

Covid19 – a moment's reflection



We are just now coming out of a seismic world event, the covid19 pandemic and while the country seems to be gradually getting back onto its feet, the lockdown has changed multiple aspects of our normal existence for everyone. This virus has been no respecter of occupation, class, culture, race, age etc and for so many of us, not just in Aotearoa but all around the globe, our dreams, our finances and our futures, have been torpedoed. Prior to lockdown we had plans to buy a house or pay off a mortgage; to complete training or education, to secure a first job or a career change, to travel internationally or buy that new car. Covid-19 has put everything on hold.

While NZ seems to have avoided the large numbers of fatalities seen in other countries, our economy which is so connected to global trade will be significantly impacted for potentially many years to come. Primary sectors such as agriculture, fishing and forestry will recover, but, hospitality, tourism, and the international student industry have been significantly affected. Everybody's normal has changed and most of us are worried about our employment prospects and financial situations if

not for ourselves for our family and loved ones and sadly, psychologists, social workers and therapists alone seem to be in for boom times!

But it is perhaps important to quietly mention that not everything was bad. Many of us involuntarily had the guilt-free opportunity to slow down a little, to learn a language, to write a poem, to read 'Ulysses' completely for the first time, to perfect their sourdough or even to have the time and proximity to get to know their kids, and themselves better.

With specific reference to Education, as you may know, Oasis' role is not just to offer relief and contract work to local teachers but we are also contracted by the Ministry of Education to attract and recruit hard-to-staff subject teachers from overseas to come and work in NZ. Every year we place overseas teachers who offer subjects such as hard and soft technology, Maths, Physics, Chemistry etc, into Auckland schools. Now, suddenly, for the immediate future this supply has been turned off. Along with tourism, immigration into NZ for work purposes has largely been halted and we do not

know when it will resume. Work visa and residency applications are on hold, so this is a barrier right now to incoming teachers as well as a disincentive for those looking at NZ as a future destination. Of course, there are those that argue that we should not import teachers, rather we should be meeting the demand domestically from our own colleges of education. The reality is however, that for the time being with our population now exceeding five million and with schools experiencing significant roll growth, we are not training enough teachers or in the right subjects to replace attrition from retirement, let alone to meet the needs generated by more schools and increasing student numbers.

So, what should NZ's population be? 5 million? 10 million? 50 million? and given our country's susceptibility to skills shortages, changes in the work force, the ebbs and flows of immigration and our isolated geographical position in the world is the concept of a specific population number even feasible? Especially in recent years, skill shortages across Primary Industry, Education, Health, IT etc have been driven dually by immigration and rising birth rates and the demand for more overseas workers will surely engender further ongoing labour shortages.

We can't put the genie back in the bottle and many sectors of the economy are specific to and rely on immigration for their survival but regarding the future shape of our country, what covid19 has done is give us a breathing space to consider the future of our country. Just as the lack of cars on the roads for six weeks made us realise how good the air can be in the absence of large quantities of carbon monoxide or how sweetly the Tuis sing when we actually have the silence and the opportunity to listen to them, this temporary closing of our borders allows us the opportunity to consider and discuss the future makeup of Aotearoa.



2020: When Covid came to town; a NZ teacher's experience of working during lockdown.



Oasis celebrates Xmas in easier times.

What a year we have had. Covid-19 was the bitter cherry on top of the disaster-cake that has been Aotearoa for the past few years. As a nation we have been faced with natural disaster, terrorist attack, economic hardship, and a deadly pandemic. As a teacher, my experience of the latter has been a steep learning curve, both for myself and for my students.

