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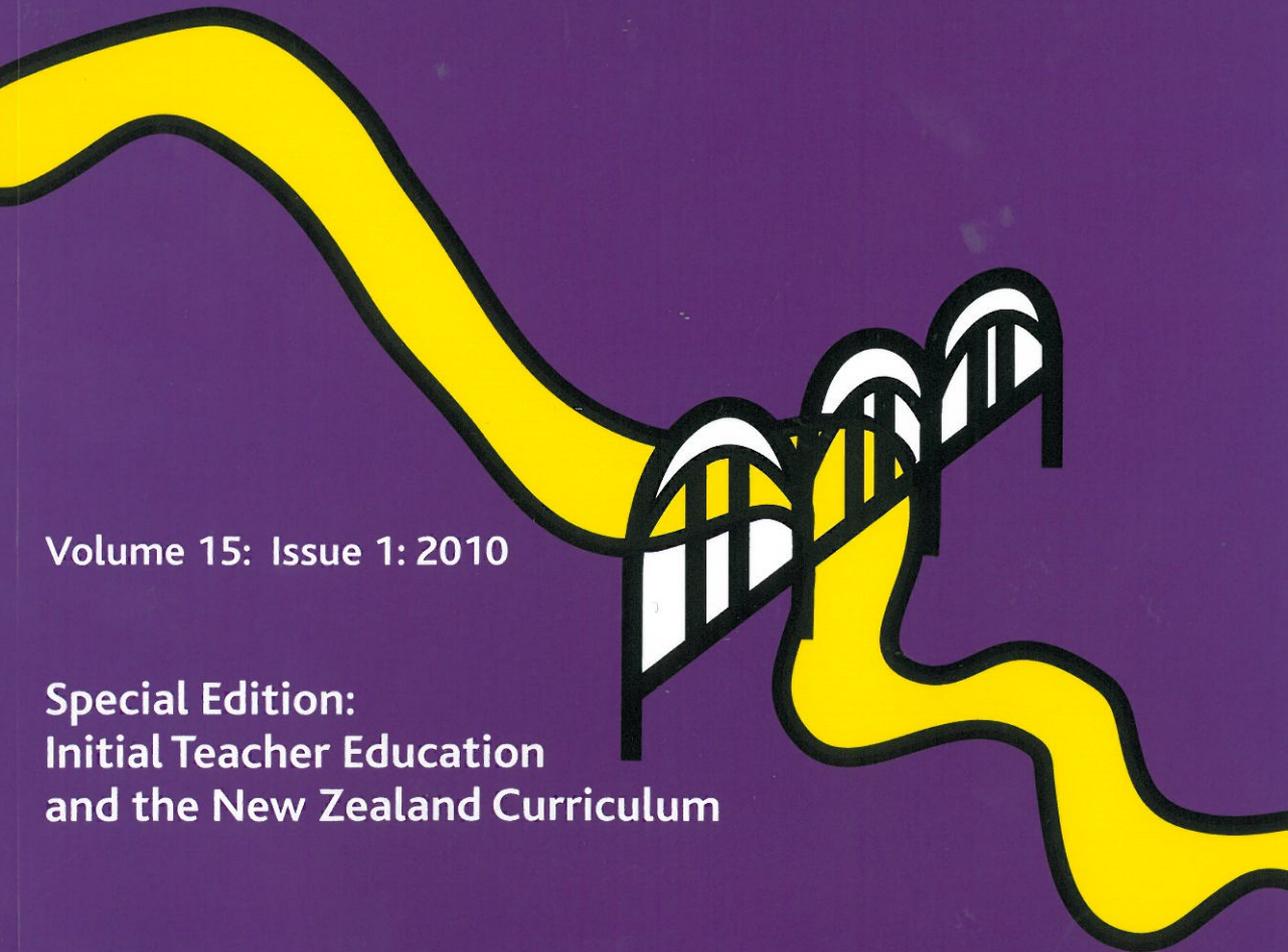
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SHIFTING CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW ZEALAND CURRICULUM: CONCEPTUAL MODELS AND A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF DATA

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ABSTRACT *The introduction of a revised national curriculum in New Zealand has implications for ITE regarding how student teachers and teacher educators conceptualise knowledge and learning. This paper explores different conceptualisations of knowledge. The paper describes and critiques four conceptual tools. It reports some of the emerging findings from a Teaching and Learning Research Initiative project. The project investigated shifts in teacher educators' conceptualisations of knowledge and explored initiatives for working with teachers and student teachers in this regard. Consideration is given to how any shifts in conceptualisation affect the way the national curriculum is interpreted. The exploration of changes in thinking are presented in a detailed case study of a student teacher's reactions to a course on cultural studies.*

KEY WORDS

Cultural studies, conceptions of knowledge, cultural attitudes

INTRODUCTION

Teacher education, both initial and continuing, is perceived as key to the successful realisation of the opportunities of the revised *The New Zealand Curriculum* [NZC] (Ministry of Education, 2007). The project "Shifting conceptualisations of knowledge and learning in the integration of the new New Zealand curriculum in initial and continuing teacher education" is funded by the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative of the New Zealand government. The project team consists of three investigators and 10 practitioner-researchers working at the University of Canterbury. This project examines shifts in the conceptualisation of knowledge and learning in learning outcomes and course design in the implementation of the revised 2007 national curriculum in initial and in-service teacher education. In this project we have used conceptual and pedagogical tools to support teacher educators to engage in theoretical discussions related to epistemological shifts in the literature related to the "knowledge society", postmodernity and "education in the 21st century". Our aim was to enable project team members to engage and appropriate

different discourses while, at the same time, develop the ability to critique these discourses and to grow their intellectual and professional autonomy in shaping educational change. This research project maps their learning process in trying to incorporate the changes suggested in the literature in the introduction of the revised national curriculum relating to teacher education practices.

