

## Interview with Assistant Professor Jenny Poskitt

### Speakers

Dr Jenny Poskitt

Dr Jennifer Farrar

#### **Jennifer Farrar 0:00**

Hello, Jenny, thank you so much for joining me today for a discussion that is a wonderful opportunity for us to gain some really important insights from you as an international expert into curriculum and assessment and the reform of these from your part of the world. So, Jenny, you're an associate professor in the Institute of Education at Massey University, which you're sitting within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. I wonder if you could maybe just give us a little bit of an introduction to yourself, your role, and maybe a little bit about your research interests if that would be okay.

#### **Jenny Poskitt 0:40**

Thank you, Jennifer, and look, hello, listeners. It's a privilege to be here. My career began as a primary teacher. In fact, I was allocated what we call new entrance, I think you call... I've forgotten. This is the entrance year - the first year of nursery. So I grew from the, I was seconded in my fourth year of teaching when I was actually doing my masters part-time to work on a research project for 18 months, which involved consultation with various community groups. And it was from that, actually, that a lot of my interest in collaboration and communication began, and from that opportunity I then had my arm twisted, so to speak, to apply for a job at Massey - Massey University - which Palmerston North is its main campus. The 3 camps is actually 3 in the North Island, further North Auckland Albany campus one over 2, and in our capital city, Wellington. So as we have it, we're known for a major distance program, too.

Anyway, my role since being at Massey obviously is academic, so a researcher, a teacher doing academic citizenship or service on various committees etc. But from those early days of that seconded project I was involved in a couple of administrative education projects. And actually, looking back over my career, I have continued that right through various Ministry of Education and also our New Zealand qualifications authority. I serve on a technoglobal group of assessment that oversees the scholarship exams, which is that of our high stakes, or we do have an NCA qualification, and the scholarships for the most able students. I'm also on the Rural New Zealand College of general practitioners' Educational Advisory Group. And the point for mentioning these is, I'm just so passionate about doing the best for learners and students and my real interest in education, assessment, professional learning, educational leadership and so it's communicating, spreading the word, if you like across that, but learning from people's different experiences to try and see how we can improve things.

My current role is, I've been seconded point 7 from the Institute of Education into the pro Vice Chancellor's office, and it is director of college projects which means that I lead projects where the, that are hitting towards the, well, are supporting the strategic direction of the university. So some of them might be a bit more what you might call mundane in terms of health and safety, but others are more, and you know, for example, where there's a big movement at the moment in New Zealand, towards how we deal with artificial intelligence. So I'll be leading out a bit on that. with supporting projects that help staff connect research teaching and assessment for the basement of the students that... and, you know, personally, we are married - we have 3 young people they range in age from the eldest 27 to the youngest 18. So I've also been a parent in the system, right through, and you know we've had one graduate from university, and the youngest has started his first year at university. So we wear multiple hats.

**Jennifer Farrar 4:09**

Thank you. They're great, lovely overview. Thank you so much, and so important. I think, to point out the many different insights that you've got in terms of working at government

level, within classroom level, and then also as a different kind of stakeholder as a parent within the system. So thank you.

So you've mentioned there your interest in assessment, professional learning that a lot of your research looks at the importance of relationships, communication and collaboration, and that's one of the things that I hope will come out from a conversation today. But thinking about the reforms that you have overseen and you you've been, you've worked through and lived through as a teacher and academic in New Zealand, and then hoping that we can take some of those insights and shine a light into the current reforms underway in Wales and think about some of the lessons that we could maybe take from colleagues in New Zealand in terms of their experience to help, you know, colleagues in Wales make sense from the current situation.

I wonder maybe you could just begin by telling us a little bit about the context of education where you are in and New Zealand. Maybe how you would describe the curriculum – it's key features and principles. Just briefly, please.

**Jenny Poskitt 5:18**

Yes, thank you. So currently, the New Zealand curriculum has been in place since 2007, and it's undergoing a major refresh that I'll talk about shortly. But for now, the current one in existence was written in 2007, and it's based around having a vision of lifelong and life wide learners, and obviously everyone trying to be as capable as they can, and learning and assessment capability. But it's also, it's looked at so that that vision,, values of you know, valuing the learner of and linking into key competencies, for example, thinking, working, working independently, being able to work with others in the learning areas, or that, you know, you might know as the subjects, and that the same as you have, I oversee. So it's a national guiding framework. And probably what's different in New Zealand is that we have a system. where the ministry will have a curriculum, and it's a guiding framework. But schools, in a self-governing model that we have, schools are able to interpret it and respond to the local context. So long as they consult with the local community, and sometimes it's through the board of trustees, but it's expected to be more than that, to communicate with the

parent body and local organizations and community groups to adjust topics, the way they put the emphasis on topics or skills.

