



Australian Government
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SEEKING A PEDAGOGY OF DIFFERENCE:

What Aboriginal Students & Their Parents in North Queensland Say
About Quality Teaching and Teachers

Brian Lewthwaite

Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the Bindal and Wulgurukaba people of the Townsville area. It is upon their land we teach. It is upon their land we learn . We acknowledge elders past and present and trust our actions work towards reconciliation, especially in our one-on-one interactions on each and every day.



Tensions Between National Agendas and First Peoples' Aspirations for Education



What our communities want is lost in the demands that comes from our nation

Nationalistic agendas and ways of thinking override Indigenous peoples aspirations for education

Why do such calls have priority over what we see as important

We fail to recognize, especially in the important space of teacher-student interaction, that students and the communities they represent have something to contribute

Why does our voice not have value in changing the practice of teachers?

(McKinley, 2010)

Background to the Study

Australia's focus on *teacher quality and teaching quality*

Contributors to this discussion: Noel Pearson (CYI DI), Chris Sarra (Stronger Smarter), Siegfried Engelmann (DI), John Fleming (EI), Anita Archer (EI)



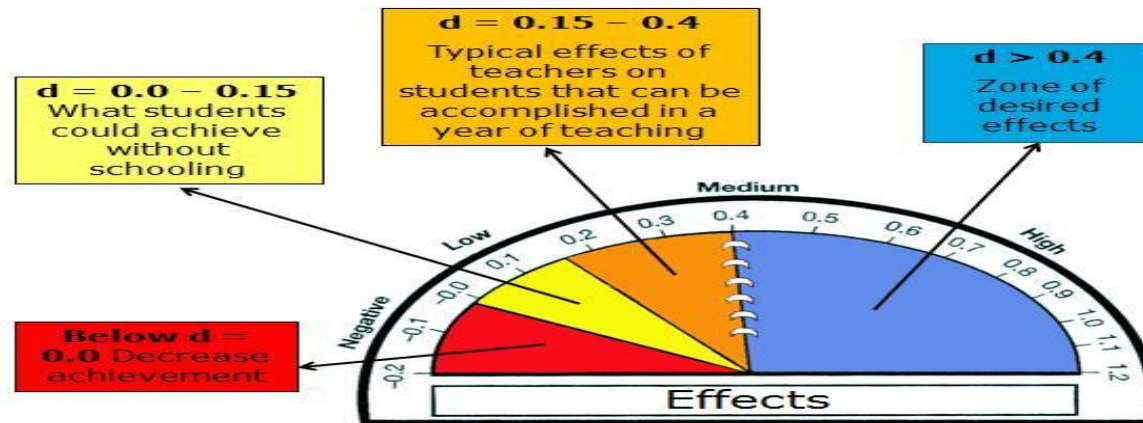
John Hattie & Visible Learning

Central character, Professor John Hattie (Visible Learning)

Attributes of *effective teaching*:

- Understand the essential learning of their subject – **know their subject well (CK)** and **how to communicate it well (PCK)**
- Respond to student interests – can **connect** it to students'
- **Feedback, monitoring** and progress of each student
- Create **positive classroom learning environments**
- **Clear learning goals and self-regulation**

Barometers of Influence





Concern Across the Tasman



Concern that Hattie's work is now generalised across all contexts (decontextualized: 'invisible') (Snook et al, 2013)

Nationalistic agendas override Indigenous peoples aspirations for education, especially in the important space of teacher-student interaction (McKinley, 2010)

There is a growing uneasiness [in Australian education] related to how little is known about teacher quality from Indigenous students' own perspectives (Rowe, 2007).

"There is astoundingly little known about *what Aboriginal students see* as the qualities of effective teachers and the impact this has on educational outcomes (Craven, 2011).

A Pedagogy of Indifference

Australian research indicates a general unwillingness to, first of all, believe and, then, enact pedagogical differences that may hold some consequence for minority students.

(Lingard, 2007)

As asserted by Sarra (2011), enacted curriculum, including teaching practice, must demonstrate links between school and the everyday realities of Indigenous peoples' life practices, histories and cultures.

By treating all students, however much they differ, as equal in rights and duties, the educational system gives its sanction to the initial (and historical) inequality in relation to culture (Bourdieu, 1990).

As asserted by Lingard (2007), a 'pedagogy of indifference' will continue to prevent marginalised students from accessing the cultural capital that is rewarded within mainstream education.

The Research Focus



As well, Craven (2011) states, “[t]here is a need to critically validate the generalisability of [Hattie’s and Rowe’s] findings to Aboriginal students **to tease out facets of quality teaching that are salient to Aboriginal students; elucidate their perspectives of teacher quality; and test the influence of specific facets of quality teaching on academic outcomes** and the consequences of the findings for developing interventions for Aboriginal school students.”

What is the focus of the project?

