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A hard tweak: TeachNZ criteria and the Smith proposal

A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy
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ABSTRACT

The Hon. Dr Nick Smith suggested in 1999 and 2003 that ‘men’ be recruited as primary school teachers through the TeachNZ scheme. This thesis analyses the attendant policy making processes, and the influence of ideology. Six interviews were conducted and are considered against political events over the years 2003-2004. The work of Kingdon (2003) and Matland (1995) proved valuable to the analysis as they provide complementary models for discussion of data.

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Introduction

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In July 1999, the Minister of Education, Hon. Nick Smith (Smith, 1999) (Appendix 1), suggested that the TeachNZ sponsorship scheme be used to train some men as primary school educators and so address balance within the sector. Later that year the policy was abandoned. It was not clear at the time why this happened. This thesis is an attempt to investigate the reasons the policy was abandoned and the connections between the Minister's proposal and the early childhood sector, but principally the policy processes at work.

Specifically it was hoped to discover why it was decided not to use the TeachNZ scheme to target and recruit males as primary educators in 1999. The research aims were finalised in May 2003 and were intended to be used to determine:

- The policy basis on which the decision was taken, and by whom;
- Who the influential lobbyists were, and what were their motives;
- The linkage between this issue and early childhood care and education (ECCE).

An attempt has also been made to assess how greatly ideology might have affected educator balance in 1999, today, or in the future.

For the purposes of this study the term educators includes all those who are involved in the early learning of children (0-11 years), particularly those who are involved subject to government regulation and funding. It is not an easy task to order the literature surrounding male involvement in early education but what is abundantly clear, both nationally and internationally, is that males are a minority in both the primary and early childhood teaching cadres.

Background

It is first necessary to link the primary and the early childhood care and education sectors together.

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Linking the sectors

Livingstone (2003) suggests that generally there are four major types of arguments in favour of involving more men in early learning, although he specifically restricts his concern to the primary teaching sector. Livingstone (2003, p. 35) points to “widespread concern about the proportions of male teachers in schools” and summarises the arguments for involving more men as: *Academic*: to address perceived learning deficits of boys; *Social*: to cater better for perceived social needs of boys; *Environmental*: to reduce the overly “feminised” nurturing ethos in primary schools; and, *Representational*: to make primary school staff more representative of society at large. In Livingstone’s (2003, p. 40) assessment it is the representational class of argument which has most to offer, and he (following Alton-Lee and Praat, 2000) states, “[s]ociety is a diverse place, and primary schools should be microcosms of society”.

It seems clear that if the representational style of argument proposed (Alton-Lee and Praat, 2000; Farquhar, 1997; Farquhar, Cablk, Buckingham, Butler and Ballantyne, 2006; Livingstone, 2003) should hold the same “ought to be the case” over the entire early learning sector, not simply primary schools. The addition of an early childhood dimension into the policy discussion about sponsoring males into the primary service through TeachNZ scholarships is clarifying in a number of ways. Educators in the two early education sub-sectors share roughly similar professional responsibilities, may belong to the same teacher union (NZEI), and their pay scales are progressively moving toward parity. An important difference however is that much of the early childhood provision in the country is privately supplied and subsidized by the government. This is in marked contrast to the primary service which is for the most part directly supplied by government. Scrivens notes, “strain between early childhood services and the government since 1986 has been characterised by tensions between [a] New Right agenda and the growing professionalism of early childhood personnel and services” (2002, p.158). Ideology is, therefore, a factor to be considered.

