

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

Abstract

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.

v_i

+



Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vii
List of Figures	x
List of Tables	x
List of Appendices	x
Chapter One Introduction	1
1.1 Why this project?	1
1.2 The research problem, purpose and key questions	2
1.3 Structure and treatment of the thesis	3
Chapter Two Literature Review	7
2.1 Background: tertiary education in New Zealand	7
2.2 Tertiary teaching: conceptions and perspectives	10
2.2.1 Empirical studies of tertiary teaching	10
2.2.2 Scholarly studies of tertiary teaching	14
2.2.3 Implications for this study	18
2.3 Expertise, excellence and professionalism	19
2.3.1 Expertise	19
2.3.2 Professions, professionalism, education for professions	22
2.3.3 Excellent teaching, expertise in tertiary teaching	26
2.3.4 Implications for this study	29
2.4 Educational development for tertiary teachers	32
2.4.1 The nature of educational development	30
2.4.2 The location of educational development	35
2.4.3 Educational development through courses and qualifications	37
2.4.4 Theories and critiques of educational development	41
2.4.5 Implications for this study	44
2.5 Workplace learning and community of practice	45
2.5.1 Community of practice	45
2.5.2 Studies of academic communities or cultures	52
2.5.3 Studies of workplace learning	55
2.5.4 Implications for this study	59
2.6 Conclusions and research questions	60
Chapter Three Research Framework, method and process	63
3.1 Qualitative research	65
3.1.1 Characteristics of qualitative research	66
3.1.2 Qualitative research methods	70
3.2 Case study research	71
3.2.1 Types of case study	71
3.2.2 Characteristics of case studies	72

3.2.3 Decision to use case study method	73
3.3 Research design	74
3.3.1 Selection of data gathering strategies	76
3.3.2 Identification of cases and participants	79
3.3.3 Design of data gathering instruments	81
3.3.4 Ethical issues	85
3.4 Implementation	88
3.4.1 Data gathering	88
3.4.2 Data analysis	93
3.4.3 Reporting the case studies	96
3.4.4 Quality checking	98
3.4.5 Limitations affecting the study	99
Chapter Four Becoming a Polytechnic Teacher	101
4.1 Background and context	101
4.2 What is teaching like in the polytechnic?	102
4.2.1 Findings from institutional documents	102
4.2.2 Findings from educational developer interview	106
4.2.3 Findings from teacher interviews	109
4.2.4 Findings from class observations	116
4.2.5 Some initial conclusions	117
4.3 What do some experienced teachers say about how they have developed as teachers in the polytechnic?	120
4.3.1 Entry to teaching in the polytechnic	120
4.3.2 Formal learning about tertiary teaching	122
4.3.3 Informal and incidental learning about tertiary teaching	125
4.3.4 Developing a sense of identity as a teacher	129
4.3.5 Some initial conclusions	131
4.4 What provision does the polytechnic make for teacher education and development?	132
4.4.1 Findings from the documents	132
4.4.2 Findings from the educational developer interview	136
4.4.3 Findings from the teacher interviews	139
4.4.4 Some initial conclusions	142
4.5 Discussion: becoming a teacher in the polytechnic	144
Chapter Five Becoming a Wananga Teacher	149
5.1 Background and context	149
5.2 What is teaching like in the wananga?	150
5.2.1 Findings from institutional documents	150
5.2.2 Findings from the educational developer interview	155
5.2.3 Findings from teacher interviews	158
5.2.4 Some initial conclusions	163
5.3 What do some experienced teachers say about how they have developed as teachers in the wananga?	165
5.3.1 Entry to teaching in the wananga	165
5.3.2 Formal learning about teaching	170
5.3.3 Informal and incidental learning about teaching	171
5.4.3 Developing a sense of identity as a teacher	174
5.4.5 Some initial conclusions	176

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

9.2.4 Implementation of recommendations	294
9.3 Advantages of adopting a community of practice approach to tertiary teacher development	295
9.4 Challenges of adopting a community of practice approach to tertiary teacher development	297
9.5 Further research	298
9.6 Summing up	299
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