Mandate for Catholic Education:

to improve equitable outcomes for its Indigenous students

Catholic Education recognizes that engaging teachers in inclusive curriculum practices is a central focus in its commitment to provide equitable learning outcomes

Can't be driven by national agendas that overlook practices that are likely able to be voiced by our parents

To find out the teaching practices *that best support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in their learning*

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers



1.3 Demonstrate knowledge of teaching strategies that are responsive to the learning strengths and needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds.

1.4 Demonstrate broad knowledge and understanding of the impact of culture, cultural identity and linguistic background on the education of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

2.4 Demonstrate broad knowledge of, understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages.

Research Focus

We want to find out what/if teacher behaviors as voiced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their communities have effect on learning

We are seeking a pedagogy of difference



Learning Environment Research

Systematic evaluation of physical, psycho-social, pedagogical aspects that influence learning

Well-established and long-standing area of research in Australia (for example, Barry Fraser, Darrell Fisher)

Dominated by research in mainstream classrooms with little consideration to minority populations

Qualitative Phase:

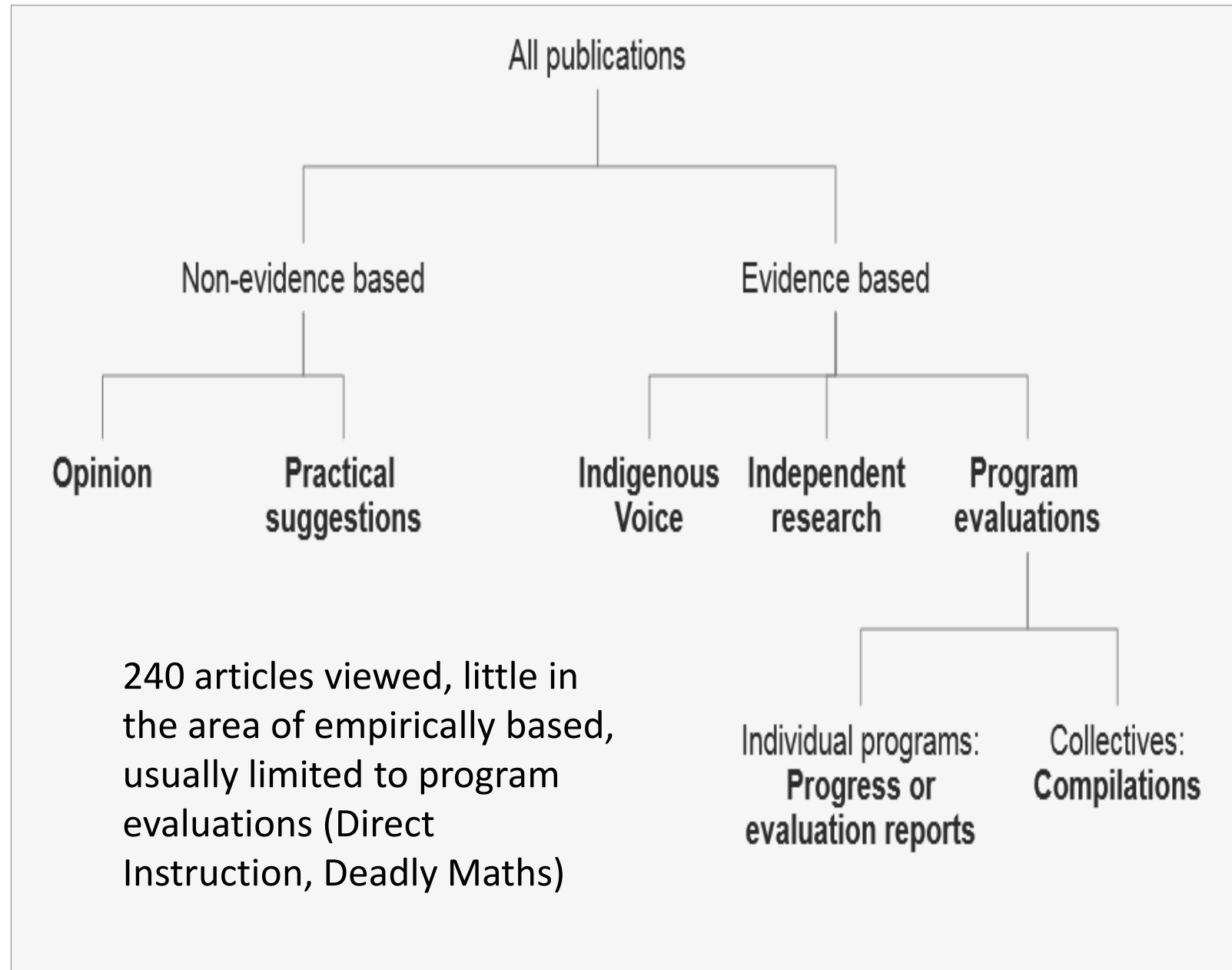
- Literature Review
- Classroom Observations
- Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Initial Instrument development

Quantitative Phase

- Statistical Validation of the instrument
- Instrument Application
- Intervention – adapted teacher practice to determine effect

Australian Research on Indigenous Pedagogy

.... attention to good ideas research, which remains unsubstantiated. We have to question why we have failed [as a nation] to pursue a line of research that seeks this understanding (Craven, 2009).