So a little example might be, you know, if you live near a mountain area, it may be that your sports and fitness program is a bit more geared to outdoor education, and, for example, learning to ski, whereas if you are base near the ocean or near a lake, then you might focus a bit more on swimming and sailing, you know, surf life-saving, those kinds of skills. So that's what we know as the localized curriculum, so that it may be different from your experience where people can have the liberty to interpret – they're still expected to cover the same key concepts, if you like, but to interpret this in ways that suit the local area.

But we also have another curriculum - Te Marautanga - and that's a curriculum document for Kura and Maori medium schools, and the difference there is that it upholds the cultural identity and heritage in learners so that students in multi medium schools, where the language of instruction is either solely or predominantly Te Reo Māori, and so the intention there is that they can participate and understand more about the cultural heritage in the Maori world, and advocate that world view and particularly get success as Maori, and what is deemed to be important in a Maori society. So, for example, one of the key differences is you know, being viewed as a collective rather than as an individual, as your part in the group and respecting others and fulfilling, you know, if you like social obligations. So that would be a very simple distinction of it.

So that's probably enough of the overview, except we do have compulsory schooling from age 6 to age 16, but most people enroll their children at school at age 5 in New Zealand. You can do that. It's compulsory at six, but most do it at 5. Prior to that there's options of early childhood and that's under another curriculum called Te Whāriki, and then students go from that into primary school, which goes from basically age 5 to around age 10/11. Then there is a bit of variation, but they typically then go to 2 years of intermediate school, and then on to secondary school, which is usually from about at age 13 through to 18 for those who do those extra years. And I say there's a little bit of variation round the middle years, because, like in parts of Scotland, we have a lot a lot of our schools in the rural areas, and so some of them go beyond year 6 to year 8, so they just go from primary through to secondary. And in very rural isolated areas we have what are called area schools, where students can start at

age 5 and leave that school at 18. It covers the right, the whole curriculum. So it's a bit of variety. Thank you.

**Jennifer Farrar 10:04**

Thank you. When you get to the secondary phase, the older children, are there senior phase exams at the end. I mean, how does assessment look at that point in school life?

**Jenny Poskitt 10:14**

Yes, secondary school. So there's a national certificate of educational achievement, and that normally kicks in at year 11 - so for many students, it's around age 15. So there's generally thought it is viewed as 5 years of secondary school education. So the first years, years 9 and 10 is a more general education usually - a general sort of preparation for going on to the last 3 years where there's the qualification. So the first year, level one of the national certificate of educational achievement, is, if you like, an entry level. And some schools have taken that seriously in terms of preparation for, because it's level 2 and level 3 that are more high stakes. Level 2 - it means you can, providing you meet certain standards within it, you gain university entrance from it, and a lot of entrance to university courses are based on the level of performance in it. So while the students in our system get 3 categories of Achieve, what you'd know as a pass, Merit which we would otherwise think of as rather the B kind of range, and then Excellence, so the A's/A+'s. So to get an E in New Zealand is actually really good, it's not a failure, it's an excellence. But level, so there's level 2, so people often leave school with that, and then they've left with at least some qualification.

And the interesting thing about the NCA is, it has 2 elements that I think you find interesting. That quite a proportion of it is internally assessed and teachers are trained, if you like, with some moderation. They're also given guidance, guiding standards to assess against, and their results are moderated by an external body called NZQA, New Zealand Qualifications Authority. There are school liaison officers that guide teachers in it, and there's lots of professional learning online and other organized workshops to guide them in that. And then there are external exams and those are typically your more traditional, you

know, 2 to 3 hour exams. Students can choose how many standards they sit in it, so some students might only sit one or two, and then others will sit, you know, three or four external standards. There are subject areas, for example, that don't have exams, so subjects like your performing arts having an out folder. And so they're more portfolio based. And level 3 is means that people have greater depth and curriculum areas, and they usually need particular level 3 qualifications, or passes, if you like to get into particular university courses.

We also, for the most able, will have opportunities to sit scholarship exams, and those come not only with some monetary value to help with fees through any tertiary study in New Zealand, but also come with a bit of prestige, particularly the top premiere, and the real top one is the Prime Minister's award that goes to one student. Now, typically those premier award and Prime Minister Awardees, go to your universities in the UK or to the to the States. You know, they may go to Cambridge, and they go to Duke University.

