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TE HAUTAKA MĀTAURANGA O WAIKATO
VOLUME 5, 1999

Vouchers and the Privatisation of New Zealand Education LIZ ELEY AND JOHN CLARK	3
Standards-based Assessment in English: Take 3 TERRY LOCKE	13
Poem: Untitled PIRKKO MARKULA	32
Qualifications, Critiques, and Reforms: The Rhetoric Surrounding the New Zealand Qualifications Authority IVAN HODGETTS AND DARRIN HODGETTS	33
Poem: Boarder's Leave Ending RACHEL WOOD	50
The Maori Language Science Curriculum in Aotearoa/New Zealand: A Contribution to Sustainable Development MILES BARKER	51
<hr/>	
SPECIAL SECTION: TEACHER EDUCATION AND TEACHING: TRENDS AND POSSIBILITIES	61
Introduction BARBARA HAROLD	61
Reviews of Teacher Education in New Zealand 1950-1998: Continuity, Contexts and Change NOELINE ALCORN	63
Research Trends and Possibilities in Teacher Education CLIVE MCGEE	77
Teachers Talk Back: Educational Theory and Teacher Education SUE MIDDLETON AND HELEN MAY	89
Stories to Live by on the Professional Knowledge Landscape D. JEAN CLANDININ	107
Remapping the Practicum in Teacher Education ROSIE LE CORNU (DOBBINS)	121
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The Effectiveness of a Māori-Focussed Teacher Education Programme FRED KANA	133
Poem: Day is Done TERRY LOCKE	138
Coping with the Dual Crises of Legitimation and Representation in Research RICHARD PRINGLE	139
Poem: Tracks JIM DENISON	151
Bright Future, Five Steps Ahead - Making Ideas Work for New Zealand: A Commentary HOWARD LEE AND GREGORY LEE	153
Ka Ora Kāinga Rua: Finding a Home in the Academy. A study into the Experiences of Four Maori Women in the Academy LAURA HAWKSWORTH AND PARE KANA	165
Neo-Liberalism and Constructions of Democracy: The Impact on Teachers' Work NESTA DEVINE	171
Producing an "Iwi-Meaningful" Doctoral Proposal: A Case Study BELLA TE AKU GRAHAM	181
"Coming to Know" in Teaching Physical Education: Moving Across Cultural Boundaries GEORGE SALTER	189
To the Fullest Extent of his Powers: C.E. Beeby's Life in Education NOELINE ALCORN	199
Poem: Junia DEBORAH FRASER	208
Poem: Tania DEBORAH FRASER	209
Poem: Otorohanga, 1966 DEBORAH FRASER	210
Book Reviews	211
Poem: Let's Hear It TERRY LOCKE	217

TEACHERS TALK BACK: EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND TEACHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT This article is about the teacher education experiences of a number of individuals over a number of decades. It begins with a brief exploration of the changing context in which "theory" is taught. Then, drawing on some of our interviewees' experiences as students, teachers and as teacher educators, we share some of their impressions of "theory" in their teacher education programmes. We also explore some examples of teachers, past and present, who developed a passion for theory, trace this to its sources, and speculate on what these have to teach us as we re-shape our courses and programmes in the new political and professional environment. Finally, we illustrate how our life history approach in our recent book *Teachers Talk Teaching* provides some theoretical frames for understanding the diversity of experiences in the domains of teacher education and teaching. We argue that contextualised life-history narratives provide a window of everyday realities that bring "theory" to life in way that is meaningful for students in teacher education, and teachers.

INTRODUCTION

This article is about our book, *Teachers Talk Teaching, 1915-1995: Early Childhood, Schools and Teachers' Colleges* (Middleton & May, 1997). We begin with a few vignettes from it that seem particularly appropriate for teacher education. Patricia Harrison described her experience of Dunedin Teachers' College and Otago University in the late 1940s as infused with:

... that philosophy of opening the imagination, of allowing people to create, of allowing exposure to beauty. These things had a tremendous impact on us all. We knew that we were in an exciting period in education. It was so different from what I had experienced, and what I knew inside myself to be wrong and not to be education. It was schooling I had experienced rather than being. It was simply that environment which we felt; we responded to it (Patricia Harrison, b. 1931).

