachers at the end of their training

Teachers still acknowledged that following instructions accurately was an important skill for an administrator. However, at the end of the training period, being a good listener to children had decreased in importance. This may be due to teachers realising that their role did not require them to mark and grade the assessment data they collected and therefore they did not attach as much importance to hearing student responses.

1.5 Skills teachers felt most confident about at the end of the training week.

Having identified the skills that teachers perceived as the most important for successful administration in Section 1.4, it was interesting to see what skills they felt most confident about. At the end of the training week administrators rated ‘working with a partner’ as the thing that they felt most confident about being able to do, as demonstrated in Figure 7.

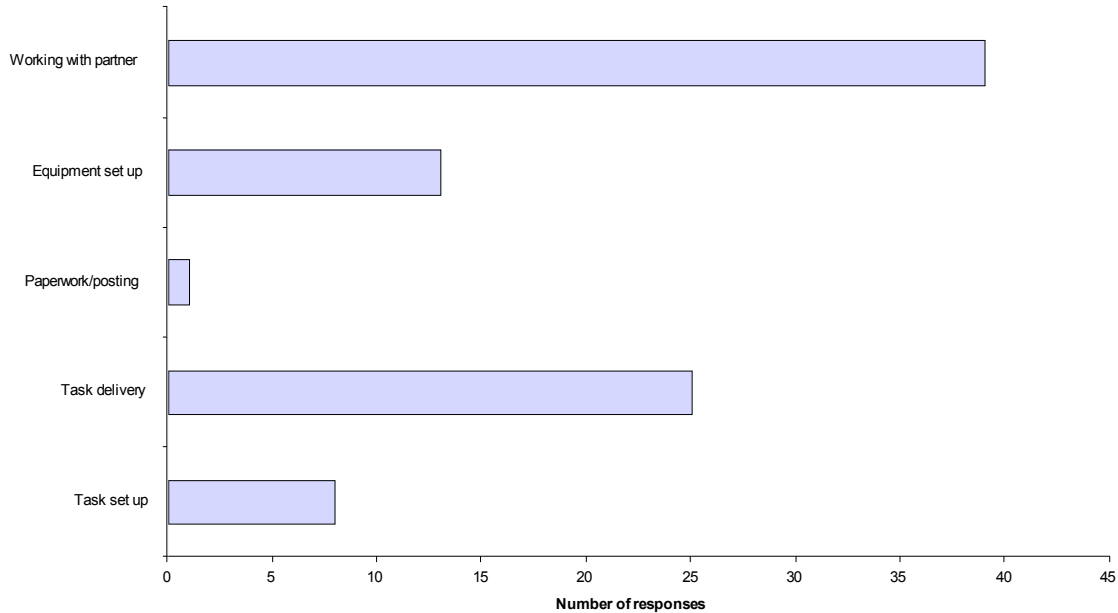


Figure 7: The skills teachers felt most confident about at the end of the training week

Several teachers acknowledged the importance of working effectively with a partner in order to implement the assessment tasks successfully. Their reasons were:

- the opportunity to share and clarify ideas
- working with complementary strengths
- being able to monitor each other to eliminate errors
- collegiality
- being able to share and consequently vary the tasks administered
- having a duplicate set of equipment
- being able to problem solve issues with someone
- gave mutual support and confidence

Some journal entry comments relating to effective partnerships were made during administration. These confirmed teachers’ ideas about the importance of successful collaboration:

TAJ13: I got to know my partner really well and have enjoyed the professional discussions on a range of topics. I don’t think it would be much fun doing the admin on your own – walking into a new school on your own would be hard, as some staff look at you with suspicion. It’s good to bounce ideas off and problem solve together.

TAJ7: The smoothness of administration depends on how well you work with your partner. Shared work load is very important in terms of task allocation. Task allocation did appear to be fair in most cases.

TAJ9: (*My partner*) and I are both well organised people who are prepared to give and take. From my perspective, neither of us seems to dominate. When one of us is busy the other is able to use her initiative and help our day/week run smoothly.

Teachers acknowledged that a positive collaborative relationship was beneficial to the administrator role. The mutual support that a constructive partnership provided enabled the administration of assessment tasks to run more smoothly and provided a sense of collegiality when working in changing environments.

1.6 The NEMP experience

Teachers had identified the skills, ideas and understandings learnt during the training (Section 1.3) and at the end of their training had discussed their perceptions of the most important skills needed in the administrator role (Section 1.4). On completion of their training as a NEMP teacher administrator, teachers experienced a high level of satisfaction. Teachers reported that the training programme was highly organised, the assessment tools were well constructed and relevant. They found the NEMP staff knowledgeable and helpful. The majority of teachers felt confident about entering schools and working with children on the assessment tasks. The following comments reflected these things:

TAJ7: The training was outstanding... the information presented was excellent, although after day two I was thinking, “what have I got myself into?” There was a lot to take in, but a fair bit of head space was given. The preparation (*training*) was well organised. A lot of information was covered, but it is all in the Admin. Manual; this is an excellent working document and point of referral.

TAJ6: The training has been pretty thorough... there have been long days, two of them in particular. I think there has been a good balance between the areas.

Teachers left the training week knowing that if they experienced any concerns or difficulties, they could contact any member of the NEMP team on the free ‘phone number, which they found reassuring.

TAJ5: I felt confident after that, that I could always contact someone at NEMP base. It’s very reassuring.

TAJ25: The 0800 number does give me confidence that help is at hand. Otago staff are very, very helpful.

These comments repeat those reported by Alison Gilmore (1999) in her study of the benefits of NEMP as professional development for teachers. Gilmore found that “the

professionalism and support from the NEMP team was commented on frequently (35%). In contrast the number of negative comments relating to the training week was very small. The most commonly expressed concern (by 18% of TAs) related to the intensity of the workload” (Section 3.1.1). Support from the NEMP office was also identified as being important: “The consensus view was that it was good to know that help was readily available from NEMP, which was generally described in positive terms such as reliable, efficient and professional (46%)”.

1.7 Important skills acquired from training identified at the end of the administrating period.

At the end of the training the majority of teachers felt confident about working in the administrator role as discussed in Section 1.5. They spent the next five weeks in schools, working in this role and implementing assessment tasks. As well as completing the third questionnaire, a number of administrators kept a journal and recorded their experiences throughout the five weeks. In the questionnaire teachers were asked to identify the most important skills that they had *acquired from training* that enabled them to work effectively in their role. This required teachers to reflect on both the training process and the administration period and decide on the most important skills they had learnt for implementing their new role. Their responses are shown in Figure 8. The skills seen as being the most important were:

- the ability to use ICT effectively to implement tasks and record data
- the methods for administrating tasks
- praising student’s efforts and not performance

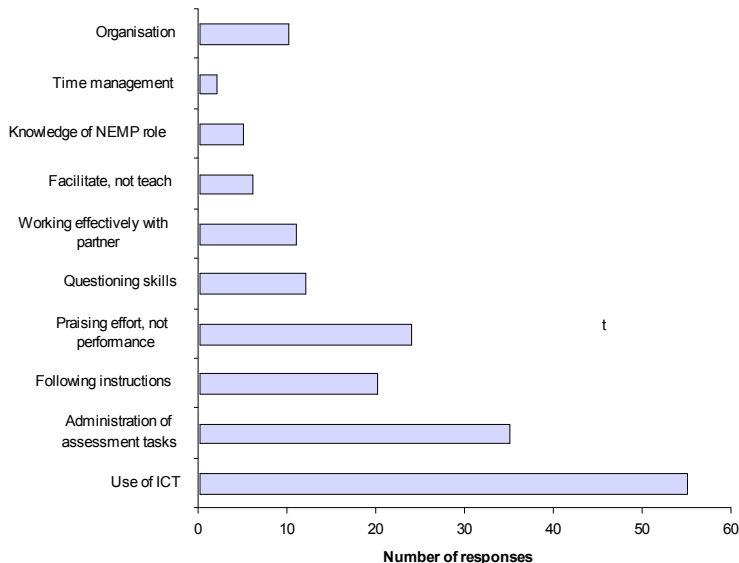


Figure 8: The three most important skills and understandings acquired from training

It is apparent that the training process enabled teachers to acknowledge and incorporate some of the skills and understandings that NEMP staff identified as being essential to implement the assessment programme effectively. The ability to use ICT equipment had been noted as a skill that teachers needed to learn (Figure 4). They identified it as a skill that they had learnt during training (Figure 5). At the end of the training, although ICT skills were identified as an important skill to have learnt, being able to work with a variety of technologies was not perceived as a significant skill for the administrator role. But, by the end of the administration period, the use of ICT equipment was identified by most teacher administrators as being the most important skill acquired from training that was necessary to implement their role successfully. It seems that participating in the administration process changed the perceptions of aspects of the role for many teacher administrators.

Following instructions was initially perceived to be an important facet of the administrator role (Figure 2). It was identified by most teachers as being the most important skill/understanding learnt during the training (Figure 5). After working in the administrator role, following instructions, although still acknowledged as being a necessary skill for implementing the assessment tasks had declined in importance (Figure 8).

Praising students' efforts not performance was acknowledged by some teachers to be important in their initial perceptions of the administrator role (Figure 2). It was also a significant skill/understanding taken up by teachers at the end of the training week (Figure 5). Administrating the assessment tasks confirmed to a number of teachers that praising students' efforts not performance was an important skill to use in the administrator role (Figure 8).

