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*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

***School of Education***

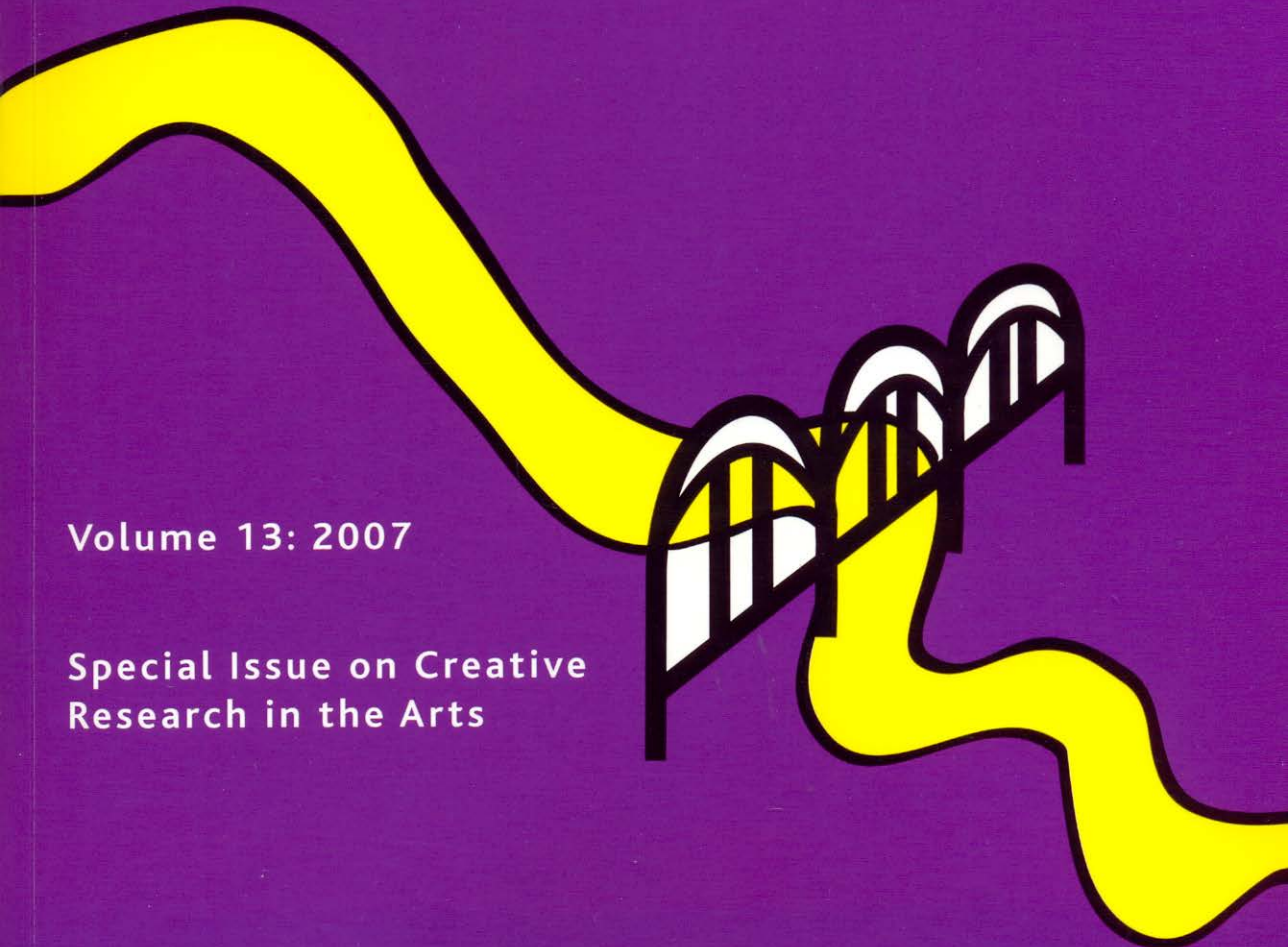
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# WAIKATO JOURNAL OF EDUCATION