But prior to level one NCA, the assessments are all based in schools and are a lot by teachers, teacher judgements and formal assessments. But we do have some national standardized test that are run by our New Zealand Council for Educational Research, and schools do have a choice about whether they participate in them or not. They're often used to confirm judgements from other assessments, but they are also used by the ministry to decide, you know, resource allocation, but also where they may need to put more professional learning in for example, literacy, mathematics, that kind of thing.

**Jennifer Farrar 14:28**

That's interesting that there are national standardized tests, but they are optional – that schools can opt in and out of them. Okay, interesting. Thank you for that overview. You mentioned that there are currently a new set of reforms in New Zealand. So I wonder if you could talk us through the sort of reform - ,rt of change - that's on the horizon.

**Jenny Poskitt 14:47**

Yes, thank you. Yes. So we're currently undergoing a major refresh that's expected to be fully implemented in 2026. So there are, some of it is still very much in the discussion and planning stage, and some of it is ready to be implemented.

So the first ones off the block, as we say in New Zealand, New Zealand histories, so to say, because in New Zealand, we have a treaty - Treaty of Waitangi - which was signed in 1840. So then, essentially for you, it's to understand that there's a partnership between the Tangata Whenua, you know, the people of the land and the Tangata Treaty - people who've signed the treaty, so the other. And so the proclamation then, is to have mutual respect and to honor the cultural beliefs and ways of Maori.

Without giving you a major history though, there have been concerns. Whilst New Zealand has done better than a lot of other countries, there still has been concerns of colonization of where Maori have not always had their rights honoured and respected. So that is being really embedded through the curriculum refresh. So there's a couple of major changes. So one is embedding Tao Maori which is the Maori world, one is Maori knowledge, and the other is Maori customs and language. So there's a real embedding of those cultural beliefs, world views and valuing Maori knowledge right through all the subject areas and the curriculum. And so that's a major thing that's under way at the moment.

It's also focusing on, so 3 other big points. Focusing on learning that can't be left to chance. So it's making even clearer the important concepts, you know, those in Wales might think of it as threshold concepts. But the important concepts and building blocks of each curriculum and subject area. And furthermore related to that third one is that, there's a move to developing what at the moment are called common practice models, and that's intent is to strive for greater consistency and quality teaching and learning. New Zealand has a bit of a history of variation within schools and across schools in terms of quality and successful achievement. So, for example, in literacy, the Ministry have been drawing on the knowledge of literacy experts, you know, researchers, internationally and in nationally, professional learning and development providers, expert teachers to advise on evidence and informed approaches that are known to make that difference to lift student learning and performance, particularly for students who've been traditionally disadvantaged or have

struggled with learning. So there's an intention to try and look at what is the best practice and best evidence here to guide teachers and effective instruction there. And so we're seeing that since, certainly the literacy has been, has just been developed and is about to be highlighted, if you like, the histories is ready to go out in secondary schools, but the other curriculum areas are in development.

The other big change is looking at broad learning progressions over the time of the compulsory schooling, and really they are trying to make sure that teachers, learners, and parents can understand what progress looks like and what to expect over time. And the fifth point is to have better intentions and better alignment and transitions between early childhood, primary, secondary school, and ideally been into tertiary. Because previously I mentioned, there was the Te Whāriki and the early childhood, which is that weaving knowledge and based on learning from play, and a bit more on the whole child, and a lot of interaction and discussion with parents and family. So the intention is to have smoother transitions from early child through primary/secondary.

And what's interesting in New Zealand, and I don't know how unique it is - the Ministry of Education and the other educational agencies are very good at communicating, collaborating across the sector. So underneath this change that's happening, this refresh is a group called the Curriculum Voices Group, and it has about 60 members in it, and it represents, or there are representatives on it right across the board. So I'm there as a researcher from a university, all because of my experience and assessment and various projects I'm on. But there are people, for example, from the Deaf Association, the deaf community, people from the rainbow youth from obviously across the different curriculum areas, the subject experts. There are the professional learning providers, there are principals, unions represented from the teacher unions there. There's a youth group for advising, for giving advice. So the intention is to have people right across the sector, with Her in the ministry - she is the latest thinking. And those people in the groups, you know, discuss that, reflect on it and give feedback. So it's very much, if you like, an iterative model. And what has been successful with any of the reforms we've done is when time is taken to consult and particularly involve the sector, the people who are actually going to have to put it into place. Because then not only do they feel listened to, their concerns are heard and



hopefully addressed, because often for schools we want you know, as classroom teachers, you want that specificity. You want that detail. You want the roadmap spelled out if you like, whereas policy may often, looking higher level right across the country, and looking at the general kinds of ideas and strategic planning. And so with having people involved there from Her, the chalk face, so we call them, you know they are, say, well, what does this look like? How will this work in schools? Look, here are the realities we're dealing with. You know, secondary teachers – we deal with 120 students a day through changing classes. How can we possibly put this into place. So there's a reality testing often with it. And it also then influences what professional learning is required, where we need to put resources.

