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The Dynamics of Transformation at the Auckland College of Education 1985 – 2000 : An Analysis of the Impact of Socio-political and Institutional Change on Pre-service Teacher Education.

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

Doctor of Philosophy
In
Education

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2002

Abstract

Colleges of Education in New Zealand had during most of the 1900's enjoyed a protected position as sole providers of teacher education, providing the nation's centres and schools with teachers. The New Zealand Department of Education exercised tight control over the colleges and a degree of autonomy was accorded to them progressively from the 1960's. Change had been incremental and evolutionary in response to shifting socio-political pressures.

Socio-political change over the period 1985 – 2000, however, was dramatic in style and profound in effect, as successive governments sought to reform the economy, the state sector, the administration of education and the shape of tertiary education. Colleges of education, along with other tertiary institutions, were manoeuvred into a competitive and contestable environment which imported into education the principles of the "free market".

This qualitative study analyses the impact of those changes on pre-service teacher education at the Auckland College of Education over that intense period as transformational changes moved the College from its previously protected teachers college configuration, relating closely to the school system, to one which more typically reflected that of other tertiary institutions alongside which it now stood and with whom it now competed. A theoretical framework is developed that analyses the changes on two dimensions. A vertical axis assesses the nature of the pressures to change and the realities of the skills, knowledge, aspirations and dispositions that the staff of the College brought to them. A horizontal axis tracks the progress of the changes and their impact on the College. The study, which employed interviews with both individuals and focus groups and documents as its prime sources of data, adopted an eclectic methodological approach.

Clusters of changes that impacted on pre-service teacher education emerged as "change narratives" based on sets of changes that reflected the impact of various institutional mergers, administrative and professional restructuring, the development of a research culture, the review of the degree taught jointly with the University of Auckland, and the development of a provider degree. The impact of those developments on the provisions for pre-service teacher education is evaluated and from them a set of principles for the management of transformational change in colleges of education or similar institutions and organisations is developed.

Acknowledgements

A study such as this relies on the quality of the input from the participants who, having been involved in the changes that were the focus of the study, willingly contributed with perspicuous and honest observations, analyses, and opinions. I thank them not only for this but also for the time they gave to me so selflessly.

Dennis McGrath, former Principal of the Auckland College of Education, supported the study through open access to material, encouragement, time, and many conversations that assisted thought and analysis. Lexie Grudnoff, Dean of Teacher Education, was firmly instrumental in suggesting that I undertake the study, interested in its progress at all points and a significant contributor to it. I appreciate the support, guidance and help that I received from these two most valued friends and colleagues . Professor Gary Hermansson supervised the work with care and encouragement. His guidance was most important and supervision sessions resulted in more informed activity and productivity. Professor Roger Openshaw similarly contributed to the supervision. The academic experience and rigour of the supervisors was a source not only of discipline but also of confidence. Dr Rex Dalzell was a hospitable, knowledgeable and generous "critical friend" whose support and wisdom was valued highly.

Sarah Middleton provided assistance with important tasks – the data input, checking references and the formatting of materials. Margaret Allingham transcribed interviews with speed and accuracy and helped in many different ways as the work of the researcher had to be fitted around the demands of the daily job.

The Auckland College of Education supported this study with the award of a Tertiary Scholarship which provided time at critical points and some assistance with transcripts and other costs. The College is a supportive environment in which to undertake research and I thank library staff, the research development team, and the many colleagues who are interested in the work of others.

Inevitably time to complete a study such as this has to come from somewhere and that, to a large extent, is time that is normally available to pursue home life and activities. Sue Thorp was in every way a supportive and interested partner and I thank her for allowing me to spend the necessary time needed without guilt or the pressure of competing demands. Her interest and support is special.

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