- Phase One (2014): Conversations with students, parents and teachers to identify the teacher actions that influence student engagement & learning
- Phase Two (2014-2015): Develop *Effective Teaching Profiles* used to monitor classroom practices (Quantitative)
- Phase Three (2015-16): Monitor classrooms and determine if any measures of the Profile are associated with learning gains for students, specifically Aboriginal students
- Phase Four (2016): Work with Grades 4, 5 and 6 – Self-select to adjust practices and determine influence of these practices on student engagement and learning

Phase One: Conversations With Parents

28 parents across 4 schools (Townsville and Mount Isa)

Open-ended conversations

On average, 45 minutes long, and often with an Indigenous teacher or education worker

Some conversations over three hours

Tell me about classrooms and teachers where your child feels good about herself and her learning

What are some things that you would like your child's teachers to know that would help your child in their learning?

What can teachers do to help your child or children in their learning?

It is important to know and understand our history with education. It's a history I do not think many teachers know. It might be a part of the past, but knowing helps to build a better future for our children. It is an important history as it helps to understand how many parents and their children approach education today. For many, including my parents it was not positive. School was not a welcoming place. You weren't made to feel welcome so for every [Aboriginal] person there is that reservation – a mistrust with schools, and with teachers. It's just too much a part of our history. So, when our children go to school I think they carry that same sensitivity to school and to teachers. They can sense it and until they are really sure and certain, there will be that mistrust in the background. Until they see something different there will be that mistrust. That's why just those basic skills of making someone feel 'welcome' – really welcome are important. Just a smile, a gesture, a comment – all of those things are so important. Even more is if those things aren't there when you go to a school. We need to receive that gesture, that smile, that comment. If it is indifferent, then that's telling us we aren't welcome. My parents experience with education was not positive. I picked up on that, and I know what it feels like to not feel welcome – to not be treated like I am welcome. There is a difference between being made welcome and being made to feel like you are not welcome. It doesn't take much to make you feel either welcome or not welcome. We want our children to feel welcome and a teacher can do so much to make that happen

*I want my children to go to school and be happy. And that is all about the relationship they have with the teacher. It's like a child says, "Do you value me?". "Do you really care for me?". If there is any sense from my child that school is not a happy place, where they are made to feel good about themselves, then why would I want my child to go to school? **I think for many of us our own experiences with school influence the way we respond to our child's experience at school. If our memories are not that good, and we saw school as not a happy place, then that's what we are thinking about for our children. If it's not happy, we don't have a way of making that right. You are kind of at the mercy of the school to recognize that.** But they might not know any different. It can change so much from year to year. At the start of the school year you wait as a parent to see how things are going. You want to ask, but maybe you don't but you see it – maybe it's good or maybe it's bad. And you feel good or bad. If it's not good, it's hard to know what to do, because you put that trust in the school to know what's best. You want to be able to do something for them, but you don't know how.*

General themes

- *Understanding **Our History** with Education*
- *Understanding the “**Code-switching**” Required of Our Children*
- *Understanding Our Perceived **Inability to Change Schooling** as It Exists Today*
- *Wanting Teachers and Schools to Hold an **Alternative Point of View** of Indigenous Students and the Communities They Represent*
- *Wanting Schooling and Teaching to Affirm **Cultural Identity***
- *Ensure **Learning Priorities** are Broader than Achievement*

[illegible]

Phase One: Conversations with Students

28 students across 4 schools (Townsville and Mount Isa)

Open-ended conversations

On average, 45 minutes long, and often with an Indigenous teacher or education worker

Questions asked:

Tell me about classrooms and teachers where you feel good about yourself and your learning

Next year, you will get a new teacher [for a subject]. What do you want that teacher and classroom to do to help you to learn?

You can tell she is interested in us all. Every day she lets us know she is interested in us. She tells us about her life and she's interested in my life. She wants to get to know you. Not just friendly stuff but making you feel you are important and that you can do alright in his subject. In the class she'll spend lots of time with you and not make a scene about it with the rest of the class. You feel welcome.

I think she's a good teacher because she gives you time. She's not bossy. But she's not soft. She takes time to get to know you in the classroom but will talk to you at Coles [shopping store]. My dad noticed that. That is the way it is in the classroom. Because she is that way with us, we try hard to be that way with everyone. Everyone is important. No matter who you are. Then, this all shows in how we behave to each other, not just to her.