Although the administration of tasks was not rated by many teachers as being an important skill learnt at the end of training (Figure 5) they felt confident about delivering the assessment tasks (Figure 7). Figure 8 shows that after administrating, many teachers felt that the administration of assessment tasks was an important skill to have learnt.

However, teachers also identified other skills that they found to be important to them in order to implement the assessment procedure that they considered had not been part of the training process and some which had not been part of their perceptions of the role. These are discussed in the next section.

1.8 The most important skills required in the teacher administration role

As well as identifying the most important skills *acquired from the training programme*, (Section 1.7), Questionnaire 3 also asked teachers to identify the most important skills they perceived necessary to perform the administrator role. Again this required teachers to reflect on both their training process and their administration period and think about the skills that their new role required. The most important skills identified are shown in Figure 9 below:

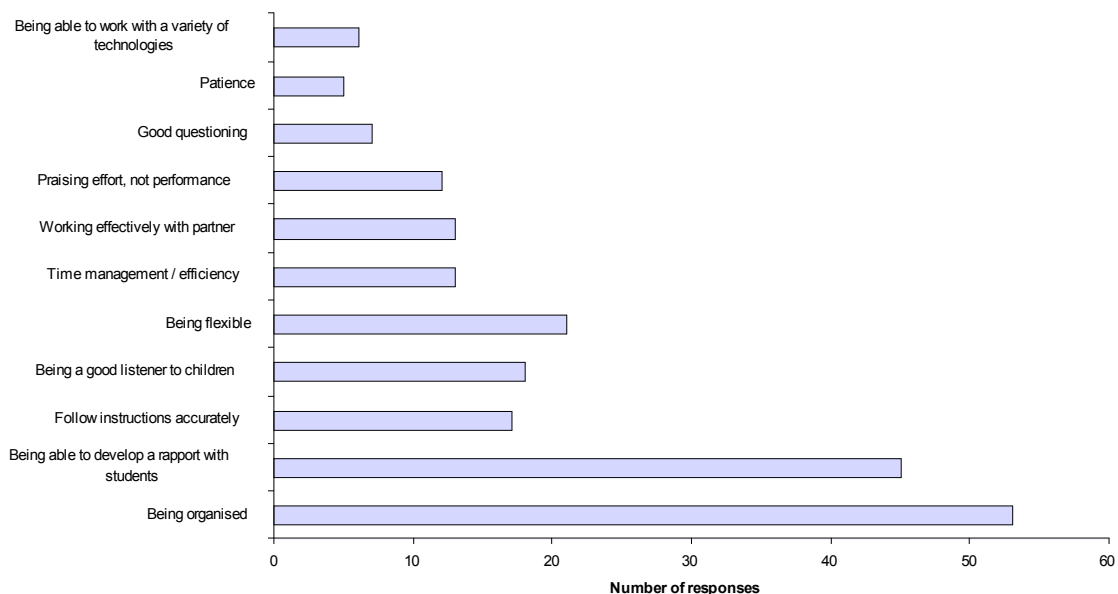


Figure 9: The most important skills and understandings to work effectively as a teacher administrator

The most important skills identified were:

- being organised
- developing a good rapport with students
- being flexible
- working effectively with a partner
- being a good listener to children
- following instructions accurately
- focusing on students' effort not their performance

Being organised and having a good rapport with students reflected teachers' initial perceptions of the teacher administrator role as shown in Figure 2. Teachers retained these initial ideas, which were affirmed by experiencing their new role. Being organised (including having good time management and working efficiently) and having a good rapport with students are essential components of the teaching role, which teachers acknowledged they brought with them to the administrator role (Figure 3).

Focusing on students' effort and not their performance was confirmed by a number of teachers as being a necessary skill to have. Following instructions accurately was also identified as being necessary, although its importance had declined (as discussed in the previous section). Being a good listener to children was part of teachers' initial perceptions of the role. Although this declined in importance by the end of the training period (Section 1.4) it maintained that level of importance at the end of administration.

The importance of working effectively with a partner was included in a few teachers' initial perceptions of the role (Figure 2). A number of teachers thought that they had the skills of working effectively with others (Figure 3), although it was identified as a skill some felt they need to learn (Figure 4). Some teachers acknowledged that they were able to develop a relationship with their partner during training (Figure 5). Although many teachers felt confident about working with a partner (Figure 7), the importance of a successful collaborative partnership was not realised by many teachers until they actually experienced working in the administrator role (Figure 9).

Although many skills learnt in training were acknowledged as being important in the administrator role, there were some skills that were not part of the training process and not part of teachers' perceptions of the role. At the end of the administration period the need for flexibility had arisen as being an important skill to have. This had not formed part of teachers' perceptions of the role at any stage. The need for teachers to be flexible in the administrator role had been identified by a member of the NEMP team (Section 1.1).

When also asked in Questionnaire 3 to identify what was the most difficult aspect of the administrator role, the need to be very flexible and work effectively with a partner were identified as the most common difficulties experienced by administrators. These are discussed in the next section.

1.9 Difficulties experienced by teachers when working in the administration role.

The difficulties that teachers experienced when working in the administrator role are shown in Figure 10.

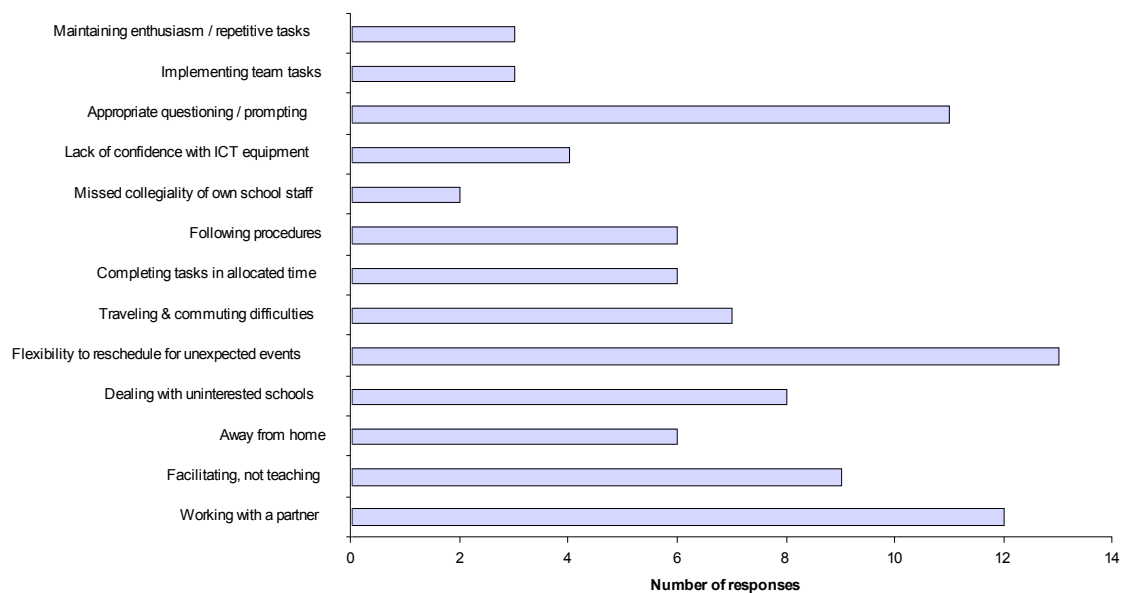


Figure 10: Difficulties (one or more) experienced by teachers when working in the teacher administrator role

It seems that some teacher administrators were not aware that the administrator role required a high degree of flexibility in order to accommodate such things as individual student issues, school timetabling difficulties, the impact of the school programme and unforeseen events. At the end of the five weeks in the administrator role, a number of teacher administrators included the need for flexibility as an important skill. These teachers did not include flexibility in their perception of the role. They felt that it should be focused on during the training process. Comments to this effect include:

TAJ3: The role is different from what I expected...we need to make organisational decisions and be flexible to enable tasks to be completed in this tight timeframe. I have realised that a lot more flexibility and initiative needs to be used. Some tasks are not cut and dry and there is the need to work with and adapt to different children, schools and situations.

TAJ26: A rapport with students is essential, and organisational skills are important. I do feel flexibility is more valuable than was indicated in training – adapting to schools, prior bookings, e.g. cross country, production, outside visitors.

TAJ17: My partner and I are working well together. We are both well organised and flexible – probably the two most important skills required.

The concept of flexibility is antithetical to following instructions and following the methodical implementation of the NEMP process that is a focus during the training week. Consequently, some teachers had difficulty working with the two ideas. This is known as role ambiguity, and is experienced by people when expectations within a role are incomplete or insufficient to guide behaviour (Biddle, 1979: 323). Although some NEMP staff addressed timetabling issues and provided anecdotal evidence of situations that may occur, it may be that the need for flexibility has to be made more explicit. This will serve to place the idea that flexibility is part of the required role in the mind of the administrator so that it becomes a shared expectation (Biddle, 1979: 117). As flexibility may not be a skill that can be taught in a week, such as is given for the NEMP training programme, it may well be essential to include ‘flexibility’ as a prerequisite in the advertisements and information package that NEMP uses to recruit teachers. Teachers commented to this effect in Questionnaire 3, when identifying the skills that NEMP needed to look for when selecting their administrators. Clarifying expectations at an early stage in the preparation process may enable teachers to adopt a new role more successfully as it becomes part of constructing their perceptions of that role.

