

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.

Bodies of knowledge:

Early childhood teachers' experiences of their initial teacher education programme and sense of preparedness for teaching

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

Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
Education

at Massey University, Manawatu, New Zealand.

Katherine Ann Ord  
2010

# Abstract

---

This thesis investigates the phenomenon of ‘preparedness’ as it is employed in relation to the preparation of early childhood teachers through initial teacher education. It is a descriptive account of how newly qualified teachers made sense of their learning to teach process through the lens of preparedness; a construct that was brought to the research process. Individual and group interviews with field-based and pre-service newly qualified early childhood teachers participating in the study were conducted over eighteen months. The programme leaders of participating teacher education institutions were also interviewed, and a range of teacher education programme and official documentation was examined. An interpretivist approach was employed in the design of the research, including data generation, data analysis and presentation of findings.

This thesis argues that newly qualified teachers equate ‘being prepared’ with ‘being knowledgeable’. Rather than holding this knowledge as a store of ‘in-the-head’ knowledge, the research texts strongly suggested that as students approaching newly qualified teacher status, they desired to hold this knowledge in a practice, or an embodied sense. Through investigating participants’ stories of becoming knowledgeable this thesis argues that the process of accessing and acquiring the formal knowledge of teaching was aligned to the structural form of each institution, and to the way in which each positioned students in relation to that knowledge. From participants’ perspectives each institutional setting represents discursively different ways of coming to know teaching and being teachers.

This thesis clarifies the conditions for teacher education students to understand knowledge for teaching and thus become “self authoring members” (Edwards et al., 2002) of early childhood communities of practice. It argues that the key to teacher education students’ sense of preparedness lies within the design of teacher education programmes. The stories of newly qualified teachers and the author’s interpretations of them make a contribution to on-going dialogue about what constitutes knowledge and knowing for teachers. It adds a voice to those who argue that learning to teach is not principally a cognitive process that privileges thought over action and theory over practice. Rather, this thesis contends that the nature of knowledge for teaching must be reconceptualised to take account of practice theories of knowledge.

# Acknowledgements

---

This thesis and the accompanying personal and scholarly journey began with the foresight, encouragement and continuing support of Dr Ruth Kane. Arohanui Ruth—with your passion for learning to teach you were for a time the pyromaniac of the teacher education community in this country, lighting research fires all over the place.

To my supervisors, Professor Glenda Anthony and Dr Joce Nuttall, together you have been a wonderful, inspirational team; I salute your intellectual generosity, acumen, and your faith in me as a novice researcher.

This project was supported by the award of a Massey University Doctoral Scholarship. This enabled me to study full-time and provided the luxury of being able to immerse myself in a way that was not possible when undertaking previous undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications simultaneously with full-time work.

Many have walked beside me on this journey and others have cheered me on from the sidelines. To all my family and friends, in whatever capacity you have contributed and graced my life I am humbled by your kindness. Margaret Brennan and Bernadette Maccartney in particular provided intellectual provocation and critical minds that have helped pushed this project forward through enabling me to find ways through and across the moraine of ideas, investments and ‘isms’. Mo te awhi ki ahau

To my own children, Morgan and Rhiannon, it is time now to indulge ourselves and for me to awhi you on your future journeys. I am indebted to my aunt Peggy (Walsh) for her love and material support, without which I am not sure that I would have completed this project.

To the participants in this study you have been as equally generous as those above. You gave your time, your passion for early childhood education, and you gifted your stories of learning to teach. These stories have not only sustained this project, but will hopefully have a longer term effect by encouraging others to work with the nuances and realities experienced by those who are learning teaching for early childhood education. Early childhood education is a deceptively complex and challenging, but always a potentially exciting field of study and of work. Kia kaha.

*This thesis is dedicated to my two fathers—William Kingsley Ord and  
Dudley William Thomson Sheppard—and to my dear friend and brilliant teacher  
educator and mentor—Judith Mary Carver.*

# Table of Contents

---

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Overview .....	1
Part I: Situating the study .....	2
‘Preparedness’ as a cultural storyline.....	4
Positioning myself as researcher.....	5
Positioning the teacher education student.....	7
Gaps in the literature .....	9
Learning to teach: the person in the process .....	10
‘Preparedness’ under erasure .....	11
Part II: The study takes shape.....	12
Experience as a source of knowledge .....	12
Research question and methodological orientation .....	12
Overview of thesis .....	14
<b>Chapter 2: Policy and practice frameworks for early childhood initial teacher education .....</b>	<b>17</b>
Part I: Early childhood teacher education: beginnings.....	18
The landscape of teacher education .....	20
The diploma of teaching (ECE) .....	25
Positioning the early childhood ‘worker’ as ‘teacher’ .....	27
Undermining the diploma: educational policy in the 1990s .....	31
Part II: Being “as well prepared as possible”: official discourses.....	34
Ministry of Education construction of the early childhood teacher.....	35
New Zealand Teachers Council requirements for well prepared teachers.....	38
Part III: Early childhood teacher qualifications .....	40
The early childhood qualification landscape .....	40
Conceptual frameworks .....	41
Early childhood—a distinctive field of teacher education? .....	44
Conclusion .....	45
<b>Chapter 3: A review of preparedness literature.....</b>	<b>46</b>
Part 1: Orientating to and defining preparedness research.....	46