TE HAUTAKA MĀTAURANGA O WAIKATO

VOLUME 13, 2007

<b>Creative Research In The Arts: Introduction To The Special Section</b> KAREN BARBOUR	3
<b>Art Works As A Re-Presentation Of Research</b> JILL SMITH	7
<b>Through The Eye Of A Needle: The Story Of Two Academics' Use Of Fabric Crafts To Make Defiant Messages</b> BELLA GRAHAM AND JOYCE STALKER	33
<b>Researching Collaborative Artistic Practice</b> KAREN BARBOUR, DONN RATANA, CHERI WAITITI AND KIM WALKER	49
<b>Reflective Practice: Dance-Making And Image Narratives</b> DEBBIE BRIGHT	77
<b>Reflections Through Invisible Glass Walls: Self-Study Of Teacher And Artist</b> COLIN GIBBS	91
<b>The Youthanasia Of Dance: A Research Nexus Diary Of Dance In Tertiary Education</b> LINDA ASHLEY	103
<b>Interweaving Philosophies Of Dance Teaching And Dance-Making: What Can One Practice Teach The Other?</b> ALISON EAST	123
<b>Aesthetics And Didactic Intention: The Meeting Place Of Beauty And Information Transmission In The 2006 Community Theatre Production Of <i>Swamp Treasures</i></b> JOHN G. DAVIES	139
<b>Experiential Learning: A Narrative Of A Community Dance Field Trip</b> RALPH BUCK AND KAREN BARBOUR	149

<b>Creative Teaching Or Teaching Creatively? Using Creative Arts Strategies In Preservice Teacher Education</b> ROBYN EWING AND ROBYN GIBSON	161
<b>A Case Study: Issues Of Culture, Diversity And Difference In Art Education In New Zealand</b> JILL SMITH	181
<b>Music To Measure: Symbolic Representation In Children's Composition</b> CLARE HENDERSON	197
<b>Safe To Speak? A Teacher's Story Of One Child's Apparent 'Liberation' And 'Transformation' Through The Security Of Role</b> VIV AITKEN AND SHAY COWLEY	211
<b>Captured Voices In Primary School Art Education</b> GRAHAM PRICE	221
<b>Developing Non-Verbal Ways Of Knowing In Dance: Collaborative School/University Action Research</b> CLARE HENDERSON, DEBORAH FRASER, SUE CHEESMAN AND SHIRLEY TYSON	243
<hr/>	
<b>Education's 'Inconvenient Truth': Persistent Middle Class Advantage</b> MARTIN THRUPP	253
<b>Reflecting On The Development Of A New School Subject: The Development Of Technology Education In New Zealand</b> ALISTER JONES	273

# **A CASE STUDY: ISSUES OF CULTURE, DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE IN ART EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND**

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**ABSTRACT** *This paper reports on case study research conducted in five Auckland secondary school art departments in 2005. Positioned within the reality of New Zealand's increasingly multicultural society and progressively diverse school population, the study was underpinned by a critique of interpretations of culture, diversity and difference, an examination of claims by cultural theorists that schooling has a responsibility to educate for an equitable democratic society, and arguments by multicultural art education theorists that art education can make a significant contribution towards a democratic society. The study also involved an interrogation of pedagogical approaches for culturally inclusive art education and a critique of educational policy which raises issues of the subject's position and value in the contemporary age of globalisation. This paper offers insights into the research participants' schools and pedagogical practices. The findings are intended to inform professional judgements about the shape and role of art education in a diversified society which, in an era of economic and cultural globalisation, has a historically contingent commitment to biculturalism.*

## **KEYWORDS**

Arts education, Case study, Culture, Diversity, Difference, Secondary schools

## **INTRODUCTION**

The motivation for this study arose from my role as a New Zealand/Pākehā teacher educator increasingly conscious of the imperative to investigate, empirically, issues arising from the changing demographics of New Zealand secondary schools. With a few exceptions (Smith, 2001; Sutherland, 2004), there is an absence in this country of field-based research on secondary school art education and, particularly, studies which focus on issues arising from culture, diversity and difference. The aim of the research was to seek answers to the following questions:

- How are secondary school art teachers' understandings of ethnic diversity and cultural differences reflected in their pedagogical practices in Year 9-10 art programs?
- In what ways and to what extent are these practices shaped by personal and professional influences?

## BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

My study was prompted by a number of factors, the first of which is the changing New Zealand demographic. In 2000 the Education Review Office (ERO), in its report on *Multi-cultural Schools in New Zealand*, provided a telling account of how New Zealand society, including its student population, is becoming increasingly multicultural. ERO (2000) noted that as well as 40% of multicultural schools being situated in the greater Auckland area, the location of my study, they are likely to be large, state, low-decile secondary schools. The report emphasised that a trend that is likely to continue is the decline in the proportion of people who identify as New Zealand European/Pākehā and a corresponding increase in the numbers of Māori, Pasifika, Asian and students from other cultures in our schools. Also emphasised was the need for teachers to embrace this challenge. The 2006 Census QuickStats (Statistics New Zealand, 2006) showed that while Europeans comprise 67.6% of the population and 11.1% stated their ethnicity as New Zealander (a new category), one in seven people identified as Māori, Asian groups grew the fastest (an increase of almost 50%), and those identifying with Pacific peoples' ethnic groups had the second-largest increase (up 14.7%). The changing make-up of the population was also reflected in the 10.4% of people who identified with more than one ethnic group.