Engagement. I am sure I am not alone in claiming that this was one of the greatest challenges presented to educators with the event of Covid 19 and the ensuing lockdown. Even with all the communication options available to us in 2020, it has proven near impossible to retain engagement and student interest via distance learning. The lack of clear communication from the ministry to educators, institutions, and whanau has caused issues that continue to haunt schools. The promised chrome books and internet services were late in arriving - if they arrived at all - only showing up once children were already coming back to school. This meant that, as an educator, it was extremely difficult to deliver a meaningful program which left parents, caregivers, educators, and whanau frustrated and confused. Now we are faced with the difficulty of retrieving chrome books from family's who can be reluctant to give up the at-home resource, even though they were clearly advised that the chrome books were the property of their respective schools. Many needy students never even received a device at all. This meant that it was impossible to deliver a robust program of learning to

them, leaving them with nothing but the hard packs provided by the government - of which teachers knew nothing - and the swiftly thrown together TV learning schedule, which was often pitched at a level that was unhelpful or irrelevant to our learners.

Parents and caregivers have rapidly developed an appreciation for the important role that teachers play in the day-to-day operations of a child's life. I spent a large portion of my time during lockdown

fielding calls from distraught parents who had no idea how to get their children to engage with schoolwork or attend "class" calls. I even had caregivers request that I mediate social media disputes. These are just a couple of the hats that we wear every day in our role as teachers. We counsel and console. We integrate and inspire. We educate and we empathise. Hopefully, this means we will have a far larger support base when we next head to the negotiation table.

In saying all of this, as a nation we have made fantastic progress with our last active case recovering this past week. We have successfully moved down first from level 4, then on level 3, 2, and level 1 on Tuesday morning the 12th of June. Our children are slowly returning to school and the routines that were so badly disrupted are gradually returning to normal. Our children have now had more time off school this year than they have actually spent in the classroom. The good news is that children are resilient, flexible, and simply overjoyed to be back in the school environment with their friends and teachers. Sports teams, choirs, bands, and all kinds of extracurricular activities are back up and running, providing our children with the holistic learning experiences that provide them with the skills and knowledge they need for a life of learning.

- Ethan



A UK teacher's experience of teaching in England during lockdown.



I am a high school teacher of science working in an urban region of South Yorkshire, England. I will never forget that fateful Wednesday afternoon when Prime Minister Boris Johnson made his announcement stating that all schools must shut to most pupils from Friday, with all summer examinations cancelled. My stomach turned.

In the first week after shutdown, the school made sure all its students had access to learning resources. This was possible by using a variety of online platforms including Microsoft OneNote and Microsoft Teams. My school ensured all pupils were able to access online content. In exceptional circumstances, for instance if a student does not have access to a laptop, smart phones or internet connectivity, physical work was sent home.

By the end of the first week, teachers including myself welcomed the Easter break that provided us with a much need break to revise our plans. I dabbled with some basic video production and I made a series of 20-minute videos covering a range of physics concepts. To keep it fresh I toyed with the popular social app

“TikTok” to produce short video clips of information with trendy music.

By the end of May, it was becoming clear that schools in England would not be open for usual business until at least September. So, distance learning adapted again. Students at my school are currently following a highly structured timetable where they can join set Team meetings to watch and interact with their teachers for 50-minute lessons. I am able to share my Microsoft PowerPoint slides and do practical demonstrations again. I start each lesson with “pens out, date and title in your books please.” It is amazing how warming these words feel to both my pupils and myself.

This is still a far from perfect scenario, Microsoft office is a package designed principally for professionals to use within a corporate environment. I am constantly reflecting on my own behaviour management techniques that need to adapt within an online environment. Highlighting to pupils it is not OK to use the emojis and gifs within the question panel as well as asking students to turn off their mics while eating their Corn Flakes has become the new normal.

This environment is providing me with an amazing opportunity to make sure pupils are aware of safe cyber practises as well as demonstrating online etiquettes that come along with using a professional online platform. Mistakes made online may lead to more serious consequences than when making them in more forgiving space such as a classroom. I have found that reminding the students that online lessons are being recorded is key when demonstrating how the expectations differ between attending a social or gaming platform compared with attending a professional platform.

This pandemic has forced UK schools to close indefinitely. However, learning continues. My students are learning how to time manage, take notes for themselves and navigate the online dimension. My students are also having to find ways to continue studying when no teacher is standing behind them to encouraging them to continue when they make mistakes and say well done when they achieve. This drives me and so I continue to learn from my students too.