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Comparative numbers

In 1978 the 'Hill Report' (Department of Education, 1978) recommended that men be included as a category within a 10% quota for entry into teachers colleges. Between 1979 and 1981 (Department of Education, 1982) women increased their representation as principals from 4.7% to 7.9%. By 2004 the MOE (2004) reported that 43% of all primary principals were women. Livingstone (2003, p. 31) observes that between 1992 and 2001 the percentage of men in the primary service slipped by 4% and that the absolute numbers of men also declined correspondingly. Over time, the senior male workforce in primary schools was not being replaced or retained at lower levels. In 1992 (Farquhar, 1997) 2.1% of teachers in childcare and kindergartens were men. Ministry of Education (2005) figures for year 2004 show this toehold eroding to just under 1%. In 2006 (Farquhar et al., 2006), for the first time, a small group of men at different levels in the early childhood sector worked together with an education researcher to respond to the situation. In the primary service the comparable response had come from the teachers' professional union, the NZEI. (Livingstone, 2003). While this difference may seem hardly worth mentioning, it is vitally important for two reasons. First, because of the level of power the NZEI holds over their members ability to interact normally with children through its Code of Practice and second, it has important implications for this thesis, because of NZEI's capacity for making 'non-decisions' as described by Bachrach and Baratz (1962, 1963) restraining the teaching practices of its members. The NZEI is a powerful lobby in early education and has strong traditional links with the Labour Party.

Inhibitors

Sumison (2000, p. 87) asks whether the under-representation of men in early childhood, matters. She suggests that two basic inhibiting factors exist for men moving into traditionally 'women's occupations': poor economic prospects, and social pressures about the roles men ought to play in the community. In the case of early childhood, Sumison (2000, p. 88) further notes, that deterrents "are exacerbated by community mistrust of men's motives for choosing to work with young children and suspicions about their sexual orientation". As these themes also figure strongly in the primary service literature

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(De Corse and Vogtle, 1997; Goodman, 1987; Livingstone, 2003; Skelton, 1991; Thornton, 1999), it is worth considering the issue as a whole.

A smaller set of studies (Farquhar, 1997; Seifert, 1988; Shaham, 1991; Sumison, 1999) comments on the interaction of male and female staff in early education. Farquhar (1997), in common with Sumison (1999), suggests that under-representation of men in early childhood is not helped by direct and indirect discrimination. Seifert (1988) notes, that “on the surface, male teachers seem much like female teachers. In the classroom the two genders behave in largely similar ways, and show many of the same qualities.” Galbraith (1992) reports that a 1978 study by Robinson and Canaday found that male and female day care workers scored similarly on the male and female dimensions of a test of sex role identity. On the other hand, Farquhar (1997) found that differences in perspective between male and female teachers meant that men had much to contribute to the early learning situation, and finds, in common with Livingstone (2003), that under-representation is a problem.

Wages and conditions (and presumably incentives where they exist) have been a long standing issue for all those working in the early learning sector, but more specifically in early childhood. Seifert (1988) notes that even in situations where pay and conditions are comparable to other male dominated educational specialties, men do not often choose to work in early education. Kimmel and Messner (1995, cited in DeCorse and Vogtle, 1997) suggest that men who are direct, aggressive and have monetarily oriented career goals tend to shy away from female-dominated professions. Williams (1992) contrasts the position of women entering male-dominated, and men entering female-dominated, occupations. Whereas, Williams (1992) noted that women tended to find that discrimination from within ‘men’s occupations’ restricted their career path in a phenomenon known as the ‘glass ceiling’, men in ‘women’s occupations’ tended to suffer discrimination not from inside the organisation but from the public perception of them as failures or sexual deviants. According to Williams, such perceptions of men result in them being removed to ““legitimate” practice areas” (Williams, 1992, p. 263). Williams terms this phenomenon the ‘glass escalator’, and concludes that wages are not the only, or perhaps even the major, impediment to men’s entry into ‘women’s jobs’, and

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that “further research is required to explore the ideological significance of the “women’s wage” for maintaining occupational stratification” (Williams, 1992, p. 265).