I like her teaching when she keeps the important information up front. Really to the point. I know our [Indigenous Education Support Worker] tells us that we need to be able to 'code-switch' in the class. Everything is 'code-switch' for us. Not just the way we talk but the way we are asked to learn and behave. She says if we can 'code-switch', we will be ok. Teachers talk in ways I'm not used to but that's what lots of teachers do need to be doing more. Help us to see the important stuff and then fill it in a bit – not too much we get lost. When we are learning it is good to be able to use [the language] we are used to. That is good when teachers can help us in the change [from home language to Standard Australian English]. I like it when the start of the lesson is clear. You know the focus and then at the end you come back to that. I need to know where I'm going so she makes that good. Just letting you know what you need to know and what to do, so it comes back to that.

The math[ematics]s problems are just not in words. He'll show you and you have to work it through. I mean, you can see the problem. Not just read it from a piece of paper. Then you will work it through right there, figuring it out and you're doing the maths but not really aware that you are. When it's in a book, you just get lost....because the words don't tell you what you are supposed to do. Then when you have it, the words come. But they have to after the real thing. Just so the words make sense.

Before reading, she goes over the hard words and maybe has pictures that get you thinking [not just words]. Really slow. It helps to know what will be in [the reading] and what it means. It's like she knows what words will give you trouble. She doesn't make you feel stupid, just really supportive. When you are on your own [reading], I can't understand because it's just words. You maybe can read those words but not know [and comprehend]. That's why what she does really helps.

When you know the teacher is interested in you, you are willing to share [stories] about your family [history] and other things. I know lots about my family [past history] and he will use examples that relates to some of those areas [from the area]. Battle Mountain was really important story. I had heard about that but not too much. That really opened everyone's eyes to know that [the battle between the white police and Kalkadoon people] had happened not long ago. There were lots of pictures and stories. It made it really interesting. Now, I can see that learning that was important and why native title is so important...It wasn't just one sided and he just doesn't do the talking....It was like there was more than one side to the story. The story was important and he chose to do that. Right here in Mt Isa. Not far away. It just helps you to understand that there is a history here and it does involves [Aboriginal people]. I don't think many are aware of that. That was really important learning. As a [states career choice] I want those stories to be talked about. Not just the important places around that are special [local country places named] but the stories where there was conflict.

General themes

- *A classroom climate of 'warm expectations'*
- *Building cultural bridges as a foundation for respect and learning*
- *Making provision for development of literacy (and numeracy) fluency*
- *A classroom environment that affirms and welcomes and includes community resources, both physical and human*
- *A tendency towards explicit instruction, emphasizing a gradual release of responsibility*
- *Student diversity is accommodated to promote individual engagement and success*
- *A variety of teaching practices support student learning*
- *Being attentive to student health and well being*
- *Developing a classroom environment that supports learning through mainly proactive measures, especially relational*

; Osborne, B.; Lloyd, N.; Llewellyn, L.; Boon, H.; Webber, T.; Laffin,
Day, C.; Wills, J.; and Harrison, M. (2015) *Seeking a pedagogy of
at Aboriginal students and their parents in North Queensland say
g and their learning.* Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 40 (5).

Lewthwaite, B.; Osborne, B.; Lloyd, N.; Llewellyn, L.; Boon, H.; Webber, T.; Laffin, G.; Kemp, C.; Day, C.; Wills, J.; and Harrison, M. (2015) *Seeking a pedagogy of difference: what Aboriginal students and their parents in North Queensland say about teaching and their learning.* Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 40 (5). pp. 132-159.

The Responsive Teacher

When we confirm someone [or thing], we identify a better self and encourage its development. To do this we must know the other reasonably well. Otherwise we cannot see what the other is really striving for, what ideal he or she may long to make real. Formulas and slogans have no place in confirmation. We do not posit a single ideal for everyone and then announce 'high expectations for all'. Rather we recognize something admirable, or at least acceptable, struggling to emerge in each person and community we encounter. The goal or attribute must be seen as worthy both by the person trying to achieve it and by us. We do not confirm people or communities in ways we judge to be wrong (Noddings 1996: 192).



Phase One: Conversations with Teachers

24 teachers across 4 schools (Townsville and Mount Isa)

Open-ended conversations

On average, 45 minutes long

Questions asked:

Tell me about your classroom and your teaching when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students feel good about themselves and their learning

What informs your teaching when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students?