Oasis Education Professional Development 2020

Subsequent to recent changes to NZ teacher registration requirements; specifically, the need for an endorsing Principal to sign-off a teacher as having completed satisfactory professional development, Oasis now plans to offer at least one professional development course in 2020. One of Oasis' school Principals has very generously agreed to provide a specialist classroom- practice trainer to hold a ½ day professional development course (at a time yet to be confirmed) and the Principal will sign-off all the teachers that successfully attend this course for re-registration.

It is our understanding that course content will include current best principle teaching practice; how to manage difficult student behaviour; the use of technology and devices in a classroom setting and using elements of Te Reo and Tikanga Maori in your teaching.

We don't yet know what the need is for such a PD course but should demand necessitate it we will schedule another seminar for a date later in the year.

The process from there will be as follows:

- Talia will confirm receipt of your email and will register you on a list of applicants.
- Oasis will assess each application according to its merit and will invite up to 30 teachers to attend the session.
- Applicant's participation will only be formally confirmed once the (non-refundable) \$50 attendance fee has been received.
- Once we have a minimum of 20 confirmed applicants, we will liaise with the school to agree a date and location for the course and applicants will be contacted again at that stage.

So as of the newsletter distribution date we now welcome emailed initial expressions of interest as

a first step. If you wish to attend this course then please email Talia Scarborough at talia@oasis-edu.co.nz

Best wishes the team at Oasis.

* NB if, for unforeseeable circumstances the course cannot be held, course fees will be refunded.

* NB the Principal will have the right not to endorse any teacher he or she believes has not met the criteria for satisfactory professional development

20 useful Maori Phrases for your classroom

1. E noho rā – Goodbye
2. Mōrena – Good morning
3. Hāere mai – Come here
4. Whakarongo – Listen
5. Titiro – Look!
6. Ka rawe – Awesome
7. Ka mau te wehi – That is amazing
8. Menemene – Smile
9. Pakipaki – Clap
10. Huakina te wini – Open the window
11. Katia te tatau – Close the door
12. Huakina te tatau – Open the door
13. E noho – Sit down
14. Turituri – Shush
15. Kei te pēhea koe – How are you?
16. Kei te pai aha – I am fine
17. Hāere mai ki te whāriki – Come to the mat
18. Ngā mihi nui – Many thanks
19. Kia pai to rā whakatā – Have a good afternoon
20. He aha pea he mahi mā taua, he mahi pānui – Shall we do something, shall we read

HOUSEKEEPING STUFF!

1. **PLEASE GET TO SCHOOL ON TIME.** You are not just representing yourself. Every time you go to a school you are representing Oasis and when you are late this reflects badly on us. We understand that traffic is a lottery in Auckland but most teachers 'factor this in' and get to schools on time and please note that getting to school on time is one key factor in getting asked back. If you are going to be late please call the Oasis office and we will let the school know. If you are late, even a minute or two, please apologise. This common courtesy will be appreciated by the school and might make your day better.

2. **TURN IT OFF!** Please don't use your cell phone in class.

3. **PAY.** Cut-off days for pay vary across schools and we can't control them so your pay will sometimes miss a day or two but this should appear in the next pay cycle. Oasis cannot influence this or Novopay/Edpay.

4. **MILEAGE.** Make sure you put down your mileage when you sign

in for the day.

5. **CLASSROOM KEYS.** Please double check that you give these back into reception or the homeroom teacher before you leave school.

6. **OUR CONTRACT STATES THAT YOU CANNOT TEACH AT, OR INDEPENDENTLY CONTACT A SCHOOL THAT OASIS HAS SENT YOU TO.** on your contract signed at the initial interview we ask you to list your own schools and oasis agree not send you to these schools. they are your schools and we respect this. you also agree not to contact or work without our knowledge at any school we have sent you to. unfortunately, some teachers are being booked directly by our client schools. this often leads to embarrassing double bookings and misunderstandings. **IF A SCHOOL ASKS YOU TO COME BACK YOU MUST REQUEST THAT THEY CALL OASIS TO CONFIRM THE BOOKING.**

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