The shifts in population raised issues of the reality of teacher demographics. A survey I conducted with heads of art departments in Auckland secondary schools in 2005 revealed that they are mostly female (76.6%), have taught, on average, for 11-20 years and are predominantly New Zealand European/Pākehā (83%) (Smith, 2005). The latter finding resonated with Sleeter's (2001) review of 80 data-based research studies on pre-service teacher preparation for multicultural schools in the United States, most of which focused on the "overwhelming presence of whiteness" (p. 94) of pre-service teachers and the implications for teacher education programs. Although Sleeter (2001) considered that the issue of whiteness needed to be addressed because "many pre-service teachers hold racist views", her prime concern was "to populate the teaching profession with excellent multicultural and culturally responsive teachers" (p. 94), an ambition relevant to my investigation.

These demographic statistics highlighted variability in the framing of concepts of multiculturalism. Throughout its report, ERO (2000) referred interchangeably to multicultural schools and cultural diversity. It purported to adopt a definition of multiculturalism based on 'ethnicity' because ethnicity data from schools is reported to the Ministry of Education. Analysis of policy documents showed that a view of multiculturalism which takes for granted that a primacy of ethnic diversity has been adopted. However, engagement with a range of literature pointed to a need to look beyond such a simplistic interpretation. Multiculturalism cannot be equated with ethnicity. Current theoretical debate moves away from multiculturalism and draws a distinction between ethnic diversity and cultural difference as political concepts (Bhabha, 1995). The former takes for granted a somewhat unsophisticated notion of ethnic categorisation and argues for recognition of distinct ethnic groups. The latter is more concerned with increasing cultural complexities and advocates

for meaningful and democratic inclusion at all societal levels through challenging traditional power structures.

My study was grounded in an understanding that the social world may be divided by any number of classificatory systems. Each embodies a pattern of relations in which one group is 'fundamental' and, therefore, able to culturally impose itself on the rest of the population (Cocks, 1989). Any form of classification has to take account of other cross-cutting factors and the points of difference which are created as these intersect. Of particular interest were the complexities that have been the outcome, in many countries, of migrational shifts and the impact of global communication and technology. As Taran (2001) suggested, this has meant that Western societies, in particular, are becoming more multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-lingual. It is the culturally-related differences and shifting power bases that arise from diverse groups being brought together in this way that is central to the concerns raised in my research.

Corresponding with the problematic of diversity and difference, an issue for my study was the complexity of meanings and interpretations of 'culture' itself. Posited within the framework of art and art teaching, teachers and students and society within and beyond schools, the term culture is used variously in numerous contexts. Bullivant (1993) claimed that culture is so much seen as a condition of ordinary life that it tends to be taken for granted. Begler (1998) classified culture in two ways: culture thought of in terms of the social, economic and political systems of a society and the belief and value systems of its citizens is culture with a little 'c'; culture with a big 'C' refers to 'high culture' commonly associated with forms of endeavour that represent the highest aesthetic achievements of a society. In framing culture in these terms, Begler not only identified the dilemma of culture being conceptualised in popular and confusing ways but also highlighted the issue of how art is classified. In many countries there exist elite hierarchies which define artistic worth.

Consequently, I explored a number of interpretations of culture which were to inform the study. Among them was the idea of culture as a hallmark of civilisation and of a civilised and cultured person, a notion that became known during the Enlightenment (Arnold, 1882). The literature on the modernist, hierarchical Western cultural hegemony (the Western aesthetic), which held popular tastes and art forms in disdain, ignored pre-modernist art styles, disregarded non-Western cultures, promoted elitist notions of 'high art' (Chalmers, 1996; Efland, Freedman & Stuhr, 1996) and considered the dominant Western art canon as the supreme standard of excellence (Smith, 2006), provided a critical framework for the fieldwork. Hodder's (2003) ideas on the material culture of peoples as identifiers or manifestations of a culture, and Geertz' (1977) notion of symbolic forms as conveyors of culture, were also looked for during the teaching and learning encounter. Conceptions of culture framed in terms of 'identity', 'race' and 'ethnicity' (Adams, Clark, O'Neill, Openshaw & Waitere-Ang, 2000) and Bourdieu's (1990) notion of 'habitus' which embraces all the social and cultural experiences that shape us as persons, informed the interviews with the teachers. The effects of globalisation and transnationalism, which are altering conceptions of culture, identity and nation-state (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; McCarthy, Giardina,

Harewood & Park, 2003), underpinned the classroom observations. This multiplicity of interpretations and the conflicting discourses within which they are posited suggested that art education, whatever its shape or form, is inextricably entangled in the politics of culture.