In all the time periods we studied, we found similar examples of teachers whose pre-service education, in colleges and universities, had stimulated in them a life-long passion for educational ideas and germinated the seeds of what were later to become coherent, and idiosyncratic, educational philosophies. In contrast, there were others whose salient memories were of pressures towards intellectual conformity:

University was a big disappointment to me. I'd read too many books about how wonderful university was and how it opened people's eyes. I think it was a bad time to be at university. I was there from 1946 to 1949, and the classes were very large because of the returned servicemen coming back . . . The returned servicemen were so set on making up for lost time, that whenever there was any divergence into anything interesting - a debate - they'd say, "Is this relevant to the course? Are we likely to be examined on this?"

Similarly, some described the most lasting impressions of their teachers' college experiences as characterised by rules and routines, as in these examples from the 1930s:

[college] was really just a continuation of high school. You were there from 9 until 3 or 3.30. You had your lectures on an hourly basis and there was no fluidity to the timetable at all. You worked from 9 in the morning until 3 or 3.30 in the afternoon. You did that for six weeks and then you went out on section for six weeks . . .

[The senior woman] used to stand up in the corner tower and look down, and you had to have your kid gloves. Lots of girls couldn't afford them. So you'd walk by with a pair of gloves on, you'd go in the back door and you'd walk around to the other entrance and you'd drop your gloves down for someone else to wear.

Early childhood training was separate from the mainstream of the teachers' colleges until 1974, but there were many parallels. The comments of Wellington Kindergarten College Principal Joyce Barns (b. 1916) reveal glimpses of the dynamics of class and sexism in education.

It used to be the twinset and pearl-girl brigade, like myself who were from private schools. Then we started getting these girls from public schools, and then we were getting married women, and just before I left the males were coming in.

These are but tiny snippets from over 3000 pages of transcribed interview data gathered during 1994-1996. In intervals snatched around our other commitments like teaching, administration and family responsibilities, we travelled around the country, tape-recording the educational experiences and perspectives of 150 teachers and former teachers born between the years 1899 and 1973. Through a wide-angled conceptual lens, we viewed the transcripts alongside the accounts of policymakers, sociologists and historians. Together these multiple accounts enabled us to explore how historical events, political ideas, government policies, social movements and new teaching methods have washed through all dimensions of the education system and how they have been invented, introduced, taken up, subverted, or resisted to different degrees and in different ways within and across the sectors. Our aim was to

map the tides and currents of educational ideas "from the bottom up", as "lived" by our interviewees. How do teachers and former teachers describe and account for their educational theories and practices? Where do they get their ideas from?

We conceptualised *Teachers Talk Teaching* as a text to be used in pre-service teacher education qualifications. But much has changed in the national politics of teacher education in the short time since then. What, if anything, can our book offer teacher educators and our students in these turbulent times? Does it provide us with anything other than a nostalgic, and at times self-indulgent, saunter down memory lane?

We argue that it offers a methodology, a pedagogy, for teaching what used to be known as "educational theory" or "foundations" courses, but which are more likely today to be designated as courses on "education policy", "educational reform", or "social issues in education". In these times of "remapping" teacher education, it is useful to examine the place of theory, and the most appropriate ways to teach it, in new qualifications structures. Due to shorter time frames, and competitive marketing, the traditional education courses of BEd degrees are now being squeezed out by the priority demands of courses with a curriculum, practical and professional focus.

Throughout this paper, we are centrally concerned with describing and enabling the process described by Maxine Greene (1995) as "releasing the educational imagination". For Greene, the "educational imagination" requires us to "think big" and "think small". For her, "thinking big" involves engaging with broad social questions:

We who are teachers would have to accommodate ourselves to lives as clerks or functionaries if we did not have in mind a quest for a better state of things for those we teach and for the world we all share (Greene, 1995, p. 1).