In fact one key lesson that was listened to last year was the ministry slowed down by another year because of concerns about teacher workloads, the rate of change, and you know, like you, we've been through the Covid pandemic, not as badly affected as in other countries, but it certainly took us to on schools in terms of having to teach online. So for many at the beginning of that era, that was a major change and shift. It wasn't the same for relationships, it was time consuming, setting up resources, more stressful, and then chasing up students who didn't participate. And often it was equity issues of not having the software, so then it was running around getting extra laptops and delivering those to homes, finding wrap arounds for access to broadband, those kinds of things. So there was a lot of exhaustion, and certainly still a bit of fatigue in the workforce. So when we, when you're undergoing reform, it's important to listen and adjust, because then people feel listened to and valued. and you know the pace of change as well as the extent of it.

**Jennifer Farrar 22:49**

Thank you. That is really interesting. This there's a couple of points I wanted to return to. So you mentioned this, this idea of learning that can't be left to chance - it was maybe point 2, I think, point 2. And then I think you also mentioned these learning progressions being developed. I don't want to go into too much detail, but maybe just to sort of a top level, how are these being developed? Because this idea of learning progressions is quite interesting? If you're talking about learning that can't be left to chance, that might suggest that there are right outcomes or right ways of doing things. And so I'm thinking back to what

you mentioned about the spirit of the curriculum earlier that can have a localized interpretation. Does that apply here with progression? Or are we talking about top down progression pathways.

**Jenny Poskitt 23:35**

You're absolutely right. This is where things are still being worked out. So it's still a work in progress, and there are tensions there that, you know, in terms of identifying what are the important concepts it's, you know, there's a part of it, we acknowledge students are Konga, we call them in Whariki, you know, young children, and then young people learn in different ways, they bring different life experiences. They have different, not abilities, but different capacities to learn in different ways and different subjects etc. So it's looking at those concepts that if you don't get them or understand them at a certain stage, you are, you know disadvantaged in future learning. So it might be in maths, for example, a concept like place value, of understanding, you know the hundreds, the tens, the ones, etc. If people don't get that, then they struggle with you know, bigger numbers and more sophisticated mathematical issues.

So there are, they are somewhat controversial. And it's the gaps that we've noticed across the sector. So in terms of you know, people's ability to be able to write and write clearly, to acknowledge to different audiences, fundamental myths and science concepts. So it's, it probably can't be more otherwise we would go into too much detail, and it is also still a work in progress. There is a tension there, and it is that relationship between the national curriculum, the having that common direction and that common thread intention. So that anyone, any student who moves, you know, because we do have a fairly mobile population, so if they move from one area of the country to another, that they're not disadvantage, and also that we are still in tune with what's happening internationally. So it's intended that people still follow that curriculum, with the choices as how it's interpreted in terms of the sort of topics or context. But you're still expected to teach, for example, sustainability principles that are, you know, environmental awareness, being a, how to get along with others, those are still absolutely critical, but how it works in your community may differ.

And you might do it in the context of a sports club, it may be on the Marai, it may be, so it's translating it into authentic context.

But there are some tensions, Jen, because people do interpret differently, and some communities have a greater emphasis on certain things. So you can imagine how different it is. And suburbs where people are more wealthy and have aspirations for particular professional occupations compared with other, a rural community, where I'm not saying they don't have those aspirations, but they may be more in tune with the environment or may have a greater valuing of contributing to the community, not necessarily an individual's career path.

**Jennifer Farrar 26:50**

Okay, that's really interesting. And are the policymakers the ones who are deciding these, the content that can't be left behind? Or is that being decided by, I mean, the curriculum voices group? Are they involved in that? Are they helping with that? And then this idea of like, how do we decide on progression? I will move on from this, was just, wanted to ask now.