Nieto (2004) identified a concern relevant to my study: the question of pedagogical practices. In the reports of her case studies in the United States, Nieto (2004) noted that “although teachers’ ethnic group membership may have a very powerful impact on student learning, it is this in conjunction with teachers’ cultural knowledge and awareness, and their curriculum and instructional accommodations that can make a major difference” (p. 376). Nieto (2004) claimed that while culture is one of the differences students bring to school, “teachers’ pedagogy is also influenced by their lack of knowledge concerning the diversity of their students” (p. 107). Her criticism (below) demanded attention in this research:

in secondary schools, in particular, subject matter dominates pedagogy ... that teaching from the point of view of students is uncommon ... (and) that many teachers attempt to treat all students in the same way, reflecting the unchallenged assumption that “equal means the same. (Nieto, 2004, pp. 106-107)

Chalmers (2003), in his keynote address at the 2003 conference of the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Art Educators (ANZAAE), drew attention to this problem. He urged art teachers to

recognise privilege and develop art-teaching strategies to redress societal inequalities; make art that challenges both the racist beliefs of individuals, as well as societal attitudes towards target groups; implement an art curriculum that addresses historic and current power imbalances between groups, and to be increasingly aware that silence condones racism; have students notice and be sensitive to art and artists from racial, ethnic, and cultural groups other than their own; challenge their assumptions about people who seem different; and encourage students to ask questions that increase their understanding of another person’s experiences and point of view. (Chalmers, 2003, p. 260)

My study required, therefore, a search for pedagogical approaches to culturally inclusive art education and the theoretical positions underpinning them as possible solutions to issues of culture, diversity and difference in secondary school settings. Explicated in the literature were the views of protagonists and antagonists towards ‘modernist’ versions of multicultural art education which celebrate pluralism and diversity, while serving to reproduce existing political, social and cultural conditions (Efland et al., 1996; Stuhr, 1994). It was suggested that ‘postmodern’ conceptions, such as social reconstructionist multiculturalism and teaching visual culture, should be adopted. These approaches emphasise difference and challenge the dominant power and knowledge structures that tend to create socio-cultural inequities (Duncum, 2001; Freedman & Stuhr, 2004; Stuhr, 1994). A critical approach to policy and pedagogy in art education and an ethic that gives priority to



equity and democracy as primary social objectives were considered to offer a way forward for an active engagement of social responsibility and cultural inclusion (Freedman & Stuhr, 2004; Grierson, 2003). What was lacking in the literature, however, was substantial evidence that culturally inclusive art education makes any difference to students' attitudes towards democracy, culture and one another.

Nonetheless, the relationships between the politics of culture, education and schooling, curriculum policy and the educational needs of students of diverse cultural backgrounds were an important focus of the data collection. The fieldwork was informed by the perspectives of cultural theorists (e.g., Freire, 1985; Giroux, 1992; West, 1993) that schooling has a responsibility to educate for an equitable democratic society and that teachers need to critically examine schools as political and cultural sites. Claims that culture counts in the classroom (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Macfarlane, 2004) aligned with arguments by art education theorists that art education can make a significant contribution towards democratic practices (Chalmers, 1996; Efland et al., 1996; Grierson, 2003; Stuhr, 1994). Giroux's (1992) belief that in the pursuit of democracy the teaching profession is a unique and powerful public resource also suggested that art teachers must question taken-for-granted assumptions about the construction of curriculum. Explored during the field-work was the impact upon national curriculum policy of 'reforms' during the 1980s and 1990s, which emphasised a new culture of enterprise and competition and de-emphasised issues pertaining to equity and empowerment (Peters & Marshall, 2004). One of the objectives of my research was to determine how the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education [MOE], 1993) affected the formulation of subsequent curriculum statements, including the arts.