Another considerable area of difficulty identified by administrators was working collaboratively with a partner. Although as reported in earlier sections, many teachers found this a valuable component of working on NEMP, when it was not successful there was a lot of anguish and frustration. Working with a partner was a significant change for teachers to make when adopting the new role of administrator. Many teachers have been through a ‘socialisation of isolation’ (Friend & Cook, 2003: 15) as they have developed their professional skills and abilities. The culture of many schools is one of independence

and self reliance, reinforced through structural isolation (Friend & Cook, 2003: 13-15). Individualism may provide teachers with an adaptive strategy that they actively construct to enable them to manage their relentless work schedule. It may be due to situational or administrative constraints which present significant barriers to doing otherwise. It may be a preferred way of working for a number of teachers on pedagogical or personal grounds (Hargreaves, 1994: 172-173). Whatever the origins of working individually, it can be difficult for teachers to make the transition from working independently to working collaboratively in a new role, thus affecting the ability to adopt the new role successfully.

Partner difficulties included: having different approaches to organizing and implementing the day; expectations of each other's approach and style which are not fulfilled; inflexibility of partner; hierarchical relationship of partnership.

TAJ25: I would do NEMP again despite having an 'unsatisfactory' partner. I have missed not being able to freely discuss aspects of the programme with her. I think being able to do that must be a learning advantage. I know I have deliberately masked my body language and monitored my conversation so as not to threaten my partner's position. I have tried at times to make suggestions and be a co-team member rather than a follower, especially when I became more confident being a teacher administrator. But my partner had to be the boss, so I let her be. I know I am being deliberately agreeable because the tension would be unbearable if I wasn't, and the important thing is to keep the programme going...it's necessary! I know I'm doing it, I don't feel angry about it: it is just a means to an end.

TAJ23: Getting used to working really closely with someone who approaches tasks and little things in a different way to me has been a challenge at times. I respect the fact that she is a senior teacher and has way more experiences than I do, but sometimes I feel that because of the difference in age and experiences, she doesn't value my contribution to things (as in organisation of materials etc.).

TAJ6: What I am finding a little difficult is working with a partner. Two organised people often have their own organisation systems.

This last comment demonstrated one of the tensions involved when skills considered essential for the role conflict in a collaborative situation. Although it was necessary to be extremely organised when preparing for and implementing NEMP's assessment procedures, individual ways of organizing things may conflict. In situations like this it is necessary that those involved have developed the skills and strategies to deal effectively with conflict situations to minimize the impact of disagreement on role performance.

Administrators who had experienced a positive relationship with their partner also made comments concerning the potential difficulties if the collaborative role was not successful.

TAJ17: We met up with some fellow 'NEMPers' on Friday night to share some stories. It made me appreciate that it must be difficult to work with a partner that you

didn't get along with. Several made comments about differences in style and organisation.

It can be difficult for teachers used to working in isolated classroom situations to make the transition to working collaboratively. A number of teachers expressed that they should have discussed issues of conflict with their partner but did not know how to do so, choosing instead to 'bite their tongue'. Others identified a need to have learnt some negotiation skills:

TM5: The training should include how to work closely with another person; we are so used to working on our own, in our own little classroom, it is quite difficult working so closely with someone else for a long period of time. I have talked with a few TA's and no one had a major bust up, but there were several things that were disagreed on and maybe learning some negotiation skills would be useful.

TAJ12: Forming a good, professional working relationship is essential. There are times when it is difficult. (*My partner*) criticises and tries to alter arrangements I have made – and this really annoys me. The peace is kept because I believe that we really do have to get on as a team. However, it isn't always easy.

At the end of the five weeks administrating...

At times I have felt that I needed advice on the difficulties of working with my partner. I think some of those times have caused me the only real stress in the job. However, we are expected to work closely for six weeks with a stranger – in constant close proximity. I suppose there's bound to be difficulties. Having said that, I know she has probably found me difficult to work with too. I've done quite a bit of tongue biting to keep the peace, but inwardly I've been annoyed. I probably should have brought it out in the open.

A collaborative relationship cannot be treated as 'natural' and left to evolve entirely on its own. It is a purposeful relationship, established with professional goals in mind, and needs constant maintenance. Communication is critical in order to clarify misunderstandings and confirm mutual understandings. Collaboration requires parity among participants, where each person's contribution is equally valued. It is essential for individuals to make the necessary adjustments in order that they have parity as they work together on a specific collaborative task, even if they do not have parity in other situations (Friend & Cook, 2003: 6). A perceived disparity in professional ability seems to have been a cause of partnership difficulties in several administrator situations. Instances of this occurred when a classroom teacher was partnered with a teacher from a management background and the classroom teacher felt that her comments, systems of organisation and ideas were not valued. It also occurred between teachers with significant differences in their amounts of teaching experience, where the more experienced teacher dominated the partnership leaving the other teacher feeling under-valued.

Salend and Johansen (1977) focused on the concerns teachers have about working collaboratively and how they addressed and resolved those concerns. They identified factors that contributed to the development of successful collaborative work. They suggested that training in adult-adult communication, active listening, conflict resolution and problem solving needs to be provided for adults becoming involved in collaborative work (1977: 8). Individuals need to learn ways to negotiate working effectively together that enables honest communication, risk taking, acknowledging the perspectives and experiences of their partner and letting go of absolute control (1977: 9). Friend and Cook, (2003:170) acknowledge that professional educators have been well trained to work with children but propose that they know surprisingly little when it comes to the adult-adult interactions that drive collaboration. They suggest that considerable attention should be given to assisting educators to develop positive communication skills with other adults. This enables them to attend to relationship issues right from the beginning, and as they rise along the way, in order to develop the trust required to give and receive authentic criticism of one another.

By the end of the administrating period, more administrators acknowledged that working effectively with a partner was an important skill to have developed (Figure 9). It appeared that having performed the role of teacher administrator and developed a better understanding of the administration process and the procedures for setting up that process, the importance of a good collaborative working relationship with one's partner was reinforced.

Another difficulty experienced by administrators was questioning and prompting students appropriately, which required administrators to deviate from the script. For a number of teacher administrators, 'following the script' in order to facilitate the assessment procedure was a difficult task (Figure 10). Administrators recognised the importance of following the script accurately in order to acquire valid data, and included it in their most important ideas learnt during the training week (Figure 5). Most of the difficulties with following the script arose from the use of prompts and questioning in order to elicit more information from students (Figure 10). Administrators felt that they needed more guidance as to what was acceptable prompting if the 'script' was not comprehended by students, as they were unsure as to how much they could acceptably deviate from the script in order to elicit a response. Following the NEMP process accurately is a crucial part of taking on the administrator role. By acknowledging it as one of the most important aspects of the role, teachers demonstrate that they have an understanding of what is required of them in their new role. However, it seems that in order to adopt the role successfully there is a need to be prepared differently for this aspect of the role before they go out and work in schools.

Comments received throughout the administration procedure include:

TAJ17: Sticking to the script has been the most difficult, especially when things are worded in a way that students don't understand. I am not sure how much prompting is acceptable...I don't think this was covered in our training – maybe good and/or not recommended exemplars would be helpful.

TAJ13: Not sure how much intervention I should be giving to keep students on the right track – how much to leave them even if they are going wrong. Got my report – got pulled up on this, so obviously I need to be more ‘hands off’ with my prompting. It’s good to get that feedback. Probably more emphasis could have been made on this aspect of training.

2 weeks later

The prompting is still something I struggle with. Some suggestions on a laminated card that you could have in front of you would be useful – not enough emphasis on this during training.

TAJ12: Not prepared well for how far the prompting can go. In my efforts to get children to explain ideas I’m worried if I’m over-prompting now

NEMP staff also acknowledged that keeping to the administrator script in the manuals posed difficulties for administrators:

NEMP2: Definitely forcing....you know how they read from the script, they have to stick to the script but in the end it’s sounding very like, rote and there’s no...I think the student’s feeling quite isolated in a way sitting there...so that’s not a good thing, I see that quite a bit. Also, their prompting can be too leading...prompting is very important, that they don’t tell, give answers as they prompt, or they prompt too hard, forcing the child instead of giving them time; it’s very important to give them time...pretty quickly you’ve got to have a rapport with that child and work out exactly when you think they’re going to speak...it’s quite hard really.

After watching the first week of Year 4 administrator video tapes

Prompting and reiterating the questions was not so good.

NEMP4: It is difficult to get across to TA’s how to rephrase things without being leading...this leads to the tension between them following the script and paraphrasing without giving a direction

From comments received it is apparent that following instructions and sticking to the script in order to follow the NEMP process was a problem for the administrators. A number of administrators did not successfully integrate the skills of prompting and questioning appropriately. When working as an administrator, this caused conflict between how they perceived their role and what the role seemed to require. As discussed in Section 1.8 concerning the notion of flexibility, this again appeared to be an instance of role ambiguity (Biddle, 1979: 323) where there is insufficient knowledge to guide behaviour. This created difficulties for the successful adoption of the role.