This project adopts a post-structuralist approach to research which acknowledges the instability of signification and the location of the subject in language. Our view and use of poststructuralism is akin to Stronach and MacLure's (1997) understanding of post-modernism which emphasises its ability to provide productive spaces for complexity, for multiplicity, for openness, for problem generation and for resistance to closure. This understanding helped us to frame this research project as an ongoing intervention in the professional development of all members of the project team.

The first part of this paper will provide a brief overview of the theoretical and methodological frameworks of this project. The second part presents some of the pedagogical tools we used to bridge theoretical debates. The third part presents a snapshot of one of the case studies, offering a speculative preliminary analysis of a small part of the data collected in a course on cultural studies in education.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

The theoretical framework of this project is based on an examination of arguments related to societal changes in the "knowledge society" and postmodernity that emphasise the need for a re-conceptualisation of knowledge and learning in educational policies and practices in contemporary "21st century" societies (Andreotti & Souza, 2008; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, 2003; Gilbert, 2005; Hargreaves, 2003; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; OECD, 2000; Richard & Usher 1994; UNESCO, 2005).

Three arguments are central to this literature. First, that a change in the profile of learners requires a change of educational provision and that this change demands a shift of perception of education, knowledge and learning (OECD, 2000; UNESCO, 2005). Second, that shifts in the behaviours of teachers will not be enough. What will be required are ontological and epistemological shifts (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, 2003; Gilbert, 2005; Richard & Usher, 1994;). Third, that these shifts involve knowledge about knowledge construction, as well as a focus on the construction of current knowledges and of future possibilities (Andreotti & Souza, 2008; Gilbert, 2005). Of course these arguments are highly contested (Bauman, 2001; Peters & Besley, 2006; Roberts, 2002), and this critique is extremely important in understanding the limitations, implications and ideological nature of this debate. However, in this project, rather than focussing on the intentions and implications of the truth claims in this debate (which is generally the focus of critique), we have made a conscious choice to explore the productive potential of different interpretations and appropriations of these discourses in specific contexts. We decided to focus on their potential to equip educators to address complexity, contingency, diversity and uncertainty. In this sense, we have constructed a distinction between approaches to this argument that emphasise the drive for educators to adapt cognitively to a new economic order; and approaches

that emphasise epistemological pluralism and the need to imagine the world “otherwise” (Andreotti, in press). Practitioner researchers in this project are exposed to both approaches and to the critique: they can choose what is “possible” and appropriate in their contexts.

Research Questions

This research project addresses three research questions

1. How are the shifts in conceptualisation of knowledge and learning interpreted within the different knowledge domains of the practitioners (teacher educators) in this research? How do these shifts affect the way the NZC is interpreted and implemented?
2. What are the characteristics of effective initiatives for shifting student teachers’ and teachers’ conceptualisations of knowledge and learning?
3. How do shifts in the conceptualisation of knowledge and learning affect student teachers’ and teachers’ interpretations of the NZC?

Each practitioner–researcher, supported by one of the investigators in a research cluster, is developing a case study related to their practice and learning process in 2009. A meta-analysis of case studies will be carried out by the investigators in 2010. The data collected in this project is related to research-practitioners’ learning processes and the learning processes of the participants in their courses. Each practitioner researcher is responsible for choosing an appropriate methodology for collecting data from student teachers and teachers in their contexts of work. A common baseline survey and post-intervention survey are being used to secure a level of comparability.

CONCEPTUAL/PEDAGOGICAL TOOLS

We have used specific conceptual and pedagogical tools in this project with two objectives: to bridge understandings in relation to the research itself and to theoretical debates; and to “language” new possibilities for thinking and practices. These conceptual/pedagogical tools were designed to

- enable educators to engage with a level of complexity in the debate where different perspectives are contemplated;
- address the interface between mainstream and emergent thinking, making connections with pedagogical practices;
- affirm their partial and limited nature (i.e. the fact that they are also presenting a “perspective”) and invite critical dialogue—encouraging educators to engage critically with the tool itself vis a vis their personal and professional contexts; and
- encourage educators to “think otherwise” (beyond what is presented in the tool itself) and to find their own voices in the debate. (Andreotti & Souza, 2008)

In this paper we present four of these tools as illustrations of the theories, debates and assumptions that inform the pedagogical discussions and the collection and analysis of data.

Tool 1: The Cake

This first tool, represented in Figure 1, relates to the different layers of experience and of data collected in the project. At the top of the cake we have “what we say we do and what we do”; this layer relies on our personal baggage of individual experiences. These personal experiences, in turn, are grounded on collective experiences that are socially and historically situated. These social experiences circulate meta-narratives that give us ideas about the nature of reality, being and knowledge. We have used this tool to explore the implications of “shaking” the foundations of the cake (i.e. shifting conceptualisations of knowledge, reality, learning and identities) in terms of what would happen to the top layers.