The response to *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (MOE, 2000), the key policy document underpinning the study, brought to the surface another problem. Postmodern critiques by Grierson (2003) and Mansfield (2000, 2003) included arguments that a philosophy and a politics of difference are absent in arts curriculum policy in this country. These authors claimed that, by defining art in terms of Western practices, the arts curriculum perpetuates modernist art historical assumptions and elevates it to a fine arts hierarchy. Grierson and Mansfield maintained that the relevance of popular culture and mass media, and the multiple and sophisticated imagery and media systems that are part of the daily lives of students in New Zealand are ignored. In their view, art education needs to be repositioned to represent the world of culture, history and power relations. Mane-Wheoki (2003) also questioned whether the arts curriculum could accommodate the needs of an increasingly diverse range of cultures and ethnicities, as well as the "still-dominant Pākehā and the still-subordinate tangata whenua" (p. 81). Bracey's (2003) criticism that art teachers and teacher educators obediently accepted the new arts curriculum and that they fail to reflect critically on their practice or examine the theoretical foundations of art education, also demanded attention. Bracey's view, along with Hattie's (2003) argument that there was a need to "accelerate the transition from educational practice as a craft to educational practice that is evidence-based" (p. 12), informed my investigation.

## **THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

The nature of the research problem lent itself to a methodology underpinned by an interpretive paradigm, which assumes that there are multiple realities, that meanings are socially constructed and that such meanings are derived through social interactions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The decision to use the flexible methodology offered by a case study enabled me to gain through fieldwork, in a sample of secondary schools, a better understanding of a particular case within the context of education policy, curriculum and pedagogy (Stake, 2000). Based on Patton's (1990) model of purposive sampling, five secondary schools were selected as the research settings. The criteria used were ERO's (2000) ethnicity-based definition of multicultural schools, decile classification, geographical spread, and the inclusion of single-sex, co-educational, state, integrated-state and private schools.

Three of the five secondary schools involved in my study reflected the increasing diversity of New Zealand society. The student population in one comprised 60 ethnic groups. In another, students came from 57 countries, with nearly 50% originally from overseas. In a third school, students of Asian (23%), Māori (20%) and Pacific Islands (14%) ethnicity outnumbered the 43% of European students. The rationale for inclusion of two less culturally diverse schools, one with 75% and the other with 80% European students, was in response to claims by multicultural theorists that attention should be given to cultures regardless of whether or not they are represented in a school's population (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; Sleeter, 2001). The selection of schools was also influenced by criteria applied to the choice of the 10 teacher participants: that is, the HOD and an assistant art teacher in each school. The teachers, of whom eight were female, had been teaching in secondary school art departments between two and 24 years. Five identified as New Zealand European or Pākehā; the others as Māori, Taiwanese, Samoan, North American and New Zealand Dutch.

Consistent with case study research, the perspectives of the participants were gained through multiple data collection methods, which did not privilege one method over another (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Stake, 2000). Document analysis, participant-observations in classrooms, interviews with the 10 art teachers and the photographic recording of students' art work (in progress and when completed) were employed. The analysis of documents (curriculum statements, schools' vision statements, art department schemes, program planning and student demographics) informed the interviews and classroom observations. Repeated interviews with teachers focused progressively upon their perspectives on curriculum policy, including the curriculum framework and the arts curriculum, their personal and professional histories and perceptions of their pedagogical practices. Observed during a sequence of lessons with each Year 9 or 10 class, these practices were complemented by the photographic recording of students' outcomes from the art programs. Interviewing the 231 students in the case study settings was considered beyond the scope of the research. However, the students' role were taken into account in the observations, in the documentation of their art works and in informal interactions during the observer-participant encounter.

## FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

In Years 9-10, students must study at least two of the four arts disciplines of dance, drama, music and visual arts (MOE, 2000). In Years 11-13, while the arts curriculum provides the basis for specialist teaching and learning, it is superseded by the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). Hence, Years 9-10 were the focus of my research. The aim was to discover how the 10 art teachers' understandings of ethnic diversity and cultural differences were reflected in their pedagogical practices in visual arts programs at these year levels and in what ways, and to what extent, they were shaped by personal and professional influences.

An early finding, which became evident through analysis of school policy documents and art department schemes, supported by interview data, was the marked degree to which accountability to national curriculum policy influenced, professionally, the teachers' programming, assessment and art department structuring. While value was placed on art education by all five schools and it was positioned securely within the crowded Year 9-10 curriculum, the approach to the subject appeared to be affected by the academic and economic achievement imperatives inherent in the curriculum reforms of the 1980s and 1990s. For example, each art department scheme reflected the emphasis in the curriculum framework upon the eight groupings of essential skills designed to contribute to a highly skilled, technologically competent and adaptable workforce. Reporting systems to students and their parents/caregivers focused specifically on these essential skills, although variations in emphases reflected the character and idiosyncracies of the particular school.