Search strategy and Inclusion criteria .....	47
Early preparedness research.....	51
Measures of preparedness .....	52
Part II: Preparedness and early childhood teaching .....	54
Overview .....	54
The reality of the first year of teaching.....	56
The ‘sanitised’ curriculum of teacher education.....	59
Discontinuity between the knowledges of teacher education and those of teaching .....	62
Learning to teach: theory to practice or a process of enactment? .....	65
Part III: The paradox of being well prepared .....	66
Part IV: Setting direction: the research problem .....	68
Conclusion.....	70
<b>Chapter 4: Methodology .....</b>	<b>72</b>
Part I: Theoretical positioning: selecting a theoretical lens .....	73
Interpretivism: a starting point.....	73
Phenomenology: looking for the essence.....	76
Locating myself in the research narrative .....	79
Interpretive Interactionism.....	80
Part II: Theoretical fieldwork: research in action.....	82
Research questions.....	82
Research design.....	83
Gaining academic and ethical approval for the research project. ....	83
Identifying participants and research sites .....	85
Participants.....	86
Data generation tools .....	90
Constructing and asking ‘phenomenological’ questions .....	92
Data analysis and interpretive process .....	96
Conclusion .....	101
<b>Chapter 5: Knowledge and Preparedness .....</b>	<b>103</b>
Introduction.....	103
Part I: <i>Being</i> knowledgeable.....	104
Part II: Accumulating the knowledge.....	106
Knowledge as object .....	108

Outsiders to the discourse: the experiences of field-based participants.....	109
Knowledge as an expectation: the experiences of pre-service participants .....	111
The knowledgeable teacher.....	112
Part III: Knowledge as relational.....	115
Knowers in relation to children.....	116
Knowers in relation to adults .....	119
Reflexive moments during learning to teach .....	122
Conclusion .....	126
<b>Chapter 6: ‘Cracking the Code’: The experiences of pre-service students .....</b>	<b>130</b>
Part I: The code .....	131
Accumulating the ‘bits’: “The career just got bigger and bigger” .....	138
Being overwhelmed by knowledge.....	142
Feeling lost.....	144
Part II: A hard code to crack .....	145
Polarising the programme .....	145
“Make it your own” .....	152
Part III: Cracking the code .....	154
“Ah ha, I get how you can”: The discourse of the real.....	160
Conclusion .....	166
<b>Chapter 7: Lifting the veil: The experiences of field-based teachers .....</b>	<b>170</b>
Part I: Seeing it differently .....	171
Seeing the knowledge .....	172
Why talk of ‘seeing’ knowledge? .....	175
Just-in-time knowledge: the emergent curriculum of teacher education .....	177
Illuminating the unknown .....	179
Seeing is understanding .....	181
Part II: Piata’s story: “It was all foreign to me” .....	184
Being other/ed .....	186
Relationships at the heart of learning teaching .....	187
The discursive context of teacher education .....	189
Part III: Conversational partners: engaging in dialogue.....	191
Constituting teacher self through the ‘other’ .....	192
Integration is the key.....	199
Part IV: Feeling confident: joining the club .....	200



Knowing practice .....	204
Conclusion.....	205
<b>Chapter 8: Bodies of knowledge .....</b>	<b>209</b>
Overview .....	209
Part 1: Clarifying the conditions for understanding the knowledge of teacher education .....	211
Summary of key claims.....	211
The discourse of the real: making sense of knowledge .....	213
Part 2: The knowledge problem .....	215
The nature of knowledge for learning teaching .....	215
Thinking twice .....	218
Understanding as a discursive accomplishment.....	220
The paradox of being knowledgeable .....	221
Part III: What can be learned from this study?.....	223
Pedagogies of practice .....	223
So what does this study point to? What are its implications? .....	227
<b>References .....</b>	<b>231</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>252</b>
Appendix A: Student/newly qualified teacher Information Sheet .....	253
Appendix B: Akoranga kit e ako-information sheet .....	256
Appendix C: Letter of approach to participating institution .....	259
Appendix D: Programme Coordinator Information Sheet .....	263
Appendix E: Expression of Interest Forms .....	266
Appendix F: Participant Consent Form.....	270
Appendix G: Example of participant communication sheet/panui .....	271
Appendix H: Individual interview schedule –Interview 1 .....	273
Appendix I: Individual interview schedule –Interview 2 .....	275
Appendix J: Group interview schedule –Interview 1 .....	277
Appendix K: Group interview schedule –Interview 2.....	279
Appendix L: Programme Director Interview .....	283