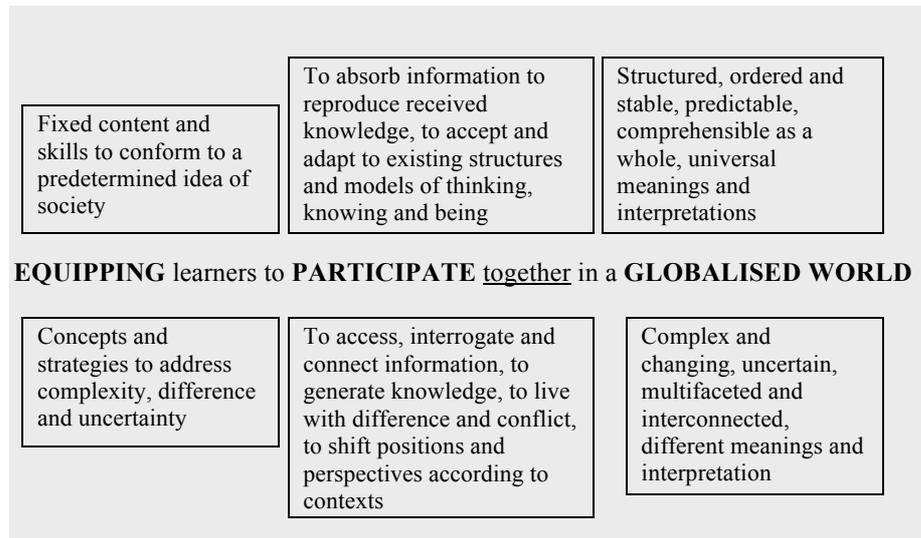
Figure 1. Pedagogical tool prompting discussions about layers of experience



Tool 2: Multiple Meanings

The second tool (Figure 2) proposes a double analysis of the idea that the role of education is “to equip learners to participate together in a global society” from two perspectives. It suggests distinct interpretations for meanings of the words “global society”, “participate” and “equip”, and invites educators to perform their own reflections. The top perspective is based on a Newtonian/Modernist way of thinking that emphasises order, stability, predictability, compliance, universal meanings and consensus. The bottom perspective has a discursive orientation and emphasises complexity, uncertainty, contingency, multiplicity, difference and situated meanings and interpretations. This tool has been useful in the analysis of the constructions of meaning in relation to roles and aspirations of educators, who are invited to explore other possible meanings attributed to these words in other contexts (e.g. an indigenous conceptualisation, a Marxist conceptualisation, etc.).

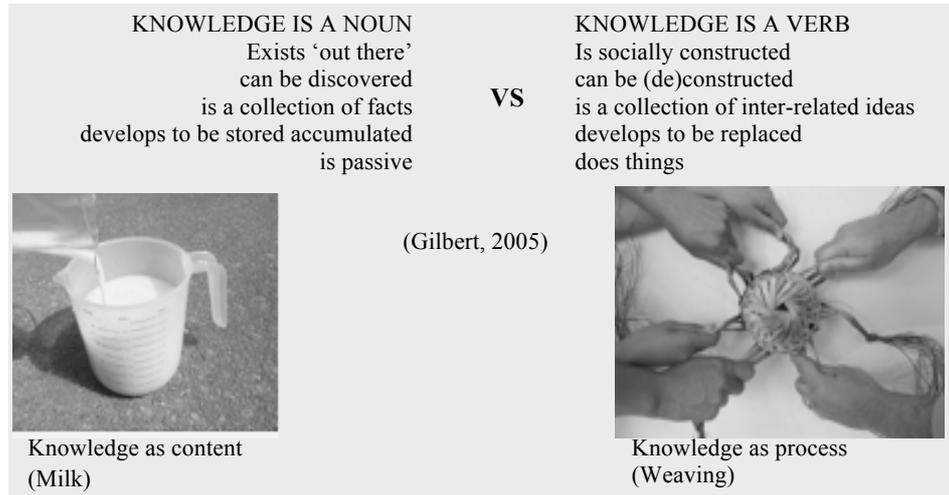
Figure 2. Pedagogical tool prompting discussions about the instability of signification (Andreotti & Souza, 2008)



Tool 3: Comparing conceptualisations of knowledge

This tool presents distinctions of conceptualisations of knowledge drawing on the work of Gilbert (2005). Gilbert offers a conceptualisation of knowledge within “industrial thinking” as a thing (a noun) or a collection of facts that exist “out there” to be discovered and as something that happens in individual experts, that is cumulative, that develops to be stored and that is passive. Gilbert’s conceptualisation of knowledge within “knowledge society thinking” presents knowledge as a process (a verb), a collection of inter-related ideas that are socially constructed and as something that happens in teams, that is developed on an “as-and-when-needed” basis, that develops to be replaced and that is active (i.e. it does things). We have complemented Gilbert’s distinction with two metaphors. We have associated the first perspective with the metaphor of pouring milk into a measure jug. Milk symbolises knowledge as content and the jug symbolises the mind and the act of pouring, teaching. The second perspective is associated with weaving a basket. The threads are situated knowledges from the weavers, the act is collective and knowledge is not what is in the basket, but the weaving itself. Each basket is woven for a specific purpose. A different context requires new weaving and a new basket.

