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.
Becoming a Tertiary Teacher in New Zealand: Learning in Communities of Practice

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

at Massey University, Palmerston North,
New Zealand

Alison Ruth Viskovic

2005
This thesis reports a research project studying how people become tertiary teachers in New Zealand. While studies of many aspects of tertiary teaching, teacher professional development and workplace learning have been published, no comparative study of tertiary teacher development across different types of institutions had been carried out. Few previous studies had linked the concept of learning in a community of practice with teachers’ workplace learning.

A qualitative, interpretive research framework was adopted, using three case studies. Data were gathered from institutional documents, educational developers and experienced teaching staff of three representative institutions, a polytechnic, a wananga and a university, from mid-2000 to mid-2001. Data gathering strategies included semi-structured interviews with teachers and educational developers, examination of documents, a teacher questionnaire and some class observations. Interview transcripts and other data were analysed to identify common themes, and findings were reported as three individual cases before integration.

It was found that most tertiary teachers’ learning about teaching and how to teach was in-service, mainly informal and experiential, and the knowledge gained was mainly tacit and process-oriented. Although that was complemented by varying amounts of formal learning, gained through courses or professional development activities, few tertiary teachers have sought or gained teaching qualifications. While institutions have central policies and procedures to support in-service teacher development, their implementation is often uneven, with little integration or balancing of the parts. Differences of practice were observed both between institutions, and between departments within institutions, indicating the importance of context for tertiary teachers’ development.

It was concluded that non-formal workplace learning is likely to continue to be the mainstay of tertiary teacher development, and that it needs to be refocussed and approached from a fresh angle. The perspective of learning in a community of teaching practice provides a conceptual framework for integrating different levels and forms of support for tertiary teachers. Recommendations for strengthening tertiary teacher development are addressed at three levels: institutions (as social learning systems); communities of practice within those institutions (such as departments, discipline groups, programme teams, or campus whanau); and individual teachers (whose teaching identities develop within those communities).
Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the following people and institutions for their guidance and assistance during my journey towards completion of this research:

Associate Professor Janet Davies, Massey University, first supervisor; Professor Deborah Willis, Victoria University of Wellington, second supervisor for the first five years; and Professor Ruth Kane, Massey University, second supervisor for the last year. They all challenged and sharpened my thinking, gave me valuable feedback, and helped to develop my approach to gathering, analysing and reporting on qualitative data.

The institutions that gave me access to conduct this study, and especially their teachers and educational developers, whose experiences contributed so much to the case studies.

My husband, who has coped patiently as I cut back on the housework for six long years. I hope, however, that photography and gardening will take priority over housework when my post-thesis life returns to ‘normal’.

My colleagues in the adult education group at Massey University, Wellington, who have listened to my progress reports, and encouraged me to keep going; and colleagues at NZARE and HERDSA conferences who have discussed my work-in-progress papers.

Massey University: Department of Social and Policy Studies in Education for travel, accommodation and photocopying costs; Massey University Research Fund for interview transcription costs; and Massey University Advanced Academic Studies Award for time release for part of the thesis writing.

As a pakeha researcher working in ‘mainstream’ tertiary education, I have been privileged to be given access to a wananga during a period when concerns have been expressed about researchers who are not connected and accountable to Maori people. I have valued that experience, and believe that being allowed to observe the wananga’s different ways of doing things has made a significant contribution to this project.

Without a glimpse of the wananga’s distinctive values and practices, it would have been too easy to assume that the teaching approaches of the polytechnic and university represented tertiary education in New Zealand.
Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Appendices</td>
<td>xconstituents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Why this project?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 The research problem, purpose and key questions</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Structure and treatment of the thesis</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two Literature Review</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Background: tertiary education in New Zealand</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Tertiary teaching: conceptions and perspectives</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 Empirical studies of tertiary teaching</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 Scholarly studies of tertiary teaching</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.3 Implications for this study</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Expertise, excellence and professionalism</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1 Expertise</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2 Professions, professionalism, education for professions</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.3 Excellent teaching, expertise in tertiary teaching</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.4 Implications for this study</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Educational development for tertiary teachers</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1 The nature of educational development</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2 The location of educational development</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.3 Educational development through courses and qualifications</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.4 Theories and critiques of educational development</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.5 Implications for this study</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Workplace learning and community of practice</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.1 Community of practice</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.2 Studies of academic communities or cultures</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.3 Studies of workplace learning</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.4 Implications for this study</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Conclusions and research questions</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three Research Framework, method and process</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Qualitative research</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1 Characteristics of qualitative research</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.2 Qualitative research methods</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Case study research</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1 Types of case study</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2 Characteristics of case studies</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4 What provision does the wananga make for teacher education and development? 178
5.4.1 Findings from documents 178
5.4.2 Findings from the educational developer interview 181
5.4.3 Findings from teacher interviews 186
5.4.4 Some initial conclusions 188
5.5 Discussion: becoming a teacher in the wananga 190