Phase Two: Effective Teaching Profile

A Pedagogy of Difference (CRP)

Identification of 82 low-inference behaviours identified through these conversations and literature

Have been categorised into **9 broad categories**

Statistically validated with 144 Catholic Education teachers – mainly primary

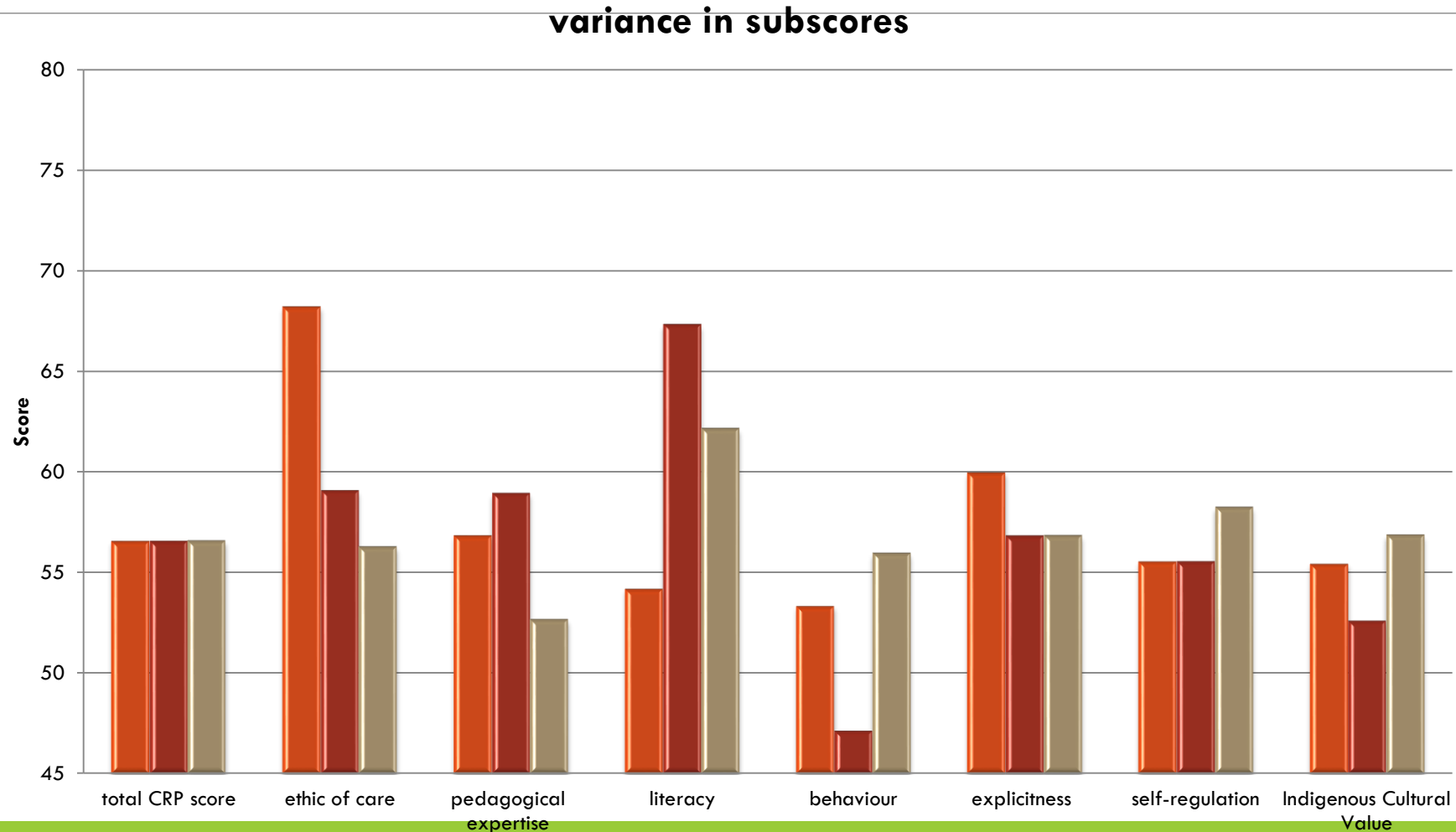
Likert-type scale – never used/evident - always used/evident

Able to identify through Rasch analysis extent to which these are practiced across classrooms