Figure 3. Pedagogical tool presenting different metaphors and understandings of knowledge construction



Tool 4: Magolda's Model

We have also used the model of epistemological development created by Baxter Magolda (1992) as a conceptual tool in the project. Stage 1 is framed around a way of knowing based on a right or wrong dichotomy (something is either absolutely right or absolutely wrong). Stage 2 is a transitional stage where there is both absolute and relative knowledge. Stage 3 is also a transitional stage where knowledge is seen as relative. Stage 4 is where context is emphasised and the choice of appropriate knowledge(s) "in context" becomes possible. In Table 1, Moon (2005) illustrates the implications of this model in student attitudes to tertiary teaching. As a team we have several reservations in terms of the construction of Magolda's model and its theoretical underpinnings, especially the implicit biological determinism, its unexamined developmentalism and its goal of creating self-authoring subjectivities. However, a poststructuralist orientation in the project allows the team to engage critically with this and other conceptual/pedagogical tools to use them as partial and provisional lenses that could be useful in different pedagogical contexts if applied critically and responsibly.

Table 1. Model of Epistemological Development of Magolda (1992) with examples in tertiary education by Moon (2005)

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Stage 1 (dualist or absolute knowing) | Knowledge/answers can only be right or wrong. Learning is about absorbing the knowledge of experts. | I like it when the lecturers are clear and straight forward |
| Stage 2 (transitional) | There are doubts about the certainty of knowledge—there is both partial certainty and partial uncertainty as well as absolute knowledge. | I have been a bit I don't know what I am I supposed to say in the exam—is there a right answer that they expect me to arrive to? |
| Stage 3 (independent) | Knowledge is uncertain and relative. There are many possible “right answers”, many possible knowledges. | People have the right to have their own views. |
| Stage 4 (contextual) | Knowledge is constructed, provisional and context based. | I try to relate different ideas to my own thinking and my thinking changes when I do that. |

CASE STUDY SNAPSHOT: CULTURAL STUDIES COURSE

In the second part of this paper, we offer a brief illustration of conceptual shifts in a case study related to a compulsory cultural studies course in the Bachelor of Teaching and Learning (Primary Education) at the University of Canterbury. The stated aim of this course was to

develop learners’ awareness of their own worldviews and lived experiences in relation to questions of culture, identity, power, knowledge, diversity and globalization, as well as the implications of those for teaching and learning. (Course outline)

The objectives of the course required successful students to

- demonstrate a basic awareness of the complexity surrounding the key concepts of this course (i.e. multiculturalism, culture, identity, power, diversity and globalization);
- recognize and acknowledge the influences that have shaped or contributed to their worldviews and cultural identities;
- identify factors that contribute to cross-cultural misunderstanding;
- analyse strategies that will help them relate to learners and communities of backgrounds different from their own in primary educational settings; and

- reflect on their learning process showing evidence of critical thinking. (Course Outline)

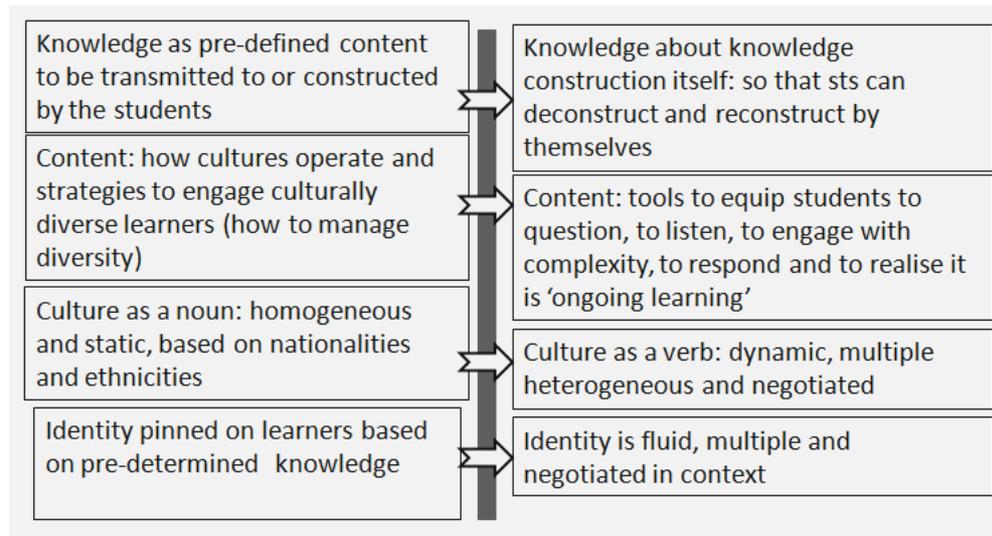
Two types of data were collected in this project: data related to the learning process of the lecturers and their implementation of the shifts indicated in the literature; and data related to the learning processes of students. One hundred and twenty-five (out of 160) students in this cohort granted consent for their course activities to be used in this project, which included a baseline study and a survey completed after the course was finished. Focus groups and interviews were also used to collect data. In this brief illustration, we have used data collected from course materials and documented professional conversations with the research-practitioner to create a table that describes the perceived shifts related to the conceptualisations of knowledge, content, culture and identity that occurred in the course as a result of the implementation of the 2007 national curriculum and discussions related to meaning and knowledge construction exemplified in the tools in the first part of this paper.