The art teachers' programming was based predominantly on the requirements of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (MOE, 2000). The four 'strands' in the visual arts discipline of the curriculum – developing practical knowledge in the visual arts (PK), developing ideas in the visual arts (DI), communicating and interpreting in the visual arts (CI) and understanding the visual arts in context (UC) – were used by all schools to define key areas of learning, assessment and reporting. Each strand was included in all the programs observed. While research on art and artists (UC) was generally used as the starting point, the greatest emphasis was given to practical art making (PK). Time allocation for spontaneous and informal art activities that were not driven by curriculum objectives was minimal. All 10 teachers, in contrast to critics of the arts curriculum (e.g., Bracey, 2003; Grierson, 2003; Mansfield, 2000, 2003), maintained that it offered them freedom, independence and a useful guide for programme development. The curriculum was not perceived as confining or exclusive but, rather, as having a positive influence upon art education. It was evident, too, that while the art units observed during the fieldwork were designed by the teachers with little student input, students appeared to value and have a good understanding of the programs offered. During observation lessons, many said they enjoyed art and liked developing skills in research and art making. Being encouraged to produce high quality finished art works was identified by a number of the Year 9 and 10 students as being particularly important. Furthermore, the arts curriculum was seen by all the teachers, (a view reinforced informally by a number of the Year 10 students), as

providing an essential foundation for Year 11 visual arts. Without exception, the teachers stated that their programs reflected a conscious decision to prepare students for NCEA.

Furthermore, all participants considered the arts curriculum to be a key influence on their effectiveness as teachers. Reflective of Hattie's (2003) emphasis on the importance of "excellent teachers and inspiring teaching" (p. 6), the personal and professional effect which these 10 art teachers had on the formative and summative achievements of their Year 9 or 10 students was a significant feature of the fieldwork. In each case the engagement of students in classrooms over a sustained period of researcher-participant observation was due, in no small part, to the supportive environment established by the teachers, the positive inter-personal relationships between teachers, students and peers, the teachers' respect for their students and the students' responses to their teachers in the learning encounter. These teachers reflected, albeit in varying degrees, Palmer's (1998) belief that good teaching cannot be reduced to technique but is rooted in the identity and integrity of the teacher. That they possessed what Palmer calls a capacity to connect with their students and their subject was reflected in the level of student involvement. Of the 231 students observed in the ten art rooms only a few were not engaged or failed to complete components within units of work. A notable feature was the implicit, rather than explicitly stated, high expectations which all the teachers had of students to perform to the best of their ability in art.

The pedagogical practices observed during the fieldwork did, however, align with Hattie's (2003) assertion that "educators still make most of their practice decisions on the basis of personal belief and personal experience" (p. 12). Nine participants professed no conscious knowledge of multicultural theory and all 10 were unaware of discourses on critical pedagogy. Planning and teaching were based largely on the teachers' beliefs about what constituted appropriate art education and on the broader social conditions and experiences which had shaped their practice. With the exception of one teacher who was required to implement the department-wide Year 9 art program designed by the HOD, elements of the personal, school and tertiary education experiences of the participants were evident in their approaches. For example, positive experiences of studying art history at school and university and a passion for classical art, as well as a stated preference for traditional art, were carried over into the pedagogical practices of the HOD in one school. Students in this teacher's Year 10 class adopted his ethos of developing skills, exploring media and techniques and understanding art styles to "achieve the pride of a good finished outcome" (Smith, 2007, p. 223). In comparison, vivid experiences at a bicultural secondary school and an inter-disciplinary-style polytechnic, an early introduction to photography, interest in issues of low versus high art and art versus craft, and increased awareness during teacher training of the need to explore and place more value on other cultures and their art were reflected in the pedagogical practices of the art teacher at another. Teaching and learning in her Year 10 class were approached from the perspective of enabling students to explore their "individual ethnicity or their culture" (p. 224) through experimenting with contemporary forms of art making.