1.10 Feedback

In the previous section it was mentioned that NEMP staff watched video tape from the first week of administrating. At the end of each week of administrating in schools, the administrators send completed video tapes and paper work of assessment data to NEMP in Dunedin. NEMP staff viewed sections of each administrator working with students at the end of the first week. Feedback is then given by NEMP staff to each administrator. This feedback took the form of a general newsletter to all administrators which included: general reminders of things that administrators should be doing, for example, following the script and procedures in the manual consistently, supplies being set out before commencing each task; administrative issues that cause common problems, for example, labelling tapes correctly, checking the microphone is working, ensuring that the completion sheets are filled in correctly. Information relating to administering specific tasks correctly is included in this section if necessary. The teacher administrators also received specific feedback on their administration. The feedback was important to administrators as it provided them with a link to the NEMP staff and reassured them that they have interpreted the role correctly. If an administrator's performance required immediate attention, a member of the NEMP staff contacted them by telephone. Most administrators received feedback by the end of the second week, which enabled them to focus on any issues and implement changes by the third week of administrating. Some NEMP staff identified a need to be in contact with administrators before this:

NEMP3: I would like to put a call through to each pair in first week...24 pairs- viable; could be shared around. It's a pastoral care function...it's a harsh break from the training week to being out there. You can see during training week that some of the pairs might want or need more personal contact. A phone call gives the TAs an opportunity to talk about what went well and any concerns or difficulties they may have. Not everyone rings, and it is a mistake to assume that hearing nothing means that all is well...

NEMP2: I would like to get, maybe...the report back to the TA's...you know how they get a report on their performance... and it doesn't arrive until the second week, which means it's not effective until the third week... so it's a matter of seeing how they're going earlier on. If I'm very concerned I ring up, as quickly as I can, though sometimes they're not too keen on that, to get their first phone call, "Oh, you're doing this wrong...", is not too good for them, but that worries me a little bit. It's often not until the third week that a problem is picked up on... and sorted out. And I think that people like (*NEMP staff member*) even find that with the returns and all that sort of thing, that things haven't been returned the way they should...he's in the same situation and he gets quite uptight in the first two weeks, but by the third, you know, hopefully it's sorted out.

Administrators look forward to receiving feedback and having their work corroborated and getting suggestions for improvement. However, the feedback sent out received a variety of responses:

TAJ14: Really appreciated the feedback

TAJ2: It was great to get the NEMP feedback...but know my administrating has lapses. Trying to head to consistency! Newsletter was great too.

For some administrators the feedback confirmed that they were performing well in their new role, reinforcing the skills and ideas that they had learned. Administrators who were aware of inconsistencies in their execution of the role also welcomed the reminders and reinforcement.

However, it was important that feedback was accurate in order to be meaningful. There were some situations where teachers felt that they were fulfilling certain aspects of their role that were subject to critical comment on their feedback sheets. However, even if they disagreed with the feedback given, it still served to focus the administrator's attention onto particular aspects of their role:

TAJ6: My partner and I both got feedback sheets in the post on Friday and were quite disheartened by them, as we have been striving to administer to an excellent standard. Both of us were advised that our 'relationships with children' needed attention. We were perplexed as the children have seemed happy, relaxed and reluctant to finish sessions. We were told not to rush into tasks before greeting children. We thought markers would realize greeting and informal discussion had taken place prior to pushing 'record'. We were trying to avoid making markers sit through irrelevant stuff!

For many teachers the feedback enabled them to focus on skills and ideas that they had forgotten or needed to consolidate in order to perform their new role successfully:

TAJ5: The feedback I received was mostly positive – I was relieved. The few suggestions I have been given with regard to language proved useful and I am mindful of this as I interact with students.

TAJ3: Although I dreaded the feedback form and am cross with myself for missing reading the instructions properly, it was good to be picked up on it, even though I felt foolish. The feedback was positive too...it encourages you to continue to aspire to be the best you can.

A number of administrators did not receive their feedback until after several weeks of administrating. This was often the case when administrators were working away from home for several weeks in a row and did not return home at the weekends. In these instances teachers were frustrated when they found that they were performing their role inadequately and had continued to do so for some time. Teachers expressed a desire to work effectively in the administrator role and welcomed information that enabled them to adopt this role successfully:

TAJ10: I didn't go home at the end of week 2 and therefore didn't get my feedback in the mail until the end of week 3, and that's over half (the time) that I've been doing things wrong and didn't know. I will have to work really hard to get it right for the last 2 schools.

TM5: It would have been useful to have the feedback sent to the next school that we were going to. I didn't get mine until week 4 as I didn't go back home until then, and I would have liked to have received it sooner.

It appears from comments made by administrators that feedback on their performance was important to them, to reassure or identify areas of concern in regard to aspects of their performance, so that they could confirm their perceptions of their role. It would therefore be beneficial for administrators to have had the opportunity to practice their role and receive feedback on their performance as they are *learning* about the role, during their training week, to acknowledge good technique and help them identify areas that need to be improved. This was suggested by administrators when they identified the sort of practice they required that would help them to perform more confidently in their new role. For example:

TAJ13: Thinking about what I could be better prepared for...it's like we should have done a few practice runs, and been observed and given feedback during the training...it would have been useful. You don't realize you do things unless you are told or you watch yourself on video.

Learning is facilitated by regular ongoing feedback. Thus, feedback during training would enable teachers to develop and refine their competence with administrating before they are placed in the situation 'for real'. Research conducted on the role of experiential learning, especially in adult education (Dorn, 1989; Knowles 1977; Petranek, 1994) has shown that receiving feedback from different perspectives during participatory methods of learning helps to anchor content and transform behaviour. It also develops positive peer support through the group's sharing of experiences, positive comments and practical suggestions. Having had the opportunity to receive feedback from their tutors and their peers and to give feedback to others, may mean that administrators are better equipped to monitor their own performance and also to provide constructive feedback to their partner in the field. This may also help to alleviate some of the partnership issues between administrators.

After viewing the video from the first week of administrating, any feedback subsequently provided by NEMP staff to administrators would be easier to give, as administrators would be used to receiving constructive feedback by this point. It would be worth posting written feedback to the next school that the administrators are to work in, as suggested by one administrator. This would avoid the difficulties of not receiving mail that some administrators experience if they are working out of their area and do not return home at weekends

The proposal to put a phone call through to teacher administrators during their first week could produce results similar to the ‘Hawthorne effect’. The Hawthorne effect refers to the phenomenon that mere attention to employees can increase the quality of performance. It was the result of a series of experiments conducted at Western Electric’s Hawthorne Works, in Illinois, which found that attention given to workers (in this case by researchers) was perceived as respect and interest in their activities and performance. Consequently, their performance in their working role improved (Mayo, 1933). This effect has had various interpretations, but there is a consensus that human beings perform at higher levels when they are being attended to respectfully by a perceived ‘authority’. The time spent on a telephone call to each administrator partnership may be time well spent if it produces similar effects to those recorded.

1.11 The practical use of ICT equipment and the assessment process

The need to be competent and confident with ICT equipment had been perceived by teachers as being important during various stages of the training and administration process (Sections 1.2, 1.3, 1.7). The use of ICT equipment is essential in NEMP assessment. Some of the assessment tasks are implemented using a computer, in order to provide variation in the delivery of tasks and in the way students respond to tasks. Many of the assessment procedures are videotaped so that data that can be analysed and marked at a later date. Teacher administrators must learn to use these technologies and incorporate them into their interactions with students. Learning the skills of using ICT equipment is seen as a priority by teachers, prior to commencing their training. This is shown in Figure 4, Section 2.

NEMP staff indicate that learning about and using the ICT equipment is always perceived by teachers as a challenge:

NEMP1: The part that teachers every year say is one of the most daunting and challenging bits is the toys department; the cameras and the video recorders; that throws a lot of teachers, and I can understand that. I mean teachers do not spend a lot of time behind video cameras, and using computers in classrooms.

NEMP2: The computer, video camera, that’s the one they tend to come to me about... electronics... “What happens if I don’t record, or have no tape”...that’s what really worries them...

NEMP3: Physical equipment...computer and video they definitely find difficult. There is a wide range of skills that teachers bring. Also, our equipment is old... computers Mac., and our videos are not digital. There is also time pressure on equipment sessions.

Administrators identified the use of ICT equipment as one of the three most important skills they developed during their training week (Figure 5). For some administrators, ICT equipment was one of the difficulties they encountered in implementing their TA role effectively (Figure 10). In Questionnaire 3, teachers indicated that the use of ICT

equipment is an area that they would like to have more training on. This is shown in Figure 11 below.

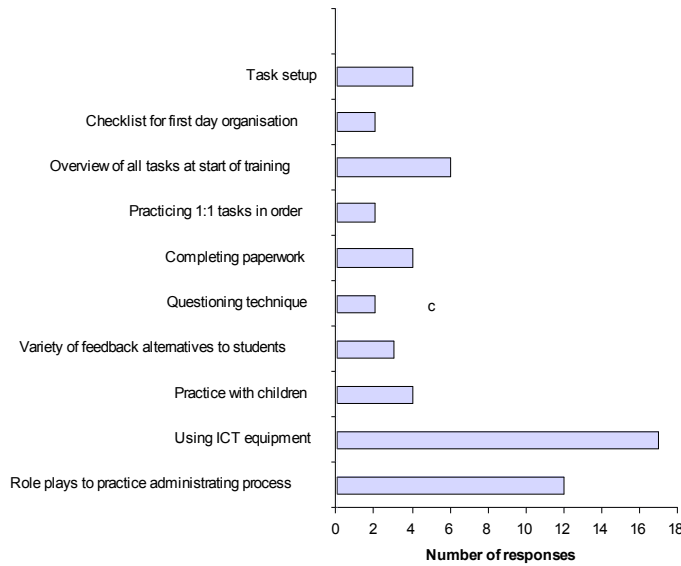


Figure 11: Areas teacher administrators felt they required more training on

However, they were specific as to the sort of practice they required that would enable them to use the equipment more confidently:

TA8-14:...I felt that a lot of emphasis was placed on recording, and a lot of the data depends on recording, so I felt that we should be able to record it, and then play it back to see. Because what we're going to do now is go out there and record stuff...we've only recorded a little bit at a time... but if we've done like 5 minutes or 6 minutes of it with our partner, then we would have felt more comfortable.