The shift in relation to knowledge and content could be felt in the change of focus from “transmission” of knowledge/concepts to “deconstruction”. Instead of a focus on the definition of terms, on narratives of cultural traditions and on strategies to manage diversity, the course started to focus on developing students’ knowledge about knowledge construction itself. Definitions of terms were then presented as multiple, situated and contested and students were encouraged to unpack these definitions (their assumptions and implications), and to construct working (i.e. provisional) definitions for themselves. Heterogeneity was also emphasised in the narratives of cultural traditions included in the course (e.g. Māori, Pasifika, migrant). These narratives were presented as “testimonies” that were at the same time, situated, contested and fluid. Instead of an emphasis on strategies that could be used across contexts to manage diversity, the course emphasised that there would be no single silver bullet solutions to address questions of difference. In line with Todd’s (2009) discussions of the difference between teaching diversity based on sets of normative principles, values and strategies and living the pluralism of existence, the course promoted the idea that students needed to develop predispositions to respond to the complex needs of diverse learners always “in context”. These predispositions included the ability to listen, to question assumptions, to engage with complexity and to feel comfortable with the ongoing process of learning in becoming a teacher in the mediation and translation of principles “in and through concrete situations with others” (Todd, 2009, p. 149).

The basic conceptualisations of culture and identity also changed in the course, which tended to privilege “noun” conceptualisations prior to the implementation of the NZC. Culture conceptualised as a noun emphasises representations of behaviours and traditions (generally associated with nationalities or ethnicities), suggesting ideas of homogeneity and fixity. Culture conceptualised as a verb presents culture as “agonistic and antagonistic negotiation of meaning” (Bhabha, 1994). It emphasises heterogeneity, multiplicity and the dynamic nature of signification and of cultural practices. In the same way, identity conceptualised as a noun tends to refer to fixed labels imposed on or adopted by individuals and/or groups, whereas identity conceptualised as a verb tends to emphasise social

construction, fluidity, multiplicity and contingency. Figure 4 presents a summary of the conceptual shifts.

Figure 4. Perceived shifts in the cultural studies course as a result of the implementation of the new NZC



In terms of pedagogy, these conceptual shifts required a different conceptualisation of teaching/learning and of effective teaching/learning. Prior to the introduction of the new conceptual framework, teaching could be framed as the transmission or construction of strategies to manage diversity in classrooms. The focus on deconstruction in the new framework, required teaching to be conceptualised as the creation of spaces for cognitive dissonance where students could face different testimonies and question their own assumptions. This kind of teaching is defined by Felman (1992) as teaching through “crisis”. Talking about her experience in teaching around testimonies of human suffering and historical traumas (such as the Holocaust), she argues that in the teaching and learning process, what is “new” can only be recognised, learnt or put to use if students are exposed to the limits and vulnerability of their existing frames of reference. This exposure necessarily involves a crisis that touches a critical or unpredictable dimension of such frames of reference. Felman states that her job as a teacher is to create the “highest level of crisis [a class] could withstand, without driving the students crazy—without compromising the students’ bounds” (p. 53). She draws a parallel between this kind of teaching and psychoanalysis in their dependence on a crisis to be effective

Both are called upon to be performative and not just cognitive, insofar as they strive to produce and to enable change. Both this kind of teaching and psychoanalysis are interested not merely in new information, but primarily, in the capacity of their recipients to transform themselves in function of the newness of that information [...] I want my students to be able to receive information that is

dissonant, and not just congruent, with everything that they have learned beforehand. (Felman, 1992, p. 53)

Boler (1999) also emphasises the importance of discomfort, dissonance and crisis in learning processes that aim to transform the emotional structuring of social relationships and to enable learners to see things differently.

The crisis that became central in this course was related to issues of difference, racism and inequalities in New Zealand schools. It surfaced as a collective “rebellion” against the course that was supported by lecturers in other courses. Students wrote letters and used their journals to question the focus and selection of readings for the course, the authority of the lecturers and authors of the texts, and to express their frustration with being forced to engage with perspectives that were inconsistent with the images they held of themselves and of reality. The crisis exposed students to information and strategies that were not congruent with their perceptions of themselves, of others and with their own experiences in the educational system. For most students, this period of crisis lasted from weeks 3 to 7 of the course. In week 7, they were introduced to Magolda’s model and prompted to examine selected responses from the course, as well as their own responses and knowledge construction. This seems to have equipped students to safely turn the gaze towards themselves and to produce meaning beyond existing frameworks. This enabled most students to re-story the narratives of their experience with the course.

In order to illustrate this crisis, we have chosen to perform a longitudinal analysis of learning journals of one student (Rob) over a period of 9 weeks using the weekly learning journal entries he posted in the course. Rob’s process illustrates a strong pattern identified in the preliminary analysis of the data.

In this speculative analysis, we felt that, despite the usefulness of our existing conceptual tools in shifting thinking about pedagogy, they were insufficient to “language” the complexities of the processes in the data we encountered. Therefore we created a new analytical tool, merging selected aspects of Magolda’s model with selected aspects of the model of intercultural competence of Bennett (1993), some psychoanalytic concepts related to defence strategies deployed to avoid hearing traumatic experiences (Laub, 1992) and common threads we have observed in the course data in another analysis focusing on learning journal entries towards the end of the course (Giroux, Andreotti & Fa’foi, n.d.). The resulting tool consists of two spaces of understanding that can be framed as ethno-centric and ethno-relative (using Bennett’s distinction) and a space of crisis in-between characterised by a perceived relative loss of epistemic privilege.