"Thinking small" requires us to connect with "other" people:

Imagination is what, above all, makes empathy possible. It is what enables us to cross the empty spaces between ourselves and those we teachers have called "other" over the years (ibid, p. 3).

EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND THE TURMOIL OF THE TIMES

Poised at the edge of the third millennium there is a perception of crisis, as national, regional and global economies and political systems fragment and collapse. In our own line of work, teacher education, things have seldom felt so uncertain. In the 18 months since *Teachers Talk Teaching* was published, many of the foundations of teacher education have been shaken, and already dramatically transformed. The real "shake up", however, may have only begun.

At this time, two government white papers that will further radically reshape the possibilities for our work are waiting in the wings. These follow public submissions on two green papers. In September 1997, Government released for discussion *A Future Tertiary Education Policy For New Zealand:*

Tertiary Education Review (Ministry of Education, 1997a). This was closely followed by *Quality Teachers for Quality Learning: A Review of Teacher Education Review* (Ministry of Education, 1997b). Their aims were described by the Minister of Education as helping our country "to become the most highly skilled nation in the world, with relevant skills and academic acumen widely distributed throughout the community" (Creech, 1997). The popular press, education weeklies, tertiary teachers' unions and professional networks prophesise yet "more market" reforms across the tertiary sector.

To date, of all the education sectors, it has been in teacher education that government faith in the free market has been most dramatically applied. And, somewhat ironically, the free market education policies of government have brought more and not less regulation to the content and shape of teacher education qualifications. Externally monitored "competency" measures have been strengthened; the pre-service curriculum is crowded with increasing numbers of new curriculum documents that have to be covered; and the number of external agencies to which teacher educators are accountable has been increased. New "providers" have entered the race; older ones either amalgamating or abandoning co-operative programmes (such as jointly taught BEds by universities and colleges) to "divorce" and become competitors. As tertiary institutions desperately scramble for students in a limited market, degrees have been shortened with the four-year BEd being supplanted by the three-year degree variously known as BEd (Teaching) or BTeaching.

A crucial impact of these institutional rearrangements is that there is now little space for what used to be called the "theory" courses in education that provide the understandings of ideas, practices and institutions past and present, national and international. Even the study of human development has been much trimmed back in some new programmes and opportunities for teacher education students to take "interest" courses in universities or colleges or to develop a subject speciality are minimal and fragmentary. Traditional teacher education programmes saw a part of their role as providing broader educational opportunities for the student's own benefit in the belief that good teachers were more than competent classroom technocrats; they were also interesting, thinking people. For better or worse, this streamlining of what is being taught as teacher education is a global phenomenon. Sandra Acker (1995) describes how in British pre-service degrees, "theory" is disappearing in the wake of a consuming emphasis on "learning through practical experience" (p. 60). And, writing from Australia, Erica McWilliam (1995, p. 114) described how in six years she has seen:

. . . the demise of the foundational disciplines as educational "theory". Psychology, sociology and philosophy have been doled out in increasingly small measure because more pedagogical territory was demanded for curriculum "basics" and fieldwork.

In this time of change it is important to examine how the "theory" components of pre-service teaching qualifications have been conceptualised by staff and experienced by students.

THE EXPERIENCE OF "EDUCATION" IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Previous studies have argued that in the education components of many pre-service teaching degrees, students have encountered "theory" (in the sense of education disciplines, interdisciplinary theories, or policy critique) as packaged products produced "somewhere up there" in laboratories or ivory towers (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; McWilliam, 1995). The lived nature of educational theories was thereby rendered invisible. Rather than appearing as researchers' and philosophers' investigations of lived dilemmas in the educational world, theory was handed down from on high. As Clandinin and Connelly (1995) expressed it "for the most part a rhetoric of conclusions is packaged and transmitted via the conduit to the teacher's pre-formed knowledge landscape" (p. 9). The various theoretical typologies become like maps. Students are positioned as spectators or readers and as outside rather than inside what they are studying. Beverly Morris (b. 1926), who has been a foremost figure in early childhood education, trained as a teacher during the war and was doing her masters degree at Victoria University in the 1940s:

Professor Bailey took me through my MA in education, but all I got was a feeling for the philosophy of education, the history of education, the statistics of education and so on. Not a child was spoken about. It is amazing that you could do a subject like education without having children mentioned . . . I wrote an MA thesis on what children do out of school times. You can see my interests in play were already there, as a primary teacher, but the university wasn't interested.