**Jenny Poskitt 27:13**

So in terms of you know, what's the important learning in literacy, they have a special, if you like a subgroup. There's some members who are also on the Curriculum Voices group, but it's a special literacy advisory group that's comprised of, you know, New Zealand researchers who are internationally renowned. For example, you may have heard of emeritus Professor James Chapman, well known in the literacy reading area - he's on it. And there also representatives from other universities. We've also have people who are Te Reo Maori, to bring that Maori perspective, and particularly in terms of Te Reo Maori, what it means in literacy and Maori. We also have professional learning developers. So it's a subgroup who are working to advise the Ministry. So the ministry don't, or the policymakers don't, do it off on their own: they are advised, and work closely with an advisory group in that area. So, for example, I'm also on the Ministry of Education Assessment expert panel. So we are

rewriting as a position statement in paper for the ministry to guide the assessment that will be embedded right across this curriculum refresh. So each of those areas has an expert group, and they're always comprised of a mix of researchers, Te Reo Maori, and people who identify as Maori, also Pacifica, and we have people who use Her teaching and also that professional learning. So it's that mix, that hopefully, we've got that connection between what is needed at school level, that research, and also how we're going to get there in terms of the professional learning support..

**Jennifer Farrar 29:10**

That sounds really, and you mentioned that word iterative earlier on and I do think that, can, you know, I can imagine that it would just be that process of kind of to-ing and fro-ing between different sections of the process, without then saying, well that this is the right way, it will still be, as you say, then there's that local level of interpretation when it gets into schools. Thank you for that.

**Jenny Poskitt 29:29**

Yes, so. Oh, just one more, Jen, is that the Ministry of Education, so the Curriculum Voices, I'm doing this is an umbrella kind of group. The Curriculum Voices group receive reports from each of those subgroups, and then can see how it relates right across the curriculum. And part of the reason it's iterative is because what the literacy group decide actually will have an influence on what happens for assessment, and also then what might happen in the other curriculum areas. So there's a need to coordinate right across that, as aligned across the whole curriculum.

**Jennifer Farrar 30:02**

Yes, thank you for that. In broad terms then, and we've got this shift - this refresh. How are teachers responding in general to this sort of change in implementation and changes, you're saying, in assessment in the pipeline. I know it's not with you just yet, but maybe you could talk about either how teachers are responding, or what is being expected in terms of

response, and maybe what support is being offered. I know that a lot of your work has been in this field, so it'd be good to hear about some of that as well.

**Jenny Poskitt 30:36**

Thanks. Look, it's mixed. So from the field, from teachers, there is, at the moment, a real sense of exhaustion from, you know, coming through the covid pandemic. There is a sense of a lot of change happening with Curriculum refresh. So there's a weariness, in both senses of the word because there's that fatigue, so much change, it's a sense of being overwhelmed. There is also a sense of feeling a little bit, I suppose displaced, because what they've known, the way they've been doing things, is about to change, and that's always stretching us out of our comfort zones, doing something different. There's always a sense of anxiety, and so there's a need for support when you make that shift to something new and different. To have more, so there's a request for more guidance, more detail, so that they can see what it looks like and what it will mean in terms of practice.

But because it's an iterative process, the detail for the next, you know, curriculum isn't there yet. And so for some teachers, that's quite frustrating, because when you focus very much in the classroom about the needs of the students in front of you, you want that detail, whereas when you're in a luxury of positions like mine or as a researcher, you can take a step back and see right across the country, so you can see that it's important for the Ministry of Education to get this the strategy right to get the big picture, the design phase right first before you start filling in that detail. So some of it's a bit iterative, in some ways you, you know, the devil's in the detail, as they say. You don't know how the policy is going to pan out until you can see the detail. So it's very much iterative.

Now for other teachers, it's exciting, because they have been frustrated with the current curriculum. So they're excited in terms of getting more guidance and the instructional process, because when there's a lot of choice, there's also a bit of uncertainty. There's also greater responsibility to discern what is appropriate for the students in front of you. But there's also a bit of uncertainty - am I doing it right? Is the teacher down the road or down

the corridor doing it better than I am? It's not necessarily that it's competitive thing – it's about doing the best you can. And my philosophy is that people need a kitty, as we call it, or a basket of strategies and need to know, because the students learn so differently. And so you need a different response in a different way.