In the ethnocentric space of understanding students would experience knowledge as mainly absolute, relative to stages 1 and 2 of Magolda’s model. This conceptualisation of knowledge implies a relationship with difference that can be associated with the phases of denial, defence and minimisation of difference of stages 1–3 of Bennett’s model. This relationship, in turn, requires the use of defence strategies against listening to testimonies or accounts of difference that expose the limits of existing ‘absolute’ thinking frameworks (as defined by Laub, 1972, pp. 72–73). In the move towards the ethnorelative space of understanding, students reach the boundaries of their own thinking frameworks and start to acknowledge

both the existence of difference and the situatedness (and plurality) of their own knowledges and identities. In this case, the perceived relative loss of epistemic privilege is equated with the impossibility to speak from a universalist, impartial or neutral position. Stages 3 and 4 of Magolda’s model and 4 to 6 of Bennett’s illustrate the possibilities opened in an ethnorelative space: students start to recognise difference as a learning opportunity, rather than a threat. They stop being defensive about their perceived identities, they become more willing to “bear witness to themselves” (Boler 1999) and to examine their assumptions. They start to develop strategies to cope with ambiguity, uncertainty and complexity and to negotiate their identities and knowledge construction “in context”. Table 1 summarises these components, including the threads we have identified performed by Giroux, Andreotti and Fa’afai (n.d.).

In creating this bricolage, we are engaging with the three conceptual frameworks in a critical and strategic way (aware of their location, limitations and provisionality), emphasising the possibilities that they open to “language” and enable our own testimony as practitioners and researchers. Despite the fact that we are using the language of stages and levels (as expressed in Magolda’s and Bennett’s models) we reject the developmental ideas in these frameworks. We use these theories in our interpretation of the data as situated lenses that need to be de- and re-constructed in the ongoing dialogical process of “linguaging” learning.

Table 2. Analytical Tool

| | Bennet (1993) | Magolda (1992) | Laub (1992) |
|---------------|---|--|---|
| Ethnocentric | Denial of difference Defence of superiority Minimisation of difference (focus on commonalities) | Stages 1 and 2 Absolute knowing or transitional: right vs wrong | Paralysis in fear of association Outrage and shrouding Withdrawal and numbness Awe and distance Obsessive fact finding Hyper-emotionality |
| | | | |
| Ethnorelative | Acceptance of diversity Adaptation Integration of difference (into one’s life) | Stages 3 and 4 Independent knowing or contextual: knowledge as relative and context dependent | Giroux, Andreotti and Fa’afai (forthcoming) Understanding limits of own perspective Careful not to project self onto others Seeing other’s point of view Fluid and changing identity Comfortable with self to engage with others |

Rob's journey

Rob's first journal entry, after the second session of the course, can be interpreted as an acknowledgement of the role of the teacher in making all children comfortable in a classroom environment. However, Rob seems to understand the preparation for this role as a technical question, not one that requires a level of personal transformation.

It is important to go the extra mile to get to know the child so that they feel comfortable with you. One of the easiest ways of doing this is learning the child's name and pronouncing it correctly. Another thing is never to assume where a child comes from just because of the type of name he/she bears [...] All of this means that I have got to learn various techniques that enable me to deal with and understand children from different cultures.

Rob justifies this need for understanding on the grounds of creating an effective learning environment for "all". His mention of race and migration in this regard suggests that he is taking a "colour blind" approach to the issue (Blair, Bourne, Coffin, Creese, & Kenner, 1998; Blair, 2001), in which differentiated experiences of education may be minimised (Bennett, 1993) so that conflict is avoided.

In order to create an atmosphere that enhances their learning and the learning of their classmates the class needs to be calm and open about each other. Education is not exclusive to race and everyone has the right to an unbiased education that caters for all students regardless of what colour their skin is and where they call home.

In his second journal entry (week 3), strategies related to denial, defence and outrage associated with ethnocentrism start to become more explicit and Rob seems to become angry and resistant towards the course.

This is also something I am finding increasingly frustrating about this course. Just because I am a mainstream Caucasian male doesn't mean that I am going to promote white supremacy in my future classroom. I am sure that over the years some teachers have made mistakes when dealing with multicultural families such as [the lecturer's daughter's experience]. I do however feel quite strongly that it is an unfair generalisation to make, that I will make these same mistakes because why? I am subconsciously a racist? I don't think so!!

He extends his complaint with a statement which relates multiculturalism to "already" being exposed to difference in an allegedly equal society. In the context of the collective frustration towards the course, which prompted students to question the authority of lecturers and authors of selected texts, Rob's way of trivialising and minimising difference can be interpreted as shrouding in incessant speech. Laub (1992) identifies shrouding as one of the six strategies used to avoid hearing testimonies of oppression. According to Laub, the use of this strategy can indicate both a sense of inadequacy in responding to the issue and a desire to

project the responsibility for the problem onto those experiencing the suffering. In this sense, Rob's incessant speech can be read as an attempt to avoid addressing issues of power inequalities and his possible association with systems that reproduce those.