Consistency and variability across classrooms

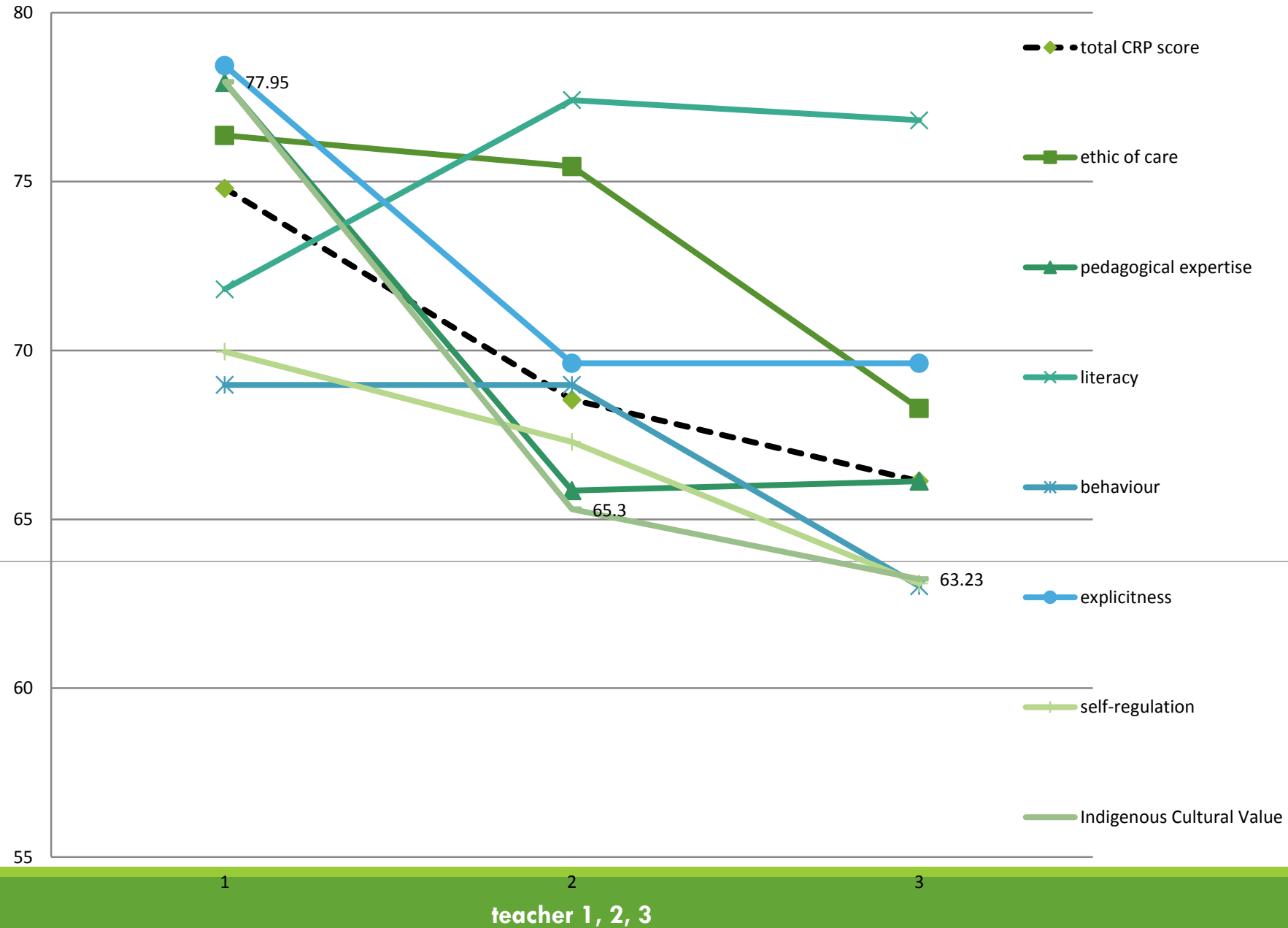
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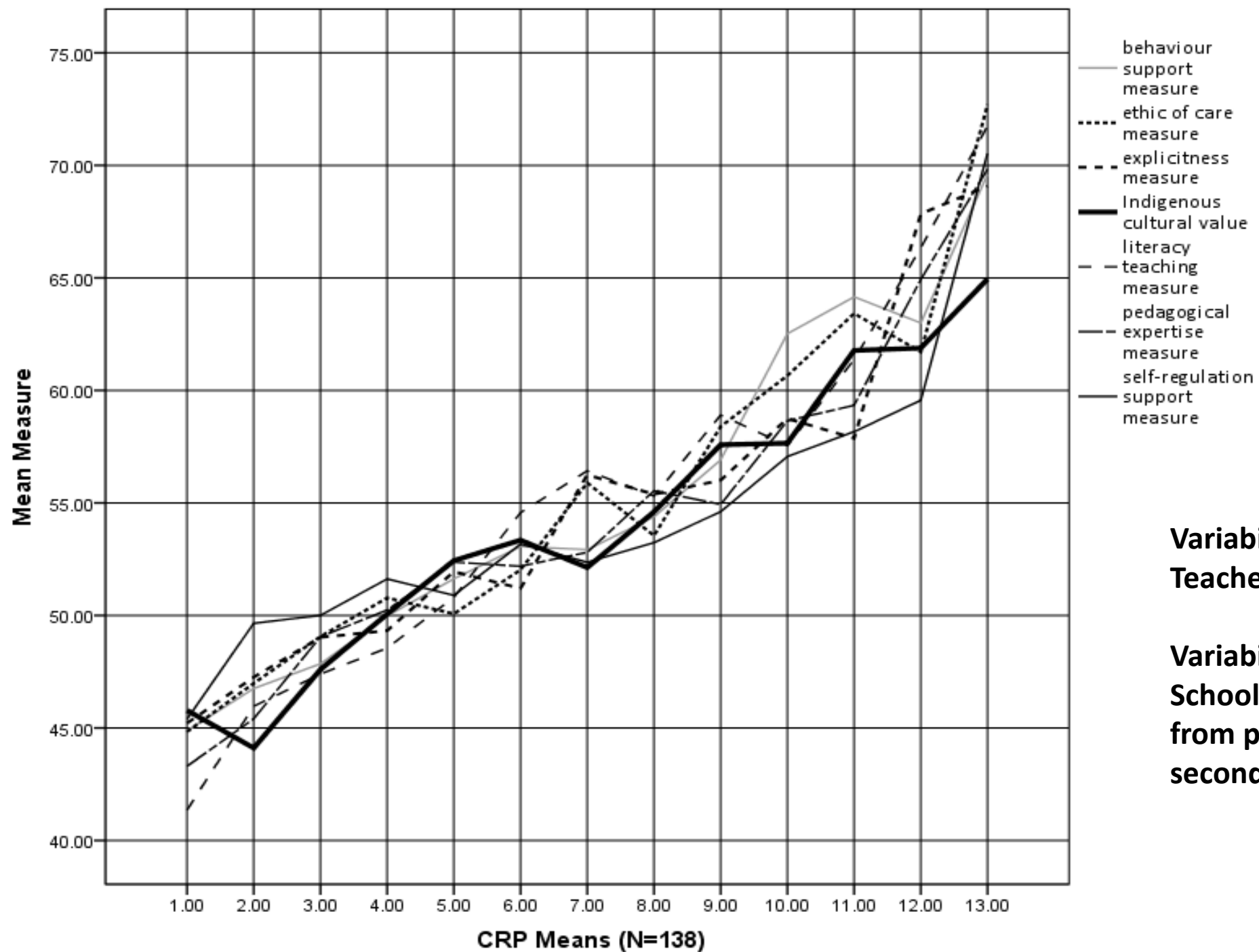
Comparing 3 teachers with identical overall score on CRP