TAJ25: Perhaps we should have practiced more with a tape in the camera. I did practice at home before week one, but there was no tape in the camera. Maybe the TA trainees could watch a video of different set ups and where the camera is placed, because part of the reason for the mistake I made was that I had not set the room up well.

TAJ13: Thinking about what I could be better prepared for...it's like we should have done a few practice runs, and been observed and given feedback during the training...it would have been useful. You don't realize you do things unless you are told or you watch yourself on video. Maybe we could spend some time on Friday looking at some of the tapes done that week and analyse strengths and weaknesses.

In order to develop confidence using the equipment in an authentic situation, there were suggestions for the need to role play an assessment situation in order for administrators to go through the procedure of setting up the equipment and using it appropriately. In Questionnaire three, teachers were asked to suggest ways that they felt they could be prepared more effectively to work as an administrator. The idea of role playing was identified by a number of teacher administrators in order to help them grasp the implementation of a variety of aspects of their role. This is shown in Figure 12 below.

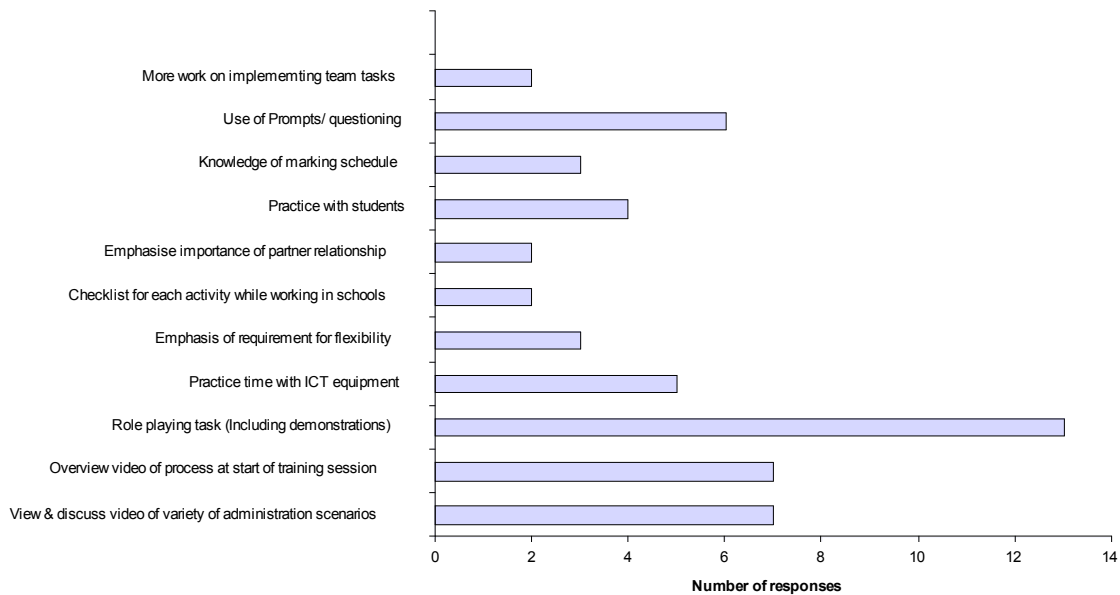


Figure 12: Suggestions by teachers

Comments to support this idea include:

TA8-8: I would have liked to experiment a bit more, with probably...and I don't know how you'd do it...we talked about it this afternoon, whether you could have children, but then we decided on sort of a mock up situation more. Today we had a mock up situation where we were the students and we sat down on the floor and we did a group situation. And had we not done that we wouldn't have asked the sort of questions. Until you're put in a situation... you have a feeling...if it's just read and you read through it, you don't see some things until you get down and actually do it

TA8-13: The other thing I would have liked was if there had been a role play. If the lecturers, our teachers as it were, if they'd actually done, right at the beginning, if they'd said, "Right we're going to look at the 1-1..." and actually showed us right from, "take the sticker out, stick it on that child's book"... if that could have been done for each area, I would have felt better. Rather than it being broken up into "now these are the task questions" and a couple of days later "now this is the administration for that"... So I thought it could have been better put together. It would have helped me, anyway.

I'd have felt happier if I could have put all the pieces together, and given that a run through...that would have helped me.

Even better would have been one of the lecturers spending 5 or 10 minutes with each of us, if that was possible, use them as a student and then some feedback that said "well you could have done this...or I couldn't understand what you said", you know. That would have been good, rather than waiting for the first week to go by and then looking at tapes... it might have been an idea to find some time to do that.

TA8-7: More time **ON** the tasks, I know we spent a lot of time on the tasks; it's been good but it's been a little superficial in a way. I probably would have liked to **do** them rather than just sit there and look through them with a partner, but to actually do them in a group situation. It puts us on the spot a bit but it is a good way to learn.

TM5: I think that you need to role play in order to be familiar with the script and equipment before using it with students. You need to be familiar with equipment use and comfortable with being on video.

The administrator role was complex, requiring the interweaving of a number of new skills into those that the teacher already possessed. Several administrators had identified the need to role play the administrator role in order to develop a better understanding of the role and consequently to be more effective in implementing it. Role playing is practice; by doing something as though it were for real, the learner gets to think, feel and act at the same time, developing a comprehensive and global understanding of the situation (Shaw, Corsini, Blake & Mouton, 1980: 2). It is a technique that is used to provide learners with knowledge and skills by allowing them to experience a nearly real situation and providing them with feedback information, to better understand themselves and their behaviour and increase their effectiveness in various situations (Shaw, et al 1980: 1). It involves realistic behaviours under unrealistic conditions. When learners are asked to do something with the learning material that they have read or heard about they are provided with an opportunity to acquire a fuller knowledge and understanding of the new information. Role playing is now recognised as a valuable procedure whenever people need to understand a situation better or be more effective in dealing with it. One of the most important aspects of role playing is that it provides a simulated reality experience in which a complete skill can be rehearsed without hurting oneself or others through failure (Shaw, et al 1980: 2-8).

Although trainee administrators may appear to have an understanding of the administrator role from reading and discussion, there is often a difference between 'knowing that' and 'knowing how'. Shaw et al (1980: 8) suggest that there is often a discrepancy between what a person knows and how they behave. Role playing can be helpful in encouraging changes in behaviour, either through the opportunity for practicing a new behaviour or through the use of feedback. Administrators acknowledged the need for feedback to enable them to modify existing behaviour to accommodate the new role.

Role playing also puts the emphasis on personal concerns or problems. Often training procedures can be too abstract or too general, or they focus on hypothetical or typical problems. Through role play relevant, personal concerns can be identified and addressed through feedback and reflection (Shaw, et al 1980: 21). This was certainly acknowledged by the administrator who commented, “And had we not done that we wouldn’t have asked the sort of questions. Until you’re put in a situation... you have a feeling...if it’s just read or you read through it, you don’t see some things until you get down and actually do it” (TA8-8).

1.12 Viewing video scenarios

Figure 12 in Section 1.11, shows suggestions made by teachers on how to enhance their role performance. The suggestions included areas they would like more training on and strategies that could enhance their skills and understanding of the administrator role. Several administrators identified the need to view video recordings of NEMP assessment procedures in order to clarify their understanding of the role. Viewing video recordings was also identified as being useful for providing examples of how to set up the administration. Comments to support these ideas included:

TA8-3: One thing I’d have liked to have done was seen some good models; so maybe video of teachers showing good practice in their role for the different areas. Maybe in the middle of the week or towards the end of the week, show a couple of teachers performing the tasks with excerpts to show how they go about the process, the prompting, how to get the most out of the kids; that would have been really powerful, I think.

TA4-4: Spending more time with setting up your area, how you might have your equipment (on the side, at a table). Maybe seeing video clips that show this ...seeing how the administration is set up rather than just seeing the interview.

TA4-7: I would have liked a holistic overview...I likened it to a jigsaw; I like to see the picture before I start. On the first day we had a bit of this and a bit of that but I wasn’t quite sure of the whole picture

Teacher markers, who had been through the training and administration process and then subsequently participated in the marking process, also reiterated these ideas:

TM2: A short video of a good example of a set up that is well set up, that it’s clear to hear and that the children are actually speaking well so that it gives the quality tapes for the markers. We have seen examples this week where the students are not all in the picture, or all four in the group are there, but they are so far away that you can’t tell who’s talking, which is important if we are doing marking on how many people in the group are participating. Also if we had pictures and the child said, “well this is a good one because...” and a lot of administrators said, “Ah, that’s the such and such a picture...”, but some didn’t, which makes it really

hard to know what we are assessing. So, if we had just seen a video and those sorts of things were pointed out to us that ‘that’s really good practice’, I think that we could have done a lot better at times, all of us.

TM3: I think it would be good to watch video footage and discuss “this is a good way of administrating because...or this is not such a good way”, so that we actually get a bit of an insight, I think, visually. Have a few sessions as part of our training, to give us a little bit more insight...I think that would have been helpful.

TAJ14: Perhaps see a short clip of a good video interview so that we could be more aware of camera distance, group shots and teacher role – what we should aim for.