But what that means, then is, it's a huge demand on teachers, because you need content knowledge. So you need to understand, for example - if we go into science - you need to understand biology, physics, chemistry, etc. Even teaching, you know, in primary, you need to understand what the curriculum has in there, and what the next stages will be. We need to understand how students learn, and we need to understand about pedagogy. We need to understand our students in front of us, our community, and then how do we assess them appropriately, you know? So that's 5/6 things that we're drawing on. At this very moment, with the student in front of us it's just us to question, and we need to draw across that range of information to respond. And then you're responding to a student somewhere else in adjusting the pace and the timing to keep classroom management, but also to keep that motivation going and adjusting it for where their understanding is. So it means, then, that we're in a stage where needing to put a lot of time and effort into that professional learning so that people understand, so what's different from what we've been doing previously? How does it look different? What support will I have alongside me so that I get it modelled and get some feedback to it just to help me get there? How can I view people doing it in different ways? And then how can I adjust it? So it's a sense of finding out what the needs are, and very much a commitment to ongoing professional learning etc.

So, you know, you question how are people feeling about it? There's a range from some from a bit of fear, uncertainty, and exhaustion, through the people who are really excited because they're excited to get new learning. Because if we, you know, teaching, for me, teaching - and this is the exciting bit about education - we're always learning. There's always something new; new angles, new perspectives. But for some that's frustrating because you need to get there. But it's the journey that's exciting and being willing to adjust, and, you know, be open and flexible and be adaptable. And I think those are the skills that we need to empower teachers with. But it's easy to do that when you've got a climate of security and support, but if you're in a climate, and we do some areas, where, you know, you've been

criticized and the media and teachers and schools are expected to fix and address all the ills of society, you know, you just, there's so many expectations on teachers that it can be exhausting.

I think some of the challenge for us is very much of valuing people, valuing our students, valuing our teachers so that we're in a safer environment, as we know for learning, so that we can take those rest and be supported when we're doing something new and adjusting. So the Ministry of education are aware of that, but often teachers don't realize it. And we, by joining with, as I said, all these different groups having the New Zealand qualification, authority alongside, and discussions having assessment experts, all the different unions, etc. Because when we have that communication and collaboration, we can understand from different people's perspectives - what they need, what they're not understanding the information they need, but also understanding what other people that they report to, or who report to them, need. So it's where we can meet together so we can share those understandings, and we get to realize how difficult their roles are and how we can support one another.

**Jennifer Farrar 36:51**

Would, you say then, so, when we talk about, you know, you mentioned this, the needs and professional learning, creating places of security and support. And I wonder, for people, does professional learning, perhaps, have connotations of a particular kind of learning? You know, that kind of like compulsory sitting in the Assembly Hall, and the, you know, I'm being a bit facetious, but from what you're describing, professional learning is possibly something that is a rich set of experiences that you might not actually label as professional learning. If you're talking about dialogue with qualifications agencies, or with communities, how is this professional learning being framed in this context for you?

**Jenny Poskitt 37:30**

Well, professional learning covers a range of things, Jen. Like you said, the more formal talking to which has been, you know, the older model, but at times it's still needed because

it's really efficient. You can access a lot of people, and particularly if you just need some information and get the context of it. But we know, for deep learning from you know, the research that's been done in New Zealand, and internationally, deep change takes time, and the really key bits are the conversations, that dialogue, especially with other colleagues looking at, because it's not only learning that so why do we need to change as to what - .what do we need to do differently? And then it's often the how and having conversations and sharing, seeing, what others are doing. So observing in classrooms, having your professional learning advisors. What about modeling some practices, having conversations, coaching a coach along the side? So it's a combination of it, but also online modules are really efficient. We've got more use to that, of course, in the Covid times, and the beauty of that is, it's when you need it. It's the timing. So it's building on those adult learning principles of choice - of being really practical when you need it. It's on demand. It's problem solving and being very specific to right now, what I need. So it's having access to, you know, a range of resources online but also knowing you can have conversations with other colleagues, your peers, and particularly in the school context, because, you know, we're in it together with the certain conditions that we have and where you can have those ongoing conversations in chances to observe or share resources.

But it's also having networks beyond schools. We have, for example, subject associations - you probably do too - where you can learn from others who have a great interest and passion you have too, in physical education that you can share ideas. We have, you know, teachers' Facebook pages, a whole range, so again, it's just like with our students as having a whole range of different ways of learning - a mix of formal and informal, and, of course, I'm at a University, we do you encourage people to do further qualifications and short courses, etc to deepen learning if they really wish to, in those you know, more scholarly ways, deeper theory, school knowledge, etc. that they can draw on in the classroom.