comparing 3 teachers who had an identical overall CRP score

Comparing three random teachers with different overall CRP scores

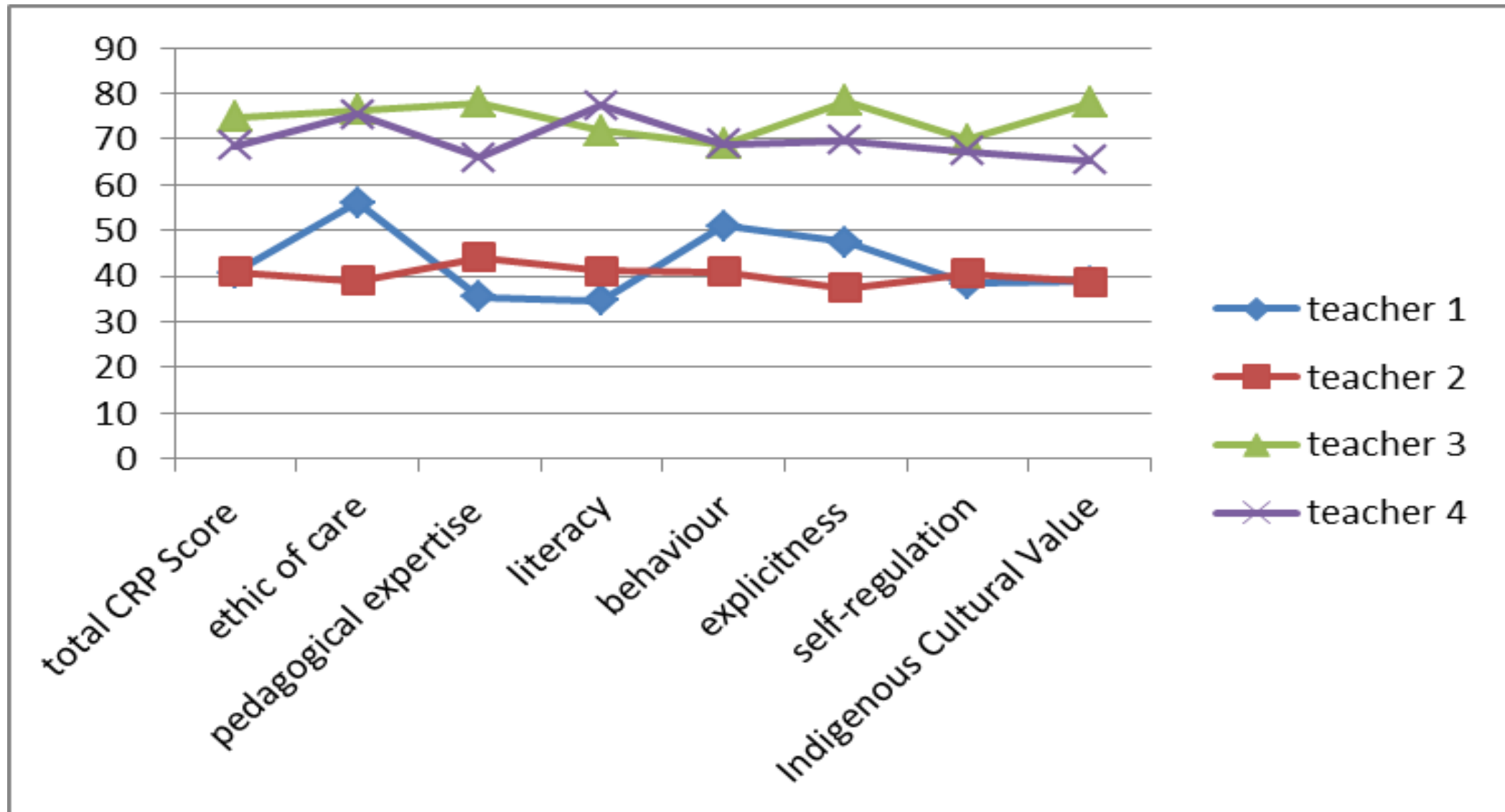




Variability in CRP Teacher Profiles –

Variability Across Schools, especially from primary to secondary

Comparing 2 teachers with the lowest score with 2 teachers with the highest scores in CRP



Current and Next Steps

Phase One (2014): Conversations with students, parents and teachers to identify the teacher actions that influence student engagement & learning

Phase Two (2014-2015): Develop *Effective Teaching Profiles* used to inform changes in practice

Phase Three (2015): Profiling Catholic Education 30 classrooms and correlating to PAT Numeracy and Literacy results over this school year

Phase Four (2016): Years 4, 5 & 6: Teacher dialogue around the stories and commentaries - teachers self-select to adjust CRP and determine influence of these practices on student engagement and learning –

We want to find out if and what teacher behaviors as voiced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their communities have effect on learning



A pedagogy of difference

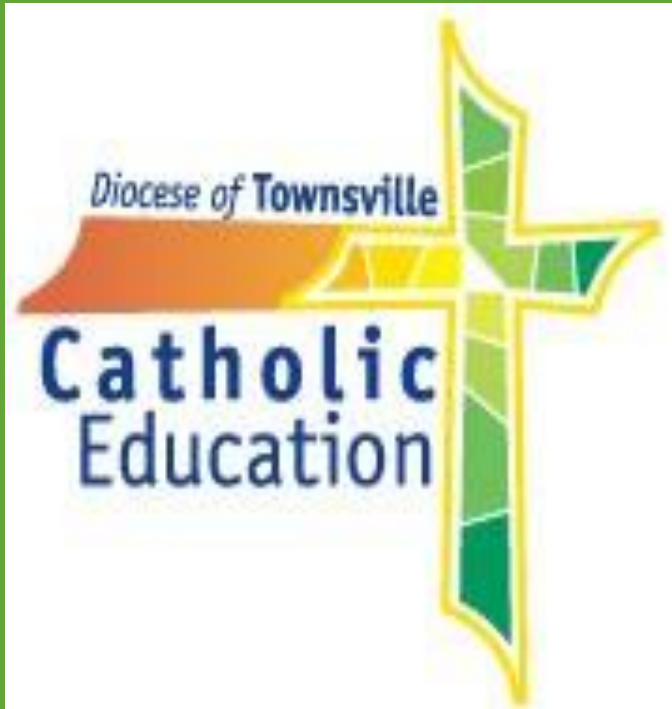
Re-defining effective teaching

Identifying what works in 'effective teaching' and what makes 'effective teachers' through the voices of Aboriginal students and community members in Northern Australia.



Seeking A Pedagogy of Difference Website

Our Quest:
understanding the