Although there are differing ideas as to when the videos should be shown there was a consensus that they would be a valuable addition to the training programme. Comments to this end had also been made by Year 8 teacher administrators on their NEMP evaluation forms, completed at the end of their training week. As a consequence, NEMP had made some video clips available for the Year 4 trainee teacher administrators to watch during their break times. There were positive comments made about this:

TA4-8: Enjoyed the videos of good practice...that was excellent; it was worth its weight in gold. I learnt this week that I am definitely a visual learner; I like to see things in front of me so to see possible scenarios and how people dealt with them was excellent.

Using these video clips had also been identified by some NEMP staff as being worthwhile:

NEMP2: Definitely – we got comments back that they would like to see it on the first day as a whole group, and I’ve always thought that too. Most went and watched them, which was really good. Maybe when we go up and trial tasks in Auckland, we might film a bit of how ‘stations’ works and how ‘independent’ works, because that’s not something that’s on those tapes. If it could fit into the programme early in the week it would be really good. I’ve always thought that. It would settle their mind and it would stop me having to answer lots of those questions in that first session.

NEMP3: Yes, there was a lot of feedback that they went really well...good practice and modeling needs to be brought into a sharper focus. I think it’s critical that it is built into a specific session. It should probably come up right at the first meeting and reinforced in a later session once they’ve built up a better understanding of the whole process.

NEMP4: Definitely...we had heaps and heaps of positive feedback about it. It was beneficial in lots of ways... even an exemplar you could find faults with... shows that the job is not that easy... shows a good model. Even though the tapes were made available for the teachers to view independently in break times or in the

evening, not many had seen them until I included them at the end of the week. They commented that it would have been good to have seen them earlier in the week, which of course they could have done. We got through the 1-1 stuff with enough time for 3 of the 4 groups to have that viewing. It was at the end of the week. But in some ways it wasn't a bad time to do it as they were at a point which they had enough of a schema to actually slot in what they were seeing... I played them and we stopped them and talked about them... I think we could have more and I can't see why it can't be in that first session, just, "This is what it looks like, this is a 1-1, here's a team, this is what we're talking about and you will see more of these in a more structured way later".

Risko, Yount and McAllister (1992) have suggested that viewing video tapes enables learners to acquire mental models of authentic situations which helps prepare them for entering similar situations themselves. However, in order for video to be an effective part of a training programme it is important that it is selected with particular learning outcomes in mind that help progress towards the programme's goals (Brophy, 2004: x). It has been suggested by R.J. Spiro that video tapes are best viewed in relatively short clips, often as short as one to three minutes (Spiro and Jehng, 1990: 163-205). However, the clips are repeatedly viewed and discussed, attending each time to a different feature or perspective of the situation being viewed, for example, physical layout, questioning by the teacher, encouraging student response. The permanence of video allows the trainer to select a particular focus of attention knowing that the opportunity to return to other issues is there. Brophy also emphasises the importance of scaffolded group discussion after viewing a section of video tape in order to allow trainees the opportunity to reflect on pertinent issues from the clip (Brophy, 2004: 296 & 303). This allows exposure to a variety of comments, questions and opinions, creating a richer experience for trainees than they would have had from viewing the clip alone. Viewing in isolation, without the assistance of a facilitator, means that viewers are limited in what they take from watching a clip by their prior personal knowledge and experiences. Viewers can also react judgmentally to what is seen, judging a performance as either good or bad. Facilitated viewing can shift the focus from generic judgmental responses towards more analytical discussions of what is viewed.

The administration process affected teachers' perceptions of their role in a number of ways: it reinforced their initial perceptions of the need to be organised and to have developed a good rapport with students (Section 1.8). It focused administrators on the importance of the role of ICT equipment in implementing the tasks, on the need to focus on students' efforts and not their performance and on the importance of the methods of administering the tasks (Section 1.7). Adminstrating also caused teachers to discover areas that they had not perceived to be significant in their administrator role, such as the need for flexibility and the importance of a good collaborative partnership (Section 1.8). It caused a conflict in their perceptions through the need to be able to question and prompt students when instructions were not fully understood, without compromising the assessment process (Section 1.10) Participating in the administration process enabled teachers to identify ways in which the training could have better prepared them for the role, such as using video scenarios and role play (Section 1.12).

1.13 Understanding of Assessment

Teachers' perceived that working with NEMP would be an opportunity for professional development in the area of assessment, enable them to develop their knowledge and understanding of assessment practices (Section 1.0). It was noted that the majority of teachers chose to apply for the position of administrator because they were interested in one or more of the curriculum areas being assessed (Figure 1). Responses to the three questionnaires monitored teachers' perceptions of their understanding of assessment before and after training and on completion of administrating. It was apparent that teachers felt they developed confidence in their knowledge and understanding of assessment. This corroborated the findings of Gilmore's research on the benefits of NEMP as professional development for teachers (1999). She found that the majority of teachers in her study had gained general ideas about assessment, gained confidence in methods of assessment and had developed their repertoire of approaches to assessment (pp. 30-33).

Figure 13 below shows teachers' confidence about their knowledge and understanding of assessment before and after training and at the end of administrating.

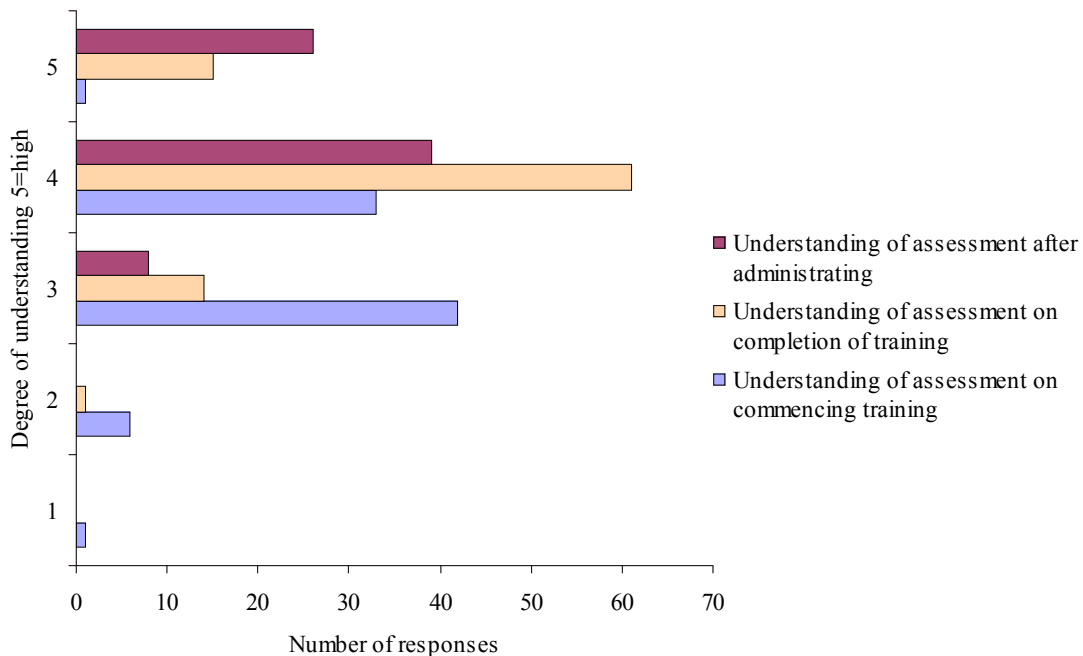


Figure 13: Teachers' understanding of assessment

1.14 Teacher markers' ideas on important skills for teacher administrators

Marking NEMP assessment data also affected teachers' perceptions of the administrator role. A small group of teachers who had completed the administrator training and had

worked as administrators were identified as being involved with the marking of these tasks. After completing the marking in January 2006, their views were sought as to the most important skills necessary for a NEMP administrator. The skills identified during interviews were:

- Developing a good rapport with students
- Being organised
- Sticking to the script
- Facilitating and not teaching

Comments from interviews include:

TM1: You have to establish a relationship with the children so that they feel comfortable and are happy to be there

Organisation is important...everything needs to be out before you start

Understand the reason why you are doing the testing – so that you have an idea of the importance of asking the question properly so that you get a satisfactory answer...the importance of sticking to the script

TM2: Rapport is so important... making them feel at ease so that you get the best out of them

Keeping to the script – so that it is consistent with everybody

Facilitating not teaching – encouraging them to give the best answers they can

TM3: Developing a rapport with children; the way that you are sitting and your body language. Getting a ‘feel’ for the child so that you know when to move them along, give appropriate prompts, that kind of thing.

The teacher markers had retained their initial perceptions of being organised and building a rapport with students, as well as incorporating skills and understandings from the training process. From the perspective of the marker, the idea of following instructions and sticking to the script in order to follow the NEMP process was identified as being more important than it had been at the end of the administration period (Figure 8). Working in a facilitating role was considered to be important by the teacher markers. Although teacher administrators had considered this to be important at the end of their training week (Figure 6), it was less important to them at the end of their administration period (Figure 8). The teacher markers viewed a considerable amount of videoed assessment data. They observed a variety of teachers working in their new role as administrators, interacting with students and implementing the NEMP assessment process. Through marking the data they gained a better understanding of the purpose of the administrator role. It seemed that viewing these situations from the perspective of a marker analyzing data enabled teachers to develop a more thorough understanding of

what is required from the administrator. It enabled them to identify what skills are necessary to implement this role effectively in order to obtain comprehensive data. Therefore it may be that in order for teachers to develop a more thorough understanding of the purpose of the administrator role they have to participate in both practical learning experiences and view video scenarios of the role. This would enable them to understand the complexity and challenges of the role and identify the skills and strategies that need to be integrated in order to perform the role successfully.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This section summarizes the findings from this study. It discusses the effects of teacher perceptions on their ability to adopt a new role. It identifies the need for agencies involved with teacher education to acknowledge teachers' perceptions when they undergo professional development. It considers the implications of these findings for constructing and implementing professional development programmes.