New Zealand's first BEd degree began in the 1960s and was jointly taught by the University of Waikato and the Hamilton Teachers' College. John Allan, the College Principal at the time, explained:

I was very keen to improve teachers' qualifications. I was very keen to do that. And one way of doing that of course is to get a degree. This was the first BEd. Peter Freyberg [Foundation Professor of Education at the University] was keen on the idea as well.

Our interviews include numerous accounts by former BEd students of an experienced split between theory and practice. This kind of tension had its origins before the first BEds in the 1960s. John Allan traced this split to long-standing antagonism between some universities and colleges:

[Waikato's BEd] wasn't when I left it as tailor-made for the job as I would like to see, but it was a vast improvement on what was offered where the university and the teachers' colleges paddled their own canoes and took no notice of each other at all - in fact slighted each other in lots of cases.

Elizabeth Kerse (b. 1922) was Dean at Dunedin Teachers' College from 1975-79 and spoke of mutual suspicion during the formative years of the BEd there:

The subject study people at college were a little afraid that their role would be undermined by students doing university work. The university, on the other hand, had to be convinced that the work we did at college was worthy of university status.

From a student's perspective such a "theoretical division of labour" between universities and teachers' colleges could result in mixed messages. Susan Grant (b. 1968) had taken a BEd in the 1980s. She saw her college courses as emphasising psychological models of child development and her university papers as teaching critical engagement with the social and policy contexts of schooling. For her this tension was both problematic and valuable:

I felt like I was getting two different messages. From the teachers' college – the teacher is someone who is eminently understanding, and accepting, and nurturing, really supporting the intrinsic individual and uniqueness of a child and celebrating them in their journey of life and discovery. Whereas, at university I was getting this view that teaching was to support the politics of the current government; and what we were providing was an economic ploy, or for an economic gain.

However, in the following example, a Māori woman, Aroha Johnson (b. 1955), had found that her college courses had ill-prepared her for the politics of Māori education. The university courses she had taken at the end of her BEd in the 1970s had challenged everything she had learned in her college diploma years:

I came out of teachers' college angry at what I didn't know about teaching, because I found out at varsity. I found out about sociology, I found out about politics, I found out about the political influence of various different policies on teaching and on what we did and what we knew. We did none of that at teachers' college and I remember when I finished my BEd being really angry at the teachers' college for what I hadn't learned. Like the whole politics dimension, the historical dimension, the expansion of educational ideas, the theory – the exciting theory. We had been taught about things at teachers' college, but we hadn't been taught about innovation. It was like, "There's a set box of tools that you need", and we got them.

Another student, who had studied for a more "integrated" BEd in the 1970s, described its theoretical component as exciting, but not directly related to her working practical teaching philosophy:

We were challenged. I don't remember a lot to do with curriculum content – I resented that a bit later – but I do remember reading and thinking, "I can go out there and be a different kind of person as a

teacher and have this freedom with children" . . . Even though I loved the theory and I loved the reading and the challenge and the debate and argument in classes, I don't know whether I'd integrated that into my thinking in terms of, this is actually going to be a way of operating when I am a teacher . . . They were just two separate worlds. (Catherine Lang, b. 1957).

However, there were other students who found that the fact that theory was taught separately from the more "hands-on" courses provided them with a much needed space for integration of their curriculum, and other programme components. The following example is from a BEd in an amalgamated institution in the 1990s:

I quite liked a lot of the education papers. Not all of them were practically based. They talked about theory and different theories for why people use behaviourism; what is a humanist? Different learning theories and how they came to be, history of education and all that kind of stuff. I found it quite interesting because it gave a basis to the things that I was trying to do . . . It gave me some knowledge as to why we'd even want to use different strategies (Jamie Telford, b. 1971).