influence of a
pedagogy of
difference



Of central importance to Catholic Education is ensuring that its schools, especially its students, teachers and administrators, *challenge the prevailing view* that disparity in educational outcomes of Indigenous students is 'normal' and modest incremental gains are acceptable (Queensland Catholic Education Commission, 2012).

We seek a pedagogical theory of the middle ground, a hybrid approach, one that eschews the theory/empiricism and politics/pedagogies binaries and instead seeks to draw teachers into dialogic space where they interrogate assumption, theory, data, politics and pedagogies (Lingard & Keddie, 2013).

Publications



Lewthwaite, Brian, Osborne, Barry, Lloyd, Natalie, Llewellyn, Linda, Boon, Helen, Webber, Tammi, Laffin, Gail, Kemp, Codie, Day, Cathy, Wills, Jennifer, and Harrison, Megan (2015) *Seeking a pedagogy of difference: what Aboriginal students and their parents in North Queensland say about teaching and their learning.* Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 40 (5). pp. 132-159.

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School Communities of:

- St. Kieran's Catholic School in Mt Isa
- St. Joseph's Catholic School in Mt Isa
- Good Shepherd Catholic School in Mt Isa
- Good Shepherd Community School in Rasmussen
- Shalom Christian College in Townsville

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Diocese of Catholic Education Townsville Indigenous Education Committee