From information provided by teachers through questionnaires, journal entries and interviews and from interviews with NEMP staff it was possible to provide information about the research questions outlined at the beginning of this report. These questions were to do with:

- Determining how teachers initially perceived the role of teacher administrator
- Identifying how NEMP administrator training affected those initial perceptions
- Finding out how the administrating process affected teacher perceptions of their role
- Identifying how observing other teacher administrators, whilst marking NEMP assessment data, affected the teacher's perception of the administrator role
- Establishing what NEMP required from the teacher administrator
- Discussing ways by which any discrepancies between the requirements of the administrator role and the preparation for this role may be resolved

For the majority of teachers coming to the training week, the administrator role was perceived to be one in which they would receive professional development in assessment in the specified curriculum areas. They expected the role would require them to be able to develop a good rapport with students and be a good listener to students' ideas. They perceived there would be a need to be organised and to follow instructions accurately.

At the end of the training process, having a positive rapport with children, being organised and following instructions (sticking to the script) which formed teachers' initial perceptions of the administrator role, were still perceived to be the most important skills for administrating. However, being able to use the ICT equipment effectively, working in a facilitating role as opposed to a teaching role and focusing on students' effort and not their performance were acknowledged as important skills learnt during the training. The training process had enabled teachers to develop their knowledge and understanding of the role and assimilate these into their perceptions of the role.

After completing the administrating process, teachers' initial perceptions of the need to be organised and to have developed a good rapport with students were reinforced. The administration process reaffirmed the importance of focusing on students' effort and not their performance and the significance of the role of ICT equipment in implementing the tasks, which were noted as being important skills/understandings developed in training. Although the administration of tasks was not rated by many teachers as being an important skill learnt at the end of training, by the end of the administration period many teachers felt that the administration of assessment tasks was an important skill to have developed. At the end of administrating, following instructions accurately had declined in perceived importance. By the end of the administration period teachers felt that they had developed their confidence with assessment practices.

By the end of their training, teachers acknowledged the importance of working in a facilitating capacity and following procedures accurately. At the end of administrating this had caused some conflict with their perceptions of the role, as some teachers felt inadequately prepared for prompting students and rephrasing instructions without compromising the assessment process. Some teachers felt that they had not had the opportunities to develop and practice these skills in ways that would enable them to transfer them successfully to their new role of administrator in schools. From the results shown in Figure 5 it would seem that NEMP training was successful in providing teachers with knowledge and understanding of the new aspects of the administrators' role (Section 1.3). However, for some teachers, it appeared that this knowledge and understanding was not well integrated into the practical application as it contradicted their perceptions of the role. It is important that training methods are flexible enough to monitor and adjust teachers' perceptions as necessary, in order to achieve the best outcome in the situation they are being prepared for.

On completion of the administration process, a number of teachers found that they had experienced other situations that were not part of their perceptions of their new role. They found themselves in situations that they felt they had not been adequately prepared for, such as the need to be flexible and to have the ability to work collaboratively with another adult. These things affected their work as administrators. This seems to support the results of Creighton and Johnsons' (2002) study (Introduction). If the challenges faced in a new role are far removed from the perceptions of that role, it causes stress and anxiety, resulting in impaired performance. It is suggested that in order to perform a complex role effectively there is a need to have opportunities to practice certain procedures and strategies before being required to execute them in the 'real' environment. This allows for the opportunity to make mistakes, which serve to enhance learning and cultivate new perceptions.

Administrators who had participated in the marking process also reported on their perceptions of the administrator role. These administrator/ markers also retained the initial perceptions of being organised and building a rapport with students, as well as incorporating some skills and understandings from the training process. Following instructions and sticking to the script in order to follow the NEMP process was identified

as being essential. This had declined in importance by the end of the administration period. Working in a facilitating role was considered to be important by the teacher markers. Although teacher administrators had considered this to be important at the end of their training week it was less important to them at the end of their administration period. Viewing a substantial amount of video taped assessment data and seeing the execution of the administrator role led to an awareness of the importance of the administration techniques and how the quality of administration affected student responses. Information provided through visual media had enabled teachers to develop a more thorough understanding of the administrator role. This contributed to changing the perceptions of that role for the markers.

In order for the administration role to be implemented successfully there were many components that had to be integrated. NEMP required teacher administrators to be able to establish a good rapport with students and colleagues. They needed them to be well organised in order to manage their time and equipment efficiently. NEMP required administrators to develop the technical skills necessary for managing the ICT equipment. They needed administrators to have a good, clear understanding of how NEMP worked so that they followed instructions and knew how to facilitate the assessments. They required teachers to develop knowledge of NEMP tasks and resources and know how to use the manuals. Teachers must know how to elicit the best responses from the students they work with. In order to minimize any discrepancies between the requirements of the role and preparation for the role the training process has to make teachers aware of these components. It must also include ways to incorporate them into their perceptions of the role and provide opportunities to practice procedures and strategies to integrate the role.

The majority of teachers assimilated their training into their perceptions of the role and performed the role successfully. Their comments throughout endorsed the quality and professionalism of the programme (Section 1.6). However, problems still occurred for a number of teachers. It is those problems, which have been identified through this study of the effects of teachers' perceptions, which are of concern. It had been noted that some teachers experienced difficulties with several aspects of this role. Working collaboratively with a partner was difficult for some teachers. Incorporating flexibility into their role was also an area of concern. Working in a facilitating role also caused problems. This included the ability to follow instructions whilst being able to rephrase and prompt, in order to get the best responses from students, without compromising the validity of the data. Teachers identified a need to develop their confidence and competence with the ICT equipment. It is therefore apparent that the training process was unable to completely prepare some teachers to amalgamate these aspects of the role successfully. As noted in the introduction to this study, where there are discrepancies between the perceptions of a role and the requirements of a role, it is necessary to identify factors that impact on changing those perceptions in order to enhance the acceptance and integration of a new technique or role (Smylie, 1988). Trainers need to develop strategies that selectively modify teacher perceptions where these are counter-productive to achieving the required result.

In order to resolve the discrepancies between the requirements of the administrator role and the present preparation for this role it is recommended that the training process incorporates a variety of strategies such as: role play, viewing relevant video scenarios and developing skills of collaboration. It is suggested that these will help teachers to make the transition from their teaching role to the role of administrator.

Timely exposure to the overall picture of any role can be of benefit to trainees, providing them with insights that might seem obvious to the trainers who are familiar with the end product. The NEMP training programme could provide opportunities for teachers to view good administration practice under guided discussion, thus providing a visual model to work towards. This was discussed in Section 1.12. Incorporating video clips of a variety of administrators working with children and attending to a different feature or perspective of the situation being viewed, would enable trainers to focus on specific aspects of administration practice, such as: prompting and rephrasing instructions; the technicalities involved with creating good video footage; physical set up of the procedure; what good administration 'looks like'.

Skills that were an asset to teaching were a problem in the administrator role, which required different skills, for example, working as a facilitator. Working in a facilitating role could be developed through providing opportunities for the role playing of administration scenarios, as discussed in Section 1.11. This would enable teachers to become familiar with the administration instructions ("the script"), the assessment tasks and using the ICT equipment, thus enabling them to develop more accurate perceptions of the administrator role.

Role playing also provides opportunities for effective feedback from both trainers and other trainees, which can develop confidence in both giving and receiving constructive feedback, enhancing relationships and communication. The importance of feedback to the teacher administrators was covered in Section 1.10. Given the critical importance that is placed on providing feedback to students in the teaching and learning process, that it should occur between adults during training, seems very sound. After viewing the video from the first week of administrating, any feedback subsequently provided by NEMP staff to administrators would be easier to impart, as administrators would be well used to receiving constructive feedback by this point. If it became necessary for a member of the NEMP team to call an administrator with feedback, both parties would feel more confident about the situation. As previously mentioned, written feedback could be posted to the next school, rather than to administrators' homes, as suggested by one administrator. This would avoid the difficulties of not receiving mail that some administrators experience if they do not return home at weekends. Placing a telephone call to administrators during their first week of administrating could also be employed as a useful technique for boosting administration performance.

NEMP requires administrators to work with a partner. Ravid and Handler (2001: 205) have suggested that collaborative efforts should be implemented with a realistic understanding of the complexities and difficulties involved, as well as the benefits.

Training could incorporate strategies for collaborative working, in order to minimise the impact that negative partnership behaviour has on the administration process. This was highlighted in Section 1.9. When requiring people to work collaboratively it is important that their training includes information that enables individuals to identify and monitor their conflict management style, and develop specific strategies for dealing with conflict. In order for all administrator partnerships to be more effective it may be necessary for NEMP to include information that enables individuals to identify and discuss issues that are likely to cause conflict. They could provide administrators with information that enables them to identify and monitor their conflict management style. By combining knowledge about what causes conflict, understanding one's response to conflict and developing specific strategies for dealing with conflict, people have the tools to manage conflict interactions more successfully.