The influence on pedagogical practices of preparing students for NCEA was particularly evident in the emphasis upon students researching artists' works and procedures as inspiration for personal practice. Sustaining critiques of the arts curriculum (Grierson, 2003; Mansfield, 2000), interviews with the teachers, classroom observations and the photographic recording of students' work confirmed that the 'artist models' selected by teachers were drawn primarily from a modernist Western aesthetic. While the majority of teachers expressed no bias towards 'high art', or rejection of the so-called 'low art' of popular culture, crafts, decorative arts, tribal and indigenous art, the artists and art works studied in seven of the 10 programs conformed to definitions of art within the Western art 'canon'. Reflecting the historical experiences of the teachers themselves, classical forms of antiquity and the development of Cubism were studied by Year 10 students in two schools, and the conventions of portraiture in a further three. In most instances, emphasis was placed upon the art forms as self-sufficient products rather than on their underlying social, political and cultural contexts. Only three programs drew upon art which extended beyond the Western aesthetic. Popular culture provided the basis for a collaborative construction of 'kiwiana chairs' in one school. Study of indigenous art which drew upon understanding of the forms and significance of Māori kākahu, inspired the construction of 'personal identity cloaks' in another. In a third, 'symbolic self-portraits' were underpinned by study of the cultural and personal symbolism in the works of Niuean artist, John Pule.

An important finding was the lack of attention given in programs to the cultures of 'others'. Although the teachers professed to be aware of the focus in the arts curriculum upon students gaining understanding of how and why individuals, communities and societies make art works, and of the declarations in the curriculum framework that the curriculum "will encourage students to understand and respect the different cultures which make up New Zealand society ... and will acknowledge New Zealand's relationships with the peoples of Asia and the South Pacific" (MOE, 1993, p. 7), this dimension was comparatively downplayed. The opportunity for students to develop "deeper understandings of cultural traditions and practices in New Zealand and overseas" (MOE, 2000, p. 5) was interpreted by the teachers predominantly in terms of biculturalism. Each expressed clear understanding of biculturalism in terms of the curriculum framework's declaration, consistent with government policy, of acknowledgement of the value of the Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) and of New Zealand's bicultural identity. While the inclusion of studies of Māori art and culture responds to a mandated requirement, all but one of the participants were sympathetic to the focus in the arts curriculum upon toi Māori, traditional Māori art forms and contemporary developments and their significance in different contexts, and the requirement to understand aspects of te reo, tikanga and whakapapa. Indeed, analysis of Māori art units in schemes and observation in one classroom showed they mostly began with the UC strand, from which insights gained by students were used to explore the art forms of Māori as a springboard for their own art making. The dual focus on Māori and European/Pākehā art and culture, evident during the fieldwork investigation, reinforced Mane-Wheoki's (2003) commentary that an "insistent 'bicultural' vision" continues to pervade art curriculum in New Zealand (p. 8). A move beyond

the bicultural emphasis was largely confined to the art of Pacific Island nations. Every school included a program with a Pasifika focus. These programs consisted of a study of either the material art forms of Pacific peoples, or of symbols which could be considered cultural stereotypes of particular Pacific peoples' ethnic groups, or the work of contemporary artists as models. In contrast to the Māori art units, study of the underlying cultural significance of Pasifika art forms was minimal.

None of the art department schemes gave specific attention to the art of cultures other than Māori, Pākehā/European and Pasifika. Several programs observed and documented during the fieldwork did suggest, however, an interpretation of culture which reflected the teachers' awareness of the students themselves. With the exception of two Heads of Departments (HODs), who professed to take little account of the ethnicity, diversity and cultural differences of their students, the remaining teachers felt they took account of "the ethnicity of students ... acknowledgement of cultural differences ... sensitivity to ethnic needs ... and the cultures and the individuality of students" (Smith, 2007, p. 227). One HOD reported that the art staff were particularly aware of the 60 different ethnic groups at her school. At another, where the population was largely immigrant, the HOD considered that all students were treated equally. In her Year 9 class, students were given opportunity to explore their cultural and transnational backgrounds. At the integrated-state school, students explored art within the cultural context of its Christian ethos. Six of the 10 programs enabled students to express their individuality and use common symbols to represent themselves to themselves, an approach that aligned with ideas expressed by Geertz (1977). The opportunity to collaboratively express the popular cultural iconography of New Zealand was given to students at one school, although the approach did not include a critical examination of popular forms of visual culture in a socio-cultural context (Freedman & Stuhr, 2004). In other instances, teachers used culture of the Western art aesthetic as a starting point, based on their views that the history of art provides a valid source of examples of artistic accomplishment.

