

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

The CIT Diploma in Tertiary Teaching

a critical reflection

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Educational Administration
at Massey University,

Batch Hales

December 1996

©Batch Hales 15 Jan 1997

Permission will normally be readily given for the reproduction of any part of this document,
provided the source is acknowledged and the cause is a good one.
The author also likes a good debate.
Batch Hales, 39 Sutherland Road, Wellington 6003
Phone/Fax (04) 389-9912

Contents

Abstract	3
Acknowledgements	4
Preface	5
1 The diploma experience	15
2 The conceptual framework	33
3 Developing the diploma	58
4 Professional competence	75
5 Looking at ourselves	93
6 The wider context	113
Notes	132
References	142
Appendix A: Outline of reference material	151
Appendix B: Examples of diploma forms	155
Appendix C: The 1992 workshop programme	175
Appendix D: A 1992 Stage One contract and action plan	179
Appendix E: Moderation of Stage Two, Dec 1995	189

List of Figures

Preface

1 The diploma experience

1:1	Diploma participants, May 1995 (from CIT, 1996)	17
1:2	Diploma structure (from TEC, 1995:1)	18
1:3	Dependence to interdependence (from Covey, 1990, p.57)	19
1:4	The eight modules of Stage One	23
1:5	Stage One pathways (from TEC, 1995:2)	25
1:6	The Stage Two process (from TEC, 1995:3)	26
1:7	Stage Three processes (from TEC, 1995:4)	31

2 The conceptual framework

2:1	Kolb's experiential learning cycle (from Kolb, 1984, p.42)	40
2:2	Levels of resolution	49
2:3	Levels of application	51
2:4	Levels of scope	52

3 Developing the diploma

4 Professional competence

4:1	Heron's experiential learning model (from Heron, 1989, p.13)	81
4:2	Dimensions and modes of facilitation (from Heron, 1989, p.23)	82
4:3	Mentoring aspects and tasks	83
4:4	Challenging questions for personal evaluation	84
4:5	The six categories of counselling intervention (Heron, 1990, p.5)	85

5 Looking at ourselves

5:1	Support for degree (from TEC, 1995)	96
5:2	1996 assessment workshops	107
5:3	Outcomes for assessment module	108

6 The wider context

6:1	Two types of action research (Based on Elliott, 1991, p.18-23)	124
-----	--	-----

Abstract

This thesis explores issues related to the implementation of a programme of tertiary and adult teacher education based on experiential learning and action research.

The Diploma in Tertiary Teaching was developed in 1991 by The Education Centre (TEC) of the Central Institute of Technology, Heretaunga, New Zealand, as a response to changes in government educational funding and delivery policies. Its emphasis on open learning, student autonomy, action research and critical reflective practice placed the programme at odds with traditional programmes as well as the new National Qualifications Framework. The challenges of negotiating, resourcing and maintaining individual programmes of study for more than five hundred participants throughout New Zealand were compounded by funding and administrative systems based on classroom courses with set enrolment and completion times.

More important were the issues faced by the TEC staff in attempting to meet the needs of a widely diverse student population while remaining true to the programme's philosophical base. The matter of whether, when and how to intervene to influence student decision-making, or the need to reconcile student outcomes with those of the programme present ethical and practical dilemmas that are not easy to resolve.

The thesis describes the diploma programme, together with the philosophical, historical and political environments that influenced its evolution. Its main focus, however, is on questions and decisions relating to the translation of its theoretical and philosophical basis into reality.

The study considers three major areas of debate – facilitation, mentoring, and assessment. Resolutions in each of the areas raise questions of meaning and practice which relate to the broader areas of the National Qualifications Framework and educational policy.

The popularity and effectiveness of programmes such as the Diploma in Tertiary Teaching, as well as moves towards the use of electronic media and the internationalisation of education, are increasingly providing a challenge to traditional delivery methods and current government policies.

Acknowledgements

The researching and writing of this study has tried the patience of the staff of The Education Centre, who have been generous with their support, suggestions, critique and encouragement. Many will find their ideas and reflections incorporated into the study, and I apologise for not giving specific credit where it may be due. Even where the words are my own the environment of open exploration and debate at TEC over the last seven years have provided impetus and challenge.

Dr John Codd and Dr Wayne Edwards of Massey University have provided advice at strategic points in the research. I particularly thank Wayne for putting me in touch with 'grounded theory'. John revitalised me on several occasions with suggestions about changes in direction and emphasis. I have valued his patience and clear understanding of my mind's intentions.

My family have been the most long-suffering. Their relief that it is finished is palpable.