A shift in emphasis

It is interesting to review the history of the early learning sector in this light. In 1975 when men first applied for kindergarten teachers college entry, a concern was expressed by a member of the TEACAPS Advisory Committee (Department of Education, 1982, p. 5) about the possible “infiltration of men looking for fast track career opportunities in early childhood, and particularly at the women allowing it” (May, 2001, p. 152). Thirty years later there is no evidence to corroborate that this fear was well founded, despite the achievement of pay parity in many parts of early childhood. A parallel possibility, since the 1982 TEACAPS report, is that the primary service has increasingly become viewed by potential male students as ‘feminised’ (Galbraith, 1992; Livingstone, 2003), offering a ‘women’s wage’, and a socially difficult career path.

There is a dearth of empirical research work in the literature on any particular value men might offer children in early learning. There is, however, a vast range of opinion surrounding the topic. In 2003 the Ministry of Education (Farquhar, 2003) released a report entitled *Quality Teaching Early Foundations: Best Evidence Synthesis (BES)*. The report was only one of a series of best evidence syntheses within the education sector but it was *the* only one to suggest teacher gender as an influence on student behaviour or outcomes, and the evidence was slight.

In Britain the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EOC) (2005) has begun to advocate for gender desegregation in the British workforce, particularly in the childcare and after-school care sector. In part this is to assist a massive recruitment drive to match the government's *Sure Start* programme. Despite a lack of empirical material from within the education sector indicating a need for more men in teaching, the Daycare Trust (EOC, 2005) had even gone so far as to advocate ‘fast-track’ programmes to induce men to commit to childcare as a career.

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In 2006 TeachNZ (MOE, 2006, p. 4) recruitment material suggested that men were “particularly welcome in early childhood and primary teaching”. What was not as well spelled out in 2006 TeachNZ recruitment material was that men might well be eligible for scholarships if they entered into the early childhood sector, but not into mainstream primary teaching.

Other stories

There are many other possible accounts of the Smith proposal, TeachNZ scholarships and the early education sector which are not told within the present account. One such story is of the number of men working in the Kohanga Reo movement. In 1995, Ministry of Education figures (Sue McGeough, personal communication, 27/01/04), suggested that 14% of the paid staff in Kohanga Reo were male. Compared with mainstream figures for early childhood in the same year the result is not only extraordinary, but world leading. In 2007, a leading Belgian early education commentator, Jan Peeters, noted that around 30% of Kohanga Reo teachers were male with “about half of these qualified and half in training” and that such a result warranted international study (Booker, 2007, p. A6).

An outline of the present study

This study follows up Smith’s 1999 proposal to provide men with a scholarship as an incentive to become a primary teacher, through a set of six (6) interviews in order to determine the issues key players wished to bring to the government agenda. After having been knocked back, Smith reissued his call for TeachNZ incentives for men in 2003. A further important part of this study follows the political activity of advocacy coalitions (Sabatier and Jenkins, 1993), over the next two years, as extra-sector issues became connected with Smith’s proposal. Kingdon’s (2003) adapted Garbage Can model has been used to illustrate the process as agenda-setting initiatives by coalitions edged existing government scholarship criteria toward wholesale restatement. TeachNZ policy underwent change, as did NZEI’s Code of Practice. Matland’s (1995) work has been used to explain some aspects of these changes.

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Chapter summary

The thesis moves from the very broad to the very specific. Chapter 2 is an extended literature review of policy making. It focuses initially on what constitutes 'policy analysis', moves to an outline of the major types of approaches to the discipline, the ways in which questions of value are dealt with, power, the interaction of policy networks and interest groups with each other and the state, and then to the important issue of how symbolic issues can be used to exert leverage. Chapter 3 provides a basis for analysing the material gathered in the study. Chapters 4, 5, 6 are concerned respectively with the methodological approach used for the study, the interviews conducted, and in the last of the three chapters, a number of media events over the 2003-4 period which are important in terms of the study. Chapter 7 is a discussion of the data gathered and uses both the garbage can model (Kingdon, 2003) and Matland's (1995) typology of implementation research. The final chapter, Chapter 8, makes tentative conclusions about what occurred in relation to Smith's proposal, the ideology of key players by using criteria established by Vickers (1965, 1968) and the extent to which the Smith proposal was shaped by ideology.