The autonomy of action which the teachers considered the arts curriculum provided was evident in their personal and professional search for programs designed in the interests of their students. Culture as a political issue in education and schooling was not referred to in art department documentation nor, in response to my questions, expressed as a relevant concern. Neither was the politics of culture – the way in which curricula reflect cultural forces that are the outcome of competing interests of stakeholders – a dimension of their pedagogical practices.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

In New Zealand, teachers accept employment on the understanding that they will deliver a curriculum as laid down by government statute. The *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (MOE, 1993) and *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (MOE, 2000) require schools to meet a multicultural requirement responsive to the increasing cultural diversity of the New Zealand population. The literature reviewed suggested that teachers have a responsibility to make a conscious and informed

commitment to a socially responsive multiculturalism (Efland et al., 1996; Freedman & Stuhr, 2004; Giroux, 1994; Kalantzis & Cope, 1999). The question can be asked as to how far the government's curriculum policy aligns with this position, especially since there is no substantial evidence to show any relationship between culturally inclusive art education and students' attitudes to democracy, culture and each other. Much depends upon what is meant by a responsive curriculum and what pedagogical interpretations it requires.

The findings of the fieldwork suggested that all the teachers believed they were able to exercise professional autonomy within the requirements of educational policy. Programs were driven not only by the arts curriculum but by a sincere concern for the welfare of students, in both educational and social terms. Many stated that they wanted to improve the life chances of their students, a position advocated by Nieto (2004). The majority believed that their art programs and pedagogical practices took sufficient account of the ethnic diversity and the individual differences within the cultures of their students. While admitting they held no theoretical knowledge of multicultural pedagogies, there was evidence that these teachers were moving, as an outcome of their professionalism, towards a position which takes account of New Zealand's increasingly multicultural society. As exemplified in students' outcomes, the art education provided by the teachers and shaped in their own terms by the students was vital, expressive and of high quality and was valued by their schools' communities.

Nevertheless, it was evident during the fieldwork that understandings of diversity and difference (see Bhabha, 1995; Grierson, 2003) were balanced, and sometimes over-powered, by the potent influences of the New Zealand European/Pākehā participants' own Europeanised artistic and cultural inheritances. Even the five teachers from 'other' cultures maintained that their criteria for high student achievement in art remained predominantly within the Western aesthetic, a reminder of Smith's (2006) claims that excellence as a desired outcome of education rests in the maintenance of the European tradition. Overall, the nature of art education offered by these 10 teachers maintained an emphasis on modernist art exemplars and continued to promote a predominantly bicultural position (Smith, 2001). The desire for students to achieve excellence was strong and an imperative to prepare students for NCEA in Year 11 was inescapable. In combination, these factors produced a form of art education whose curriculum policy, content and pedagogical practices remained within in a predominantly monocultural ethos.

Commentaries and critiques of art education in New Zealand press for change from the dominant European position to the adoption of a more revolutionary stance (Bracey, 2003; Grierson, 2003; Mansfield, 2003). This would require a shift from pluralist multiculturalism, via the medium of modernist progressivist pedagogy, to critical (postmodern) pedagogies which specify inclusion and access and which affirm diversity and acknowledge difference as a dynamic conception of culture. Education, as advocated by theorists such as Giroux (1992) and Bhabha (1995), was seen as a vital agency for informing people of the realities of ethnic diversity and cultural difference and the necessity for equity of achievement rather than mere equity of opportunity. In this context, many art theorists argued that the very visibility of art, as well as its function as a metaphor of culture, can play a

significant educational role in this respect (Chalmers, 2003; Duncum, 2001; Freedman & Stuhr, 2004). Such a change would necessitate a shift from the élitism of the fine arts, the modernist aesthetic and the Western art canon to the art of the everyday world in which students learn how to decode contemporary culture. Such decoding does not imply tacit acceptance of all aspects of the forms of what is being called 'art' in contemporary society. Rather, it focuses upon an equivalent critical enquiry that has traditionally been evident in the world of 'fine arts'. It would require art teachers to gain understanding of the importance of a transformative pedagogy and curriculum: one that challenges the hegemonic knowledge that perpetuates the power of the dominant culture; that operates in the socio-political context of students' lives; that addresses issues regarding group differences and how power relations function to structure racial and ethnic identities; that makes a space for different student voices; and that involves students in planning their education (see Giroux, 1992, 1994; Nieto, 2004).

Evidence from the research literature suggested that what can be described as the high quality of art education that is happening currently in these art rooms can be reinforced, revised and diversified further in the pursuit of cultural equity, diversity and opportunity. The question remains as to how, and in what degree, an enhanced understanding of the theoretical arguments would enhance an art education which is truly responsive to the ethnic diversity and cultural differences of students in New Zealand secondary schools today (Grierson, 2003; Mansfield, 2003). The provision of such understanding would require recognition in both the pre-service and the continuing education of art teachers.

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