**Jennifer Farrar 40:07**

Thank you for that. And that links me to the next question I want to ask you about the how do we empower teachers to become, I think what you've described as being policy influencers and enactors themselves. We talked about, you know, they can be connectors in



terms of making that...So you described, how do we make policies become lived realities? So I wonder if you could maybe just talk in that space, for a wee second about the how, and so you've mentioned it, professional learning, carving in time for your own learning and these powerful discussions. What else can we do to empower, you know, teachers to become these enactors or influencers of policy on the ground?

**Jenny Poskitt 40:48**

So firstly, at the high level. So I'm a big believer in communications and connections across the sector so as you've said, I talk about the policymakers. So, even though technically, the politicians sort of declare a policy, and the Ministry of Education are the public servants who put it into practice. But for these intents and purposes we'll put the Ministry of Education as the policymakers, and then have another group called the policy influencers who are the researchers, the professional learning developers, educational agencies like, for New Zealand, it's the, or for you, it'd be the inspectorate; it would be the private consultants, and in publicly funded consultants and subject areas, etc. And then you have the policy enactors act, as it is called, the people and the schools, the school sector.

And so you'll have seen through me from what I've described so far in the interview, the strength, certainly in New Zealand and in a small nation where we don't hit that Federal layer is the importance of getting together across - having that the connection between the policy makers, policy influencers and policy enactors for several reasons. Because then you've got the shared message, because too often, if a message comes if it's from top down from the policymakers saying, we're doing this in schools, and you're just pretty much told to do it, well, as it goes some of us will resist. Some us are compliant, but we don't understand necessarily the why, and often there's a process of what I'll call Chinese whispers - by the time it gets to us we've misunderstood, or the message is changed about, and we don't implement it how it was intended, or the way, because we don't understand the why and we didn't get the message directly. Whereas when we can have, and when you've got small populations like New Zealand to 5 million, it's easy to get those different sectors together in one room and to have those conversations and shared understandings. And then those people in that room can go out to their particular areas and share the word,

and also they can bring the ideas back in easily. So you've got that 2 way communication happening readily. And so, and the reason as I say, because then you've got clarity on the why -you've got greater clarity on what you're doing and how you're doing it.

So, what does that mean in school level? It means a similar sort of thing. It's actually having to say, by the teachers, by the students, by the community, with the leaders. So the team leaders and the principal understanding, and also having connections with other schools. So you can... we don't all have to reinvent the wheel. We can share plate this. And often it's having, you know how hard it is, if you have a, given a blank piece of paper, but if there are some ideas on that paper, then it triggers further ideas, or then you adapt or adopt them, and it's the same kind of thing in schools, etc. If we've got a few ideas to start with, then it triggers and more ideas, and we share them. Because, you know, I have a a great belief, and individually, we can do a little, collectively, we can do a lot because we draw on the range of skills and knowledge and experiences that we all have and we benefit from it.

So it's at that school level, the more practical kinds of things in the day to day sorts of things, but it's where it's a mix of ground up, and top down, seems to be where it works best. If it's one direction or other, there are always issues. If it's imposed, particularly in democratic societies, if it was imposed from on top, there will always be some who resist because they don't understand. And actually, it's not relevant in effect, maybe clearly wrong in the context, what's been asked to be done. If it just comes from ground up, then there's not the resourcing, the policy direction - there's not the same direction. It's like a flock of ducks going in all sorts of different directions, whereas if we fly together, we've got the strength and protection. So that's why I'm, I believe, in having those conversations, those iterative... both ground up, you know. Sorry, ground up and top down so we're mixing together, and we benefit from that mix of research, practice, policy. And it's definitely what's worked in New Zealand.

**Jennifer Farrar 45:18**

And so that when you've written about these gaps in implementation, is that what you mean when you've got just either too much top down or too much bottom up? There's the gaps which then lead for things to falter.

**Jenny Poskitt 45:31**

They do because you haven't got that understanding. And nor have you got, you know, the buy in or the ownership, because you don't understand why it was it so? You don't see the importance of it? Also the other thing - when you've got all those people in the mix, there's an understanding of the need for more time, how to pace it, and the particular resources that might be needed, whereas, if you've only got one side or that deciding, you know, the policy makers often want things done immediately, because they're under immense pressure. Politicians, you know, their result of the next election is dependent on whether a policy was put into place, and how well, or how well it's perceived, not how well it's necessarily done. And so there's an urgency.