[...] what some people are forgetting is, we are living in a world that is growing evermore multicultural, BUT has been multicultural for a long time already! Here are some examples from since I was a young boy. My GP is from Korea. My neighbours who I babysit for are from Singapore. My Uncle is married to a Japanese woman and lives in Japan with my three beautiful half Japanese, half Kiwi cousins. My last boss was Russian and most importantly the man I idolise the most is an African American with a Middle Eastern middle name who at this point in time is the single most powerful man in the world! How much more multicultural do we need to be?

In his fourth journal entry (week 4), after reading texts with Māori perspectives and aspirations in education, Rob again uses other examples to diffuse the arguments presented in the text by conceptualising injustice and inequality in a more general sense (i.e. in relation to deaf people). Still within a collective context of crisis and frustration where the purpose of the course was being challenged (as illustrated in his last sentence), his response can be interpreted as the strategy of "fact finding" identified by Laub (1992) used here to reflect the appeal of the course to empathetic engagement with Māori marginalisation.

The issues that are being discussed are not exclusive to Māori either. Tariana Turia speaks about our teachers being better at Te Reo because it is the official language of New Zealand, Sign Language is also an official language of New Zealand and it isn't in our classrooms. It's not even offered as an optional class here at teachers college! How does this make the deaf people of New Zealand feel? As we can see there are many issues in the New Zealand education sector and you don't need to attend a multi cultural studies course to be made aware of them.

In his fifth journal entry (week 6), there is a change of attitude towards the course and Rob starts to question and reconceptualise the meanings he had attributed to concepts such as "whiteness" and "racism" in his previous entries. Although his attitude towards the content of the course seems to have changed, he expresses reluctance in sharing insights in his learning journal.

Wow! Is what sums up that reading for me. This reading was about the different ways of being White. It explained all the questions and doubts that I had (pass tense, because I no longer have them) about this class! [...] I am taking with me the understanding of what it means to be "racist" which is something I am not yet ready to admit that I am. I feel like I now know you don't have to have swastika tat's up and down your arms, and walk around yelling at Asians to go home in order to be racist! I am pretty confident I know what type of

White I am. I am however not comfortable sharing that information as I wish to investigate more! I am leaving my old thoughts of what it means to be racist behind. My whole perception of what is racist has changed and I think this is a good thing!

It seems that Rob's move towards a more self-reflexive attitude was supported by a passage in the text where an Indian woman praises white social workers working against racism. This seemed to have given Rob a possibility to reconceptualise his identity in "positive" terms, as opposed to his interpretation of negativity in the problem posing texts that required a recognition of privilege and the existence of racism. However, his need for a positive identity and approval can also be interpreted as a need for certainty and even defence of privilege and superiority.

I loved what the Indian woman said about her perspective re White social workers! To think that there are White social workers out there working so hard and demonstrating anti-racist behaviour makes me proud to be White, which is huge given that there is so much to be ashamed of. This is an example of how one person can make a difference and change can begin. [This] means that I have new goals and a newfound inspiration towards being a teacher. If I can work hard and commit myself to teaching in a transformationalist style, which leads to people of other cultures to say about me what the Indian woman said about the social justice workers, then that is a new goal worth working for!

In his sixth journal entry (week 7), Rob seems to start to make the passage from an ethno-centric to an ethno-relative space of understanding. He acknowledges his increased interest in the subject and identifies a turning point where he can recognise injustice in the report of an immigrant child who rejects his identity in order to "fit in". He turns the analysis to his own discomfort, positioning and assimilationist attitude towards immigrants. He then identifies questions and strategies to take ownership of his learning process towards seeing through the eyes of others and creating safer learning environments. This journal is reproduced in full below.

I am still buzzing from the last weeks reading! And the last lecture just heightened my buzz! It is amazing how this transition has happened and how this has increased my interest in this subject. I can now do the readings and look forward to doing the quiz. And I get the best the result in the quiz now that I have finally embraced this positive attitude towards this course. The story that captivated me most in the reading was that of Qiu Lang. I can finally understand just how tragic it is when people from other cultures reject their own culture in order to appease those "locals" around them. "I was afraid to say anything. I was afraid people would make fun and laugh at me because of my feeling different from others. I kept quiet". This is a tragedy. For years I have had the attitude "when in Rome, do as the Romans". This is not a good multi cultural attitude to have. We

should not be encouraging these people to “fit in” and be like “us”, but asking ourselves “how can I learn about this culture to widen my own perspective and further my own knowledge of the world?” I am taking with me a more understood meaning of what it means to be truly “accepting” of other cultures. What I mean is that when faced with a difficult situation that feels “uncomfortable”, rather than turn away and say “it’s too hard, I’ve heard all this before” I will know ask myself “what can I do to help this person feel comfortable in their own skin? And how will this affect their learning and the learning of those around them?” Before I had these “rude awakenings” I could never understand the people in the readings that said, “I was like a fish being introduced to water”. Now I do, and I believe that I will be a better teacher because I have learnt this understanding, and by choice, not because I feel it is going to give me an instant pass this course. I still have a lot to learn and not much time to do it. But like all, I am lifelong learner and love the look (my own picture) of the future ahead!

In week 8 of the course, students went through an exercise where they used Magolda’s model to analyse selected journal entries from students participating in the research. In his seventh journal, Rob reflects on his own learning process using Magolda’s stages and the uncertainty of the journey ahead.