For her, the theory courses provided some "spaces in between" the practical courses for her to develop the beginnings of a personal theoretical style. Teachers who return to study at masters level after a period away from study, often express such a need to develop a coherent personal philosophy:

What I was wanting was theory. I'm a practical person, so I come from already having the experience of practical. What it did was it put a perspective that was missing, or a different line. And I'd say, that's why the missing link was there. It reassured me about what I was doing (Max Galu, b. 1947).

We wrote *Teachers Talk Teaching* as a tool to use with pre-service and practising teachers to help them imagine their own educational visions in the spaces in between the curriculum and practical requirements. We approach this task by introducing students to changing educational ideas and policies as teachers and students have experienced and lived them in everyday settings. Clandinin and Connelly (1995, p. 27) put it as follows:

Teachers' lives take shape because of their professional knowledge landscapes. They draw on their individual biographies, on the particular histories of the professional landscape in which they find themselves; on how they are positioned on the landscape, and on the form of everyday school life that the professional landscape allows.

Rather than presenting theories as a flat, or two-dimensional, map, we can study the ways in which we, as teachers, as students, as social researchers, are positioned inside the social and educational phenomena that are our object of inquiry. As in other recent life history-based studies, teachers and teacher-educators are viewed not as passive recipients of the ideas of policymakers or the latest theoretical fashion, but as creative strategists whose theories-in-practice are products of our own agency within the constraints and possibilities afforded us by our biographical, historical, socioeconomic, cultural and geographical situations and the theoretical or conceptual resources to which our circumstances have afforded us access (Casey, 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 1985; Goodson, 1992; May, 1992a, 1992b; Middleton, 1993, 1998; Weiler, 1988). We get our students to read and engage with other teachers' narratives through their readings. They also do their own interviews and contextualise their interviewees' educational life-history narrative in its time, place, and policy setting.

We shall now share some stories of interviewees, older and younger, who were stimulated and excited by various teacher education experiences. How can we, the teacher educators of the end of the 20th century, recapture some of their excitement? What can they tell us about the kinds of teacher education environments we need to create to release the educational imagination in our students? Can life-history resources and techniques help in the context of today's competitive and anxious environment?

TEACHERS THEORISE THEIR WORK

We begin with the passion for progressive education that enthused so many practitioners in the 1920s and 1930s. Jack Stanford (John) Allan (b. 1916) was a student teacher in Dunedin at the time of the 1937 New Education Fellowship Conference. Together with the staff of the college, many students attended:

We went to [the New Education Fellowship Conference] as students in Dunedin. I was tremendously stimulated by that because there were horizons and perspectives here that had never been opened to me before. They pointed the beginnings of my educational thinking towards individual development, which was not something that was mentioned to us very much at all in the course of our training . . . That had a big impact on my thinking in ways that perhaps were not clearly discernible, but they formed the backdrop against which I saw, or examined, a lot of these things.

Staff and students together became caught up in the effervescence of the new ideas. Deweyan and other ideas about the role of education in creating and protecting democracy readily took root in countries desperate to stem the tide of fascism in the prewar, wartime and postwar years. Jack Shallcrass (b. 1922) described how the atmosphere and reputation of Wellington Teachers' College as a centre of freedom of expression during the 1930s continued unbroken through the war years:

When it re-opened after the Depression, Frank Lopdell was the Principal and he was one of the thinkers and influencers of his age. A funny, shy, modest man but an extremely quick thinker with a capacity to collect people like Walter Scott around him. The college got a name in the thirties, as being a dangerously radical hot-bed and that was sustained right through to the end of the sixties. You would hear people saying "I didn't ever believe I would hear such things discussed", because nothing was sacrosanct - it was an open intellectual atmosphere. Scott was deeply influenced by John Stuart Mill. So was Waghorn who was the Principal ahead of Scott and he believed that the safest thing was to allow all ideas out because that was the only way you would know that those which survived had survived on merit and not because others had been suppressed. It was an institution away ahead of its time in that.

It was the exposure to what some of their parents thought of as dangerous or subversive people and ideas that jolted many students out of their complacