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**“TEACHER, WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE
WHEN YOU GROW UP?”**

A Case study of Career Development in a
New Zealand Primary School.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Educational Administration at Massey University,
Albany Campus, Auckland, New Zealand.

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2002

CANDIDATE'S STATEMENT

I certify that the research paper entitled:

“TEACHER WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP?”

(A Case study of Career Development in a
New Zealand Primary School)

And submitted for the degree Master of Educational Administration is the result of my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this research paper (or part of the same) has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Signed: Murray G. Sutherland

Date: 12/12/2002

ABSTRACT

With the introduction of *Tomorrow's Schools* (New Zealand Government, 1988), a national appointments structure for teachers was removed by the Ministry of Education. The researcher was interested in investigating how teachers planned their careers, in the post 1988 era, and if there were any significant differences in career patterns between genders. Factors influencing teachers' initial choice of vocation, as well as positive and negative career motivations were also identified.

The research methodology selected by the researcher was that of case study, and was conducted in my current school. Questionnaires provided the initial source of quantitative data. Interviews and field notes provided a wealth of qualitative data. The researcher was a participant observer and as Associate Principal had considerable tacit knowledge about the staff and current school policies.

The research results identified four central themes; positive motivators for teaching, negative factors impacting on teachers, gender issues, and career planning methods.

Positive motivators were all intrinsic in nature. A desire to work with children was the main reason respondents identified as the most important reason for choosing teaching as their first career. Significant positive career motivators included the teachers' own confidence and ability, desire for involvement in decision-making, and the need for change or greater motivation. External motivators such as salary or qualifications ranked the least important.

The overriding importance of balancing home and school, family commitments, location and travel factors, and significance of holidays were key factors identified as negative influences on career planning or potential career barriers.

A surprising factor in the study was the lack of significant differences in the career planning between male and female. In comparison the more relevant dimensions of differing career motivations based on women's age, generation, and family commitments were of far greater significance to the final research.

Career planning is occurring in a variety of ways, the most significant identified by teachers was the support given by a role model or mentor, and career planning conducted at appraisal interviews. Issues identified in the discussion also address the importance of career planning, and whose responsibility it should be.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.P.	Assistant Principal
B.O.T.	Board of Trustees
D.P.	Deputy Principal
M.O.E.	Ministry of Education
N.Z.E.I.	New Zealand Education Institute

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CHAPTER ONE

The Scope of the Research Project.

Background.

Since the introduction of the *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms (Government of New Zealand, 1988), teacher's career paths have changed considerably. Prior to 1988, all Regional Education Boards made teacher and principal appointments. Under this centralised system the Education Board also assessed or graded teachers for promotion purposes. Although these changes occurred more than a decade ago, they have been of major significance in the impact that they have had on the way teachers' careers are planned and structured.

Boards of Trustees are currently responsible for all appointments within a school, and with no national appointment or promotion structure variety of appointment procedure have occurred. The introduction of bulk funding gave schools even greater flexibility in staff appointments, and although national pay scales based on years of experience still applied, appointments were based on a "market driven" approach. With the change in government and the removal of bulk funding, the introduction of management units and "units to support retention and recruitment" have still allowed Boards of Trustees and school management greater staffing flexibility.

Some teachers have been unaccustomed to developing their own career development goals. The change from a national appointment policy coupled with the previous structured and prescribed career hierarchy has had significant and major ramifications on teachers' careers.

Reasons for Conducting this Research.

In this reflection I have provided some insight as to the way my own career development and changes in traditional career advancement, have provided a catalyst for my research project.

Like many young women of my generation, I had put very little thought into career planning in my early years of teaching. While I was aware of the "grading system" I thought this only applied to people who were applying for promotion, something that was not a consideration at this stage of my own career. I was aware of the "salary barrier" applicable if "Country Service" had not been completed, and made my first career decision to "get this out of the way early", and spent my first year teaching in an idyllic seven-teacher country school. It was while I completing a Social Studies Unit on Occupations, at this school, that I considered my future career when a delightful Standard One (Year 3) pupil named Wendy posed the following question.

All right Miss Mitchell, but what will you do when you get old then?

Are you going to be a mother or maybe do Mrs H's job when she dies?

I was reminded of this conversation when some 20 years later when a Year Two class were discussing the replacement of the previous principal. I was at this time an Assistant Principal of a large urban school. (Lis' suggestions of a mother and Infant Mistress role

had both come true by this time). I was explaining that the current Deputy principal, Mr B. would be the principal for a term until the Board of Trustees decided on who the new principal would be. Bo- Yuu summed it all up for the class using her newly developed English skills.

Mr A. used to be the big boss. Mr B. is the little boss of the big kids, and Mrs Bathurst is the little boss of the little kids. Mr B. is going to pretend to be principal till they chose someone. He was allowed to 'cos he looked after big kids and takes assemblies, but Mrs Bathurst couldn't 'cos she looked after little kids and could never be a Big Boss anyway 'cos she is a lady.