From the lecture I am taking with me a greater understanding of where I am currently in Magolda’s model. I am happy with this because I can see a good transition from stage one to stage two, and now gradually from stage two to stage three! I am leaving behind the idea I had previously that all students are the same regardless of where they come from, or what colour skin they have. I am still a little bit unsure about how this will change and how I will have to adapt my future lessons to suit [that]. But I am happy that I have left the general idea behind and am willing to learn how I can change this.

He identifies listening to parents and students as a challenge, but one that he is willing to face in order to meet the needs of every student.

What this means for me as a future teacher is that I will have to work very hard in order for students to feel that I will listen to their ideas. I will have to realise that what students and/or parents say will not always be easy to accept. But I will need to take it on board and work harder to ensure that I can create an environment that enhances the learning of all students, not only [the ones in the dominant culture].

In week 9 of the course students were asked to read all their own learning journal entries and reflect on their feelings and responses at different stages of the learning process. In his eighth and last entry, Rob identifies most of the characteristics of ethno-centric spaces in the model used in this paper in his own entries. He interprets his resistance in the first five weeks of the course as denial of

white supremacy expressed through “raw irrational emotion”. He describes his recent experience of moving beyond discomfort towards ethno-relativity as “incredible and liberating”.

I cannot believe the transformation that I have undergone during this course! Looking back over my journals I can see that I was in denial about white supremacy! I had a little knowledge about what white supremacy was and acted out by writing with a lot of raw irrational emotion! The week that was significant for me was when we did the reading about different ways of being white. This is when I realised that racism was a bigger problem than I thought, and that I was without knowing being a white supremacist. I believed that my (white) way was the right way and people that believed otherwise needed to come onboard the white ship and “get with the program!” How wrong I was. What I am glad about this reflection is that I can see a change in myself and I know that this is going to make me a better teacher! For the first five weeks of the course I experienced what I (now) know as discomfort. At the time I felt I was being attacked and just wanted to avoid the issue. Now I realise that this was because I was unwilling to learn a new way because I was already so set in my ways. Now I can see the new way and it feels incredible and liberating!

CONCLUSION

As a self-report exercise, one needs to be careful about generalisations in relation to Rob's journey. The power dynamics between lecturer and students, the interpreted expectations of lecturers and the pressures to pass the course are factors that have definitely shaped Rob's learning and journal writing in different ways. However, two factors indicate that these aspects may have been minimised in his case. One is the fact that learning journals were not assessed qualitatively (students did not get marks or comments for what they wrote). Thus although there was huge ambiguity in the task, there was not much risk involved for Rob in terms of accountability. Second, his use of the journal to complain about the course suggests that he was exercising his agency in negotiating the power relations in the course: Rob was happy to manage the learning task and the risk involved in order to express his feelings toward the course.

In terms of the move between ethno-centric and ethno-relative spaces of understanding, his narratives are consistent with our speculative model and Felman's insights on the importance of crisis in this kind of learning process. It seems that in weeks one to five, Rob became increasingly uncomfortable and angry with the exposure of the limits and vulnerabilities of his existing frames of reference. His crisis led him to consciously explore a new and unpredictable dimension of his learning capacity, the capacity to de- and re-construct meaning—the capacity to signify “otherwise”. In his case, the crisis created by the course seems to have enabled a deep transformation that he identified as enabling and empowering.

However, as course designers we question whether his renewed enthusiasm will survive the conflictual and agonistic dimension of being constantly “undone” in transformative encounters with difference. Learning to live with uncertainty and discomfort, without what Mignolo (2002) calls the “enchancements” of modernity’s epistemic privilege, is an arduous task for those over-socialised in epistemologies that privilege certainty, universalism and the individualised self. Rob’s writings in this course may indicate the start of a learning journey, but they cannot guarantee any outcomes in terms of wider renegotiations of power relations in relationships, schools or societies, as these will always take place “in context” framed by the constraints of the different institutions and discourses Rob will inhabit. It is also likely that without further opportunities for Rob to access support in his first conflictual engagements with difference he will find it difficult to translate his new theories into ethical practices.

Although Rob’s journey illustrates several aspects of a strong pattern identified in the course in our preliminary analysis, this was The enduring enchantment (or the epistemic privilege of modernity and where to go from here) The enduring enchantment (or the epistemic privilege of modernity and where to go from here) The enduring enchantment (or the epistemic privilege of modernity and where to go from here) not the case for all students in the course, as should be expected. In the extended analysis of the data collected in this course, we intend to explore this dimension in depth in order to further theorise the challenges of teaching difficult knowledges (Britzman, 2006) through crisis and discomfort (Boler 1999; Felman 1992). We also intend to refine our speculative model in order to incorporate aspects related to the production/negotiation of subjectivities (reified or fluid), identities and positionalities.

This TLRI project has provided a productive space for the creation of a learning community of practitioners involved in deep professional conversations and debates about what they do, why they do what they do and what might be some opportunities and challenges for the future. Some of the common threads in these conversations relate to identity, teacher beliefs, the role of theory, professional autonomy and the challenges of deep intellectual engagement with those. Another interesting emerging theme is the discomfort that these kinds of conversation generate for teacher educators, for researchers and for course participants. We hope this project will offer a contribution to the understandings of “shifts” in teacher education that will help equip current and future teachers to be better prepared to make ethical and better informed professional choices and to make education more relevant for learners in uncertain times in complex and diverse societies.

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