Preface

Introduction

In a workshop facilitated by the 1994 HERDSA scholar, Ann Kerwin, Professor of Medical Ignorance at the University of Arizona, we were asked to pose all the questions we could think of about learning and teaching. The questions tumbled out in their hundreds, ranging from the silly to the impossible, the wondering questions, many of them, that children might ask:

Does music influence learning?

Can one learn not to learn?

Why do unit standards not work?

Should learning be fun?

Do animals learn?

What would happen if there were no schools?

After a life full of answers, the main questions are all still there, the ignorance that underpins our knowing. This study is about one of those speculative ‘what if?’ questions. What if the theories of adult teaching and learning, theories of action research and critical reflective practice that have been so eloquently articulated over the last twenty or so years ... what if they were given a real concrete trial through an actual

programme? Would they really be effective? What problems or issues would arise? What would one have to do to cause them to be successful? On whose terms?

Over the last five or six years I have been taking stock of many of the questions that are avoided in education, the ones that if posed, can call into question the very foundations on which our education system has been constructed. These questions concern not only what **really** happens, but who benefits, what can be done differently, and whether we want what we are getting.

The catalyst has been the Diploma in Tertiary Teaching, developed and implemented by a team of adult and tertiary teacher educators at The Education Centre, Central Institute of Technology, Heretaunga, New Zealand.

This study tells the story of the development and implementation of the diploma programme, providing a historical and philosophical context and analysing the challenges and insights along the way. It shows the maturing of the ideas of the team through the years the diploma has been offered, and speculates on directions we may head in the future. Above all it tries to reconstruct the reality that underlies the diploma. This involves considering the 'connectedness' of ideas, the 'embedded ideology, dominant cultural values and oppressive stereotypes' underlying what we do (Kincheloe, 1993, p.97). Although a case study, its conclusions should have lasting application across any teaching programmes using similar methods.

The critical question

Despite the great deal of writing about need to move from teacher-centred pedagogical approaches to learning to ones which develop student responsibility and self-evaluation through critical reflection, few programmes seem to have consistently and effectively applied these theories, except in a small-scale way and often at a postgraduate level. And although action research has become an accepted process for teachers to investigate their teaching competence and professional development, it is rare to find it consistently applied in a full qualification.¹

Enabling people to be self-evaluating and self-critical implies a completely different set of approaches to education, and poses new dilemmas and concerns. There is a great deal of rhetoric about the need for student-centred learning, but formal learning is increasingly embedded in policies which define what and how students should learn, and course structures and teacher strategies which provide them with little power to make their own decisions. A genuine belief in the power and ability of individuals to determine their own learning causes radical re-evaluation of all aspects of education from policy to practice. This occurs both with relation to the environment, and internally, with relation to the course itself.

The diploma attempts to apply the principles of open and student-centred learning in a consistent manner, while ensuring that participants become competent in both the understanding of learning process and the practice of teaching. While the programme provides models of teaching and learning, its core is the participants' exploration and interpretation of their own experiences and the growth of their ability to be self-critical. Action research, the ability of participants to systematically implement and evaluate planned changes in their practice, becomes the key to the growth of competence.

While it is simple to work out what might be the challenges of undertaking such a programme, little seems to have been written about the actual results of putting one into practice. It is one thing to be aware of the possibilities of resistance at a number of levels, but quite another to confront the realities on a day-to-day basis. It is hard to conceive, for instance, of the actual dilemmas and complications that arise with a system of open enrolment in an institution used to enrolling students at a certain time for a course lasting a set length and assessed on a set date, or the problems calculating Equivalent Full-Time Student (EFTS) places based on classroom attendance when a course has no compulsory attendance requirements. It is easy to anticipate that there will be some student difficulty about moving to self-directed programmes; it is hard to envisage what particular forms such resistance will take, and what strategies can be used to develop autonomy.

So this study, while touching upon all the implications and struggles associated with adopting a different educational philosophy and developing a course based on it, moves on to the consequences of introducing such a programme. It is about the ongoing

decisions, the unexpected problems and the inspirations and insights that changed thinking and practice on the way, as well as the enduring issues and debates. It addresses the question of the conceptual, administrative, professional and interpersonal issues arising from the introduction of a programme which emphasises student self-direction and research within a culture that places strong emphasis on externally defined outcomes and criteria, as well as teacher-centred teaching methods.²

Data gathering

From 1991, before the diploma had been conceived, I had started documenting what we were doing. I recorded what occurred in most of the staff meetings, collected different publications and revisions of publications, and kept diaries of events and my reflections about them.