And then you've got the tension - researchers needing time to reflect and think and get the evidence before they move, and then you've got the teachers kind of in between where you've got the immediacy of having to deal with the students in front of you and the parents, an. you know, give us the guidance, give us the resources. So we know all 3 of those are involved. They understand, and can either hurry one or not, you know one side up or slow another down so that we get quality.

**Jennifer Farrar 46:37**

Yeah, I like that. Sounds quite stressful, doesn't it - all these different, all these different moving parts. Thank you, Jenny, and it can be

**Jenny Poskitt 46:45**

Just, sorry, just one more bit. But when you've got a small populate, people know each other, you know, it's a relatively small community, for example or an educational

assessment, you know. Just as a brief example, yesterday I was at a New Zealand Qualification Authority symposium where there were 100

people online, and probably similar number there in the room. And again, it was right across the sector, different people. But because we, it's more you get to know one another and so there's the trust. So that's another point I want to make - the trust and understanding each other. So you listen - you don't have to play the games of proving yourself, or anything, you know in respect they've got credibility, so the discussion can get to the heart of the matter. So for yesterday it was about what

the impact of artificial intelligence on assessment. And so the, you know, there's a really good collective will to work together on how we might address this for the better for students and assessment.

So I just want to make that point of human relationships, of knowing, building that trust, that respect, but also that you know when you know one another, you can say, just hold on a minute Jenny, you know, have you thought about this perspective? There's another angle here. Because you have the trust, and you can, you can do it without risk, you know, the political risk, or needing the courage to do so. Thank you, Jenny.

**Jennifer Farrar 48:05**

No, thank you. So I think what I'm getting from what you're saying is this idea of ensuring that how you're trying to enact in a change is to ensure the human relationships have got time and space to, to flourish, to connect, to build relationships. And that, as you've already also said, is quite a challenge when there's loads of others, other moving parts, but it's something that building that time, and just seems so important. Just as a sort of a final question, then, really, to think about drawing from your research or anything else you think is relevant - what other lessons do you think that we could, or are meaningful from your work with New Zealand, that we could, share with colleagues in Wales in terms of what they might expect from such a period of intense curriculum change and reform.

**Jenny Poskitt 48:54**

Okay. Expect that it's not going to be easy. There will be, you know, complexities. There will be a plurality of views, and not a single view. And actually, the process is just as important to the journey as is the final product. Because if people feel, listened to, that they've been heard, and at least some of their concerns have been at least you listened to, but hopefully some of them addressed, then they're more willing to go with whatever change is implemented. I mean, we had an experience a few years ago when national standards were imposed, and it was from an election, you know, campaign. And it was done in a very compressed period of time, and so what happened there?

So the worst you can do is do something quickly and impose it with little consultation, because then people resist it and don't do it, and they'll either, you know, publicly resist it, or they just won't do it in the privacy of their own classrooms or schools. So if we wanting the deep change, it is knowing it's going to take time, and we won't have everybody on board, but as long as we have most people and that they understand why and believe - if there is a belief that this is intended for the betterment of our learners and their teachers, and that we do have feedback loops where when things are not quite as we expected, that we can feed that information or communicate that bit across the different layers and have a willingness, a disposition to being open to receiving that feedback, and where appropriate, and when possible, to do something about it to adjust, then I think we're sensible.

Because look, education is always changing. We'll work really hard to get it as right as we can for now, but you know the world's changing quickly, and 2 or 3 years time it will be different. So let's not strive...try to strive for perfection: let's try for excellence. Doing the best we possibly can, the best we can do, by building those respectful relationships and drawing on the best knowledge we can from across the different sectors. So those would be the big messages I would give. Thank you.

**Jennifer Farrar 51:22**

Thank you, Jenny, and I think what would be really useful was if I'm we can maybe take some of the papers that I've been referring to, some of your work, and we can share them with colleagues so that they can have a look at your work as well. So thank you very, very much for your time, and this wonderful conversation. I think also, we're going to offer an

opportunity for people who listen to this to post some questions to come back to you. And of course, we can, if that's all right with you, ask you by email and facilitate some responses at some point.

But thank you very much. and I just would like to just bring things to a close just now, but I really do appreciate all of your time and your wisdom and your insights, and it's been fascinating to hear about the way things are in New Zealand and the changes that are in place, and also, I think, it's really encouraging to sense that there's a sense of both Wales and New Zealand, moving in sort of similar directions and similar times and going through similar experiences. So thank you once again, Jenny.

**Jenny Poskitt 52:35**

Thank you, and best wishes for the reforms. I look forward to reading about them. Thank you. Thank you.