Chapter Six  Becoming a University Teacher 193
6.1 Background and context 193
6.2 What is teaching like in the university? 194
   6.2.1 Findings from institutional documents 194
   6.2.2 Findings from educational developers’ interview 199
   6.2.3 Findings from teacher interviews 202
   6.2.4 Findings from class observations 210
   6.2.5 Some initial conclusions 210
6.3 What do some experienced teachers say about how they have developed as teachers in the university? 214
   6.3.1 Entry to teaching in the university 214
   6.3.2 Formal learning about teaching 217
   6.3.3 Informal and incidental learning about teaching 218
   6.3.4 Developing a sense of identity as a teacher 219
   6.3.5 Some initial conclusions 220
6.4 What provision does the university make for teacher education and development? 222
   6.4.1 Findings from documents 222
   6.4.2 Findings from educational developers’ interview 227
   6.4.3 Findings from teacher interviews 230
   6.4.4 Some initial conclusions 233
6.5 Discussion: becoming a teacher in the university 235

Chapter Seven  Integration of Case Study Findings 241
7.1 The contexts of the three institutions 241
7.2 Characteristics of teaching in the three institutions 242
7.3 Developing as a teacher in the three institutions 245
7.4 Provision of teacher education and development 247
7.5 Summing up: becoming a tertiary teacher in a community of practice 251

Chapter Eight  Discussion of case studies in relation to the literature 255
8.1 The case studies in the context of NZ tertiary education 255
8.2 Perspectives on tertiary teaching found in the case studies 256
8.3 Educational development and tertiary teaching qualifications 263
8.4 Expertise, workplace learning and community of practice 272
8.5 Summing up: becoming a tertiary teacher in New Zealand 282

Chapter Nine  Conclusions and Recommendations 285
9.1 Conclusions 285
9.2 Recommendations 288
   9.2.1 Recommendations for institutions 290
   9.2.2 Recommendations for local communities of practice 291
   9.2.3 Recommendations for individual teachers 293
References 301

List of Figures

Fig. 1: Relational model of teaching and learning 17
Fig. 2: Model of a tertiary teacher’s communities of practice 283
Fig. 3: Framework for teacher development in a community of practice 289

List of Tables

Table 1: Contrasting conceptions of teaching 17
Table 2: Shift of research emphasis in response to emerging issues 76
Table 3: Structure of case study chapter sections 97
Table 4: Comparison of EDU staffing and functions by institution 249
Table 5: Common occupational sequences of learning 270

Appendices

Index to Appendices 321
A. Extract from Education Amendment Act (1990), on Institutions 323
B. Development of focus group questions 325
C. Teacher questionnaire 327
D. Guide for semi-structured interviews with teachers 333
E. Guide for semi-structured interviews with educational developers 339
F. Forms developed for recording class observations 345
G. Letter from MUHEC approving ethical arrangements 349
H. Materials approved by MUHEC 351
I. Chronological sequence of research process 369
J. Questionnaire data used in selecting interview participants 375
K. List of documents obtained from each institution 379
L. Sample coded pages, analysis of teacher interview transcripts 381
M. Sample coded pages, analysis of developer interview transcripts 385
N. Vignettes of site and class observations 387
O. Vignettes of polytechnic departmental communities of practice 395
P. Vignettes of art/design communities of practice 399
Q. Polytechnic schedule of teacher descriptors 403
R. Glossary of Maori terms 405
S. Glossary of abbreviations 407