The data gathering has been eclectic. Because I have been largely responsible for producing most of the documents for the diploma, I have kept files on most of the drafts as well as revisions of finished materials. I have also tried to keep editing notes where possible. These have proven invaluable, since it has often been that through articulating our ideas on paper we have clarified them and discovered anomalies and problems.

The production of a substantial course such as this also demands a great deal of official documentation and correspondence. I gathered whatever seemed relevant at the time, by the expedient practice of dating the papers and putting them in a file box, unsorted.

Much of importance cannot be classified adequately, as it consists of casual oral feedback, notes scribbled in margins, discussion and problem-solving from meetings, reports of teaching experiences, personal stories and other forms of sharing. I have tried to capture aspects of this dominant source of data through writing diaries, commentaries on discussions, tape recording meetings and discussions, observing and recording interaction patterns at meetings, and keeping drafts of publications. These ephemeral resources provide cultural cohesion at TEC; while they will rarely be

referred to, they form a dominant discourse, and are, of course, to some extent reflected in the documents. (See Appendix A for outline of reference materials.)

The contextual background

The TEC environment

The diploma is a product of its environment. I have attempted to fill in this context in several ways. First there is the context of the other work done at TEC. At various times over the last six years I have recorded the number of other demands on the attention of the staff. For instance, even over the two or three months when the major work on the diploma was undertaken, staff were engaged in a high workload of workshops, consultancy, developing and writing courses, and other tasks.³

I have recorded feedback lecturers have given at meetings about their main preoccupations. I have also on two or three occasions documented the events that have taken place at TEC during the course of a day or a week. We have tried to analyse the amount of time spent on various activities, with a view to rationalising our procedures.⁴

Central Institute of Technology

The study has a sub-commentary about the relationship between The Education Centre (TEC) and its host organisation, the Central Institute of Technology (CIT). Much of the information for this comes from memoranda and letters, staff newsletters and special announcements. I have also had access to CIT Council and committee meetings. TEC annual reports, budgets and financial statements, Validation Committee discussions, and other documents give body to records of discussions within TEC.

CIT's decisions are themselves in a context of the pressures of on one side the demands, criticisms and interests of staff, and on the other extreme financial and operational constraints resulting from changes in educational policy. While on one hand the institution appears to have acted at times arbitrarily and with little consultation in its approach to TEC, on the other it seems to have suffered the same arbitrary and non-consultative approach itself. It, too, has worked through a succession of 'quick fix'

solutions, for instance amalgamation, first with Hutt Valley Polytechnic, then with The Open Polytechnic, followed by massive restructuring, during which most of the senior management were replaced.

TEC lecturers have taken a strong lead in many CIT initiatives, with representations on many of the committees and submissions on many changes. In particular, staff members have for the last two years been major contributors to a task force considering approaches to open learning and have played critical roles on the Academic Board and the Staff Development Committee. TEC has had representatives on the Recognition of Prior Learning Task force, the Ethics Committee, the Library Committee, Validation Committees, and many other administrative and policy bodies. I have retained copies of records of meetings with these groups.

Association of Staff in Tertiary Education

TEC has also taken a major role in the Association for Staff in Tertiary Education (ASTE), at both branch and national level, with at one stage having both branch committee members and the National Vice-President on the staff. ASTE has taken an often crucial role both in developing and supporting the diploma and in preventing the closure of TEC. Some of the documentation for these events has been retained.

National education policy

One of TEC's main sources of continuing debate, at both practical and philosophical levels, is with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). Our early interest in the development of the National Framework has been maintained through negotiations, discussion, attendance at workshops and conferences, and exploration of ideas by facilitating workshops. TEC staff have read widely about the systems operating in New Zealand and overseas, and in 1993 and 1994 visited several institutions in Britain to discover practical issues arising from the implementation of similar processes.

The association with NZQA has also involved input into the standards bodies developing units for the framework, review and critique of NZQA documents, and

membership of accreditation panels. We have worked closely with the Education and Training Support Agency (ETSA) on implementation and assessment of units, and have also been involved with many other groups in developing their own programmes of study within the qualifications framework.

The development and implementation of the diploma programme has raised many issues both relating to the National Framework, and regarding other aspects of the Government's tertiary education policy. The system of EFTS funding has been of particular concern, as have other funding issues. These we see as symptoms of an approach to education riddled with contradiction and often alien to our own.⁵

The context of private enterprise, competition and credentialism has ironically also been instrumental in TEC's success. The study documents the adaptability and creativity that have ensured our survival, without at the same time compromising our own beliefs or standards. It is interesting also to note how within five years our ideas have become accepted as sensible, if not mainstream.

Academic debate and scholarship

While in the context of polytechnic education it has sometimes been considered radical or even extreme in its views,⁶ TEC's position is endorsed by a range of experts and professional bodies. Lecturers undertake wide reading and set aside time to discuss current theories and case studies.