Once again a wise child who had put more thought into my career's planning than had! Bo-Yuu also mirrored many of the parent perceptions in that teacher's promotion structure directly matched the age of the children they teach. These two conversations highlight to some extent teacher's perceptions of their own career potential, as well as the lack of any formal career guidance or planning currently occurring in schools. They also indicate the different perceptions parents have, and indeed some women teachers' themselves, about gender differences for teachers' career planning.

I have a personal interest in the way teacher's plan their careers and how this differs from the business world. For several years I was employed as a career consultant for a Human Resources Company overseas. Career and succession planning were key policies of the company, with all professional development funding supporting these goals. Upon returning to New Zealand I resumed a teaching career in the early eighties. At this time the effects of *Tomorrow's Schools* (New Zealand Government, 1988) and consequent changes to promotion structures had occurred. New Zealand had moved

appointed staff, to a decentralised and localised structure in which elected Boards of Trustees with school staff involvement, completed appointments and promotions. I became aware of the enormous gap between the previously highly structured hierarchy system for promotion in which teachers' careers were planned for them, and the "new" structure where teachers were responsible for mapping out their own career.

Significance and usefulness of the research project to others.

I believe the research project will be worthwhile to others in that;

- It will provide a theoretical background addressing the key changes to teacher's individual career development since the introduction of *Tomorrow's Schools* (New Zealand Government, 1988)
- Provide examples, through the case study presented, of the way one school supports career development and succession planning, through Personnel Management. This may challenge others to address whose responsibility career development is, and whether the individual's goals can match the institutions goals.
- Support teachers to proactively consider their career goals.
- Identify what factors influence teacher's career development and summarise if these vary significantly for male and female.

Information presented may also challenge teachers, Boards of Trustees and School Management to discuss how they could address career development as part of their Human Resources planning, within their own school. It may also identify the need for external agencies (e.g. Ministry of Education, private facilitators, principal cluster

groups, N.Z.E.I. etc) to conduct information workshops on career development, for teachers.

The Research Problem, Objectives and Questions.

The purpose of this study is to identify what *career development, or career planning*, is currently occurring by primary teachers, using the researcher's school as a case study. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to define what is meant by the concept *career planning*, and a theoretical base is provided in the Literature Review for this purpose.

The term *career development* is frequently used by Human Resource Departments in the corporate world. It is the researcher's belief that schools perform well behind business in this type of planning. The study hopes to identify which current practices occur in primary schools.

- How does career planning occur in one school setting?
- How do individual teachers plan their careers?
- Does the school support career planning? How?
- Do the teacher's have any experience of career development models from other schools, countries or corporate experience?

For many teachers their careers and promotions have "*just happened*", with limited formal identification or planning. The study attempts to address the factors that do influence teachers' career development.

- What factors influence teachers currently in making decisions about their career?

- Have the changes to career promotion brought about by *Tomorrow's Schools* (New Zealand Government, 1988) had any affect on their own career planning?

Many teachers have identified barriers to their potential career development. The project reviews current research on career barriers, and through the case study identifies teachers perceived barriers to career advancement.

- To investigate what factors impact upon teacher's career goals?
- Do these differ significantly between genders?
- Does age or family commitments have any impact on career planning?

The information provided by the case study is summarised and provides evidence from which trends can be identified.

- Can the factors that were identified in the case study provide any trends or conclusions about how teachers plan their careers?

Methodology/ Review of the Chapters.

Having introduced the scope, background and reasons for undertaking the study, Chapter 2. provides a literature review that defines the concept of career development. This theory provides the base understanding of career planning in a general sense and is further developed to identify specific literature on teacher's career planning, as well as the unique pattern of women teachers' career planning.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used in the research and identifies why the unique characteristics of case study have been identified as the most suitable for this particular

project. The research combines both a quantitative approach through the written questionnaire, combined with a qualitative dimension, through the individual interviews. Document analysis was also identified as a further source of potential data. This chapter also addresses the important ethical considerations valid for the case study.

In Chapter 4 the researcher has collated the results of the written questionnaire carried out on staff at her current school, plus seven past staff members. The questionnaire uses the research questions as a base and attempts to identify key factors and their importance in teachers' career planning. Participants were also requested to participate in an interview, should the researcher require further clarification or further depth of information. A total of eight interviews were completed, five on current staff, and three on past staff members. As a participant observer the researcher had the advantage of tacit knowledge of the school. This knowledge supported a relaxed interview process, and with established rapport developed with colleagues field notes provided further data. The statistical data is presented in graph and table form, while the supporting quotes from interviews are presented in narrative form. The narrative provided by the interviews was transcribed to provide triangulation of the questionnaire results, as well as a richness and qualitative aspect to the results.

Chapter 5 summarises and analysis both the results of written questionnaires and interviews. Key themes are identified and analysis of the findings is discussed.

Recommendations and implications for stakeholders are identified in Chapter 6. Both the limitations of this study as well as recommendations for future study are also suggested.