It is important for educators to recognise that teachers' perceptions will have an impact on the success of any training programme. The programme outline needs to provide information that is both necessary and sufficient to inform applicants and create accurate perceptions of what is entailed. The selection criteria for any programme should be applicable to the role. The role of administrator requires people who are flexible in their working methods and can 'think on their feet'. They must optimise their time in each school, working within a variety of physical constraints and managing difficulties with implementing the assessment programme as they arise. Flexibility was not part of teachers' perceptions of the administrator role. In some situations this caused conflict when working in this role in schools, as discussed in Section 1.9. It seems that the need for flexibility has to be made explicit by NEMP to the trainee administrators. This will serve to place the idea that flexibility is part of the required role in the mind of the administrator so that it becomes a shared expectation (Biddle, 1979: 117). It may be advisable to include 'flexibility' as a prerequisite in the advertisements and information package that NEMP uses to recruit teachers.

Research suggests that it is important to acknowledge the effects of teacher perceptions on the assimilation of new learning. Given the importance that we place on establishing students' prior beliefs and understandings before teaching, it seems to be good practice to work with adults in a similar way and ascertain what perceptions they hold that may affect subsequent learning. Teachers' perceptions provide the foundation for any professional development to build on. If perceptions are affirmed through new learning it seems to enable those aspects of the role to be adopted more successfully. In this case, the importance of being organised and having a good rapport with students formed a solid basis for the administrator role that was maintained throughout the process. Similarly, if perceptions are contradicted through new learning, those aspects of the role may be adopted less successfully, unless strategies are put in place to overcome this. It is reasonable to suggest that teacher perceptions will change throughout training and implementing the process they have been trained for. In order to ensure that changes are consistent with the requirements of the role it is important that behaviour based on newly acquired knowledge and understanding is monitored during acquisition and application. By providing a practice field where new learning can be tried out, it is possible to monitor and adjust behaviour in accordance with acceptable role requirements.

This study has implications for schools and teacher education agencies that require teachers to engage in professional development that necessitates them to incorporate new pedagogical practices. For such programmes to be effective it seems that they need to consider teacher's perceptions of their role, along with providing relevant learning opportunities that enable teachers to effectively incorporate that role. Understanding the relative effectiveness of these strategies may help with constructing more powerful teacher professional development. There are often discrepancies between what a person knows and how they behave. In order to transfer new knowledge into practice, strategies that incorporate practice-rich experiences where competencies and dispositions can be acted out may be essential in preparing teachers to perform a different role (Murrell & Foster, 2003: 61). Perceptions are difficult to assess, but dispositions based in practice can be monitored. In order for education providers to assess how well teachers have incorporated new skills and understandings into their perception and implementation of a role, it may be necessary to provide such practice-rich experiences to enable teachers to demonstrate proficiencies gained from professional development programmes.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire One – Teacher Administrators, 2005

Number of years teaching experience: _____

Class level taught in 2005: _____

1. Why did you decide to apply to become a Teacher Administrator in 2005?
[Tick all that are appropriate to you].

Interested in the subjects being assessed.

Mathematics Social Studies Information Skills

Interested in seeing other students working at this year level.

Saw this as professional development in assessment.

Wanted time out of the classroom to:

Revitalize yourself.

Consider your career.

Any other reason

2. What skills do you feel are important for the role of Teacher Administrator?
[Rank in order those which are relevant. Do not include any which are not relevant.]

- Being organised
- Being a good listener to children
- Being able to develop a rapport with children
- Being able to work with a variety of technologies
- Being able to work efficiently and meet deadlines
- Being able to focus on and praise student's effort and not performance
- Being able to work effectively with a partner
- Being able to follow instructions accurately
- Other [please specify]

3. Why do you feel the skills you have identified are important?

4. Have you any previous experience/professional development/qualifications that would be relevant to working as a Teacher Administrator?

Yes No

If yes, please specify

5. Please identify the skills you feel you bring to the Teacher Administrator role.

6. Please identify the skills you feel you need to develop to work effectively in the Teacher Administrator role

7. Are the skills that are useful for being a Teacher Administrator also useful to you as a classroom teacher?

Yes No

Why? _____

8. What skills and information do you require from NEMP during your training?

9. Before your training week with NEMP, how would you rate yourself on the following? [Please circle the appropriate number]

	Excellent				Poor
At present my knowledge, understanding and experience of assessment practices are:	5	4	3	2	1
At present my understanding of the nature and purpose of NEMP is:	5	4	3	2	1
At present my understanding of the role of the Teacher Administrator is:	5	4	3	2	1

Questionnaire Two – Teacher Administrators, 2005

10. What skills do you feel are important for the role of Teacher Administrator?
[Rank in order those which are relevant. Do not include any which are not relevant.]

- Being organised
- Being a good listener to children
- Being able to develop a rapport with children
- Being able to work with a variety of technologies
- Being able to work efficiently and meet deadlines
- Being able to focus on and praise student's effort and not performance
- Being able to work effectively with a partner
- Being able to follow instructions accurately
- Other [please specify]

2. List the **three** most important ideas/understandings you learnt during your training week.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

3. List the **three** most important skills you learnt during your training week that will assist you in your role as Teacher Administrator.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

4. What do you feel most confident about? [Tick one box]

- Task set up
- Task delivery
- Paperwork/posting
- Equipment set up
- Working with a partner

5. What do you feel least confident about? [Tick one box]

- Task set up
- Task delivery
- Paperwork/posting
- Equipment set up
- Working with a partner

6. Do you feel that your previous experience/professional development/ qualifications will prove useful to you in your role of Teacher Administrator?

Yes No N/A

If you ticked 'Yes' or 'No', please explain.

7. What skills have you developed that will be useful to you back in the classroom?

8. What areas would you have liked more training on?

9. Are there any aspects of the training process that you feel were not relevant or over emphasised?

Yes No If 'Yes', please explain.

10. At the end of your training week as a Teacher Administrator, how confident are you in relation to each of the following statements? [Please circle the appropriate number].

	Excellent					Poor
At present my knowledge, understanding and experience of assessment practices are	5	4	3	2	1	
At present my understanding of the nature and purpose of NEMP is	5	4	3	2	1	
At present my understanding of the role of the Teacher Administrator is	5	4	3	2	1	

Questionnaire Three – Teacher Administrators, 2005

1. What skills do you feel are important for the role of Teacher Administrator?
[Rank in order those which are relevant. Do not include any which are not relevant.]

- Being organised
- Being a good listener to children
- Being able to develop a rapport with children
- Being able to work with a variety of technologies
- Being able to work efficiently and meet deadlines
- Being able to focus on and praise student's effort and not performance
- Being able to work effectively with a partner
- Being able to follow instructions accurately
- Other [please specify]

2. List the **three** skills that were most important to you in your role as Teacher Administrator?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

3. List the **three** most important skills that you acquired from your training that enabled you to work effectively as a Teacher Administrator.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

4. How could NEMP have prepared you better for the Teacher Administrator role?

5. Did any previous experience/professional development/qualifications prove useful to you in your role as a Teacher Administrator?

Yes No N/A

If you ticked 'Yes' or 'No', please explain.

6. What skills will be useful to you outside the NEMP experience?

7. Please identify those aspects of being a Teacher Administrator that were the most enjoyable for you.

8. What aspects of being a Teacher Administrator were difficult for you?

9. Did you experience any issues or difficulties whilst you were working as a Teacher Administrator?

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes', how effectively was this dealt with for you by NEMP staff? [Please circle the appropriate number]

Very effectively 5 4 3 2 1 Poorly

10. Are there any skills/qualifications/professional development/aptitudes that you think NEMP should be looking for when they select their Teacher Administrators? Please list.

11. Do you think that working with a partner is the most suitable method for implementing the assessment tasks?

Yes No

Comment.

12. After completing your NEMP experience, at what point in a teacher's career would you suggest working as a Teacher Administrator? Why?

13. At the end of your time as a Teacher Administrator, how would you rate yourself on the following? [Please circle the appropriate number]

	Excellent				Poor
At present, my knowledge, understanding and experience of assessment practices are	5	4	3	2	1
At present my understanding of the nature and purpose of NEMP is	5	4	3	2	1
At present, my understanding of the role of the Teacher Administrator is	5	4	3	2	1

Questionnaire 4 – Teacher Markers

From the questionnaires that went out to the Year 8 and Year 4 teacher administrators this year, a number of suggestions were made that some people would like to have incorporated into the training week. I would like you to rate them on a scale of 1-5, where '1' is not important at all and '5' is very important, and explain why you have rated them in this way.

1. Time is allocated for role playing of administration scenarios.

Rating 1 2 3 4 5

Reason

2. Practicing with video and recording a role playing session.

Rating 1 2 3 4 5

Reason

3. View, analyse and discuss the video recording from a technical perspective, e.g. angle of shot, quality of recording.

Rating 1 2 3 4 5

Reason

4. View, analyse and discuss video, to identify good administration practice, ways of improving task implementation, questioning techniques, appropriate prompting, etc.

Rating 1 2 3 4 5

Reason

5. Watch video recordings of NEMP staff role playing good and bad administration practice, with a commentary.

Rating 1 2 3 4 5

Reason

6. Initial plenary to show a video of good administration practice, in a variety of situations, to give an overview to provide a framework for subsequent training sessions.

Rating 1 2 3 4 5

Reason

7. Allow time for partners to work together to discuss organisation and allocation of tasks in preparation for administrating in schools.

Rating 1 2 3 4 5

Reason

8. Formally include the need for flexibility when working in schools, for such things as student absence, inadequacy of space provided, setting up equipment, moving rooms, school programmes, etc.

Rating 1 2 3 4 5

Reason

9. Training/discussion on skills needed for working collaboratively with a partner.

Rating 1 2 3 4 5

Reason