Our membership of the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA), the Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management Association (ALARPM), the Action Research Network (ARN) and other similar professional associations puts us in touch with practitioners from around the world. Several TEC lecturers have visited other centres and we host several overseas visitors each year. Conference papers we offer are generally well attended.

The TEC staff have had the good fortune to have worked with important mentors to have their conceptual framework translated into substance. Among our mentors have

been John Heron, David Boud, Graham Gibbs, David Jacques, John Mulligan, Rose Pere and Cliff Bunning.

My involvement as a student in the Master of Educational Administration programme at Massey University has been of importance in at least three ways. First, it has provided me with a focus for my personal reading and confirmed and clarified my thinking about educational theories and ideologies. Second, it has ensured that I have undertaken practical work both analysing TEC and critiquing educational changes. Finally, it has provided me with much needed impetus for the present study.

Sorting it out

I eventually decided on an interim set of chapter titles for the purposes of sorting the information. I then started recording my notes as separate chronological accounts, on large sheets of paper, marking those that seemed to be developing some significance. I went as the information dictated; for one of the chapters I created a separate sheet for people, for another a diagram started to form. As connections were made through the sheets, I noted those, too, on separate sheets, along with comments about the adequacy of the original category chapters and other structural questions. All the documents were placed in folders, where possible under general headings, but otherwise in rough chronological order.

When I considered that an adequate overview of a particular area was forming I started typing the commentary. The narrative started and finished with the area or topic and frequently moved towards lists or comments. Each unfinished extract of text was then placed under the chapter category in which it best fitted. Each chapter then consisted of a growing section of continuous narrative, supplemented by a string of extracts, some of which were quickly supplanted by new ideas.

I was soon made aware of the importance of context. I was hoping to find in published material confirmation of data from more informal sources, such as records of discussions and meetings. I found the opposite. Different sources of information gave parallel rather than complementary texts. For instance, not one single piece of correspondence from CIT over 1990-1992 concerned itself with educational or professional issues.

Instead, they are concerned with funding, systems, standards, and requirements. It was only when I moved into my personal diary that the extent of the involvement of TEC staff in outside matters became apparent. Concerns, concepts, and even language differed in different contexts.

I now question the concept of objectivity in the context of this sort of research. Instead different forms of data often characterise different perspectives which together present a complex picture of individual viewpoints. The informal data, the observations of staff, reports of meetings, working documents and notes, form the context from which the diploma was created and which feeds its continuing dynamism.

Ownership and confidentiality

One of the major ethical questions raised by studies such as this is that of ownership. The ideas presented in this study have been debated in various forms by TEC lecturers over the last five years. In this sense the study merely reports and summarises in a personal way dominant discourses of TEC. At times I have requested that other lecturers comment on parts of the document; other parts have been incorporated into official TEC documents.

I need to acknowledge the roles of all my colleagues who have contributed to the study both consciously and inadvertently. I have always considered their interest paramount and consider them my primary audience. The study is only valuable if it is of use to them and to the further development of TEC.

I must also acknowledge that a number of parts of the study have been used elsewhere, in particular in the definitive programme document for the Bachelor of Education (Applied) (CIT, 1996). The writing of TEC publications has occurred in parallel with this work, and so there has been a cross-fertilisation of public and private writing. This has been particularly so with Chapter Two, which formed the basis for the part of the definitive document outlining TEC philosophy.

The structure

The first chapter provides an overview of the programme. In it I have tried to capture its essence, in all its richness and complexity. The second chapter gives a philosophical rationale, in which it is shown to derive from an informed debate about the role of experiential learning and action research in the teaching of adults and in professional development. It shows that the programme is well grounded in adult learning theory. Chapter Three provides a historical perspective, in which are explored some of the conceptual, philosophical and administrative challenges encountered when the diploma was developed.

Chapter Four explores the implications of implementing a process and research based curriculum. It focuses on the three areas of facilitation, mentoring and assessment. It is these three areas that have provided the greatest challenge in terms of programme delivery. Chapter Five revisits them, considering some of the dilemmas and paradoxes that have become apparent. Chapter Six places these in a wider context of competing paradigms and educational policies.

Conclusions

This study has taken more than six years of intermittent labour to put together. They have probably been the most exciting and challenging years of my life, characterised by unrelenting change and the constant stimulus of surmounting intractable obstacles. Through our adherence to a common vision and philosophy, and through our determination, the TEC team have silenced our critics and have built up an enviable authority and respect.

It documents what has been for us extraordinary times. It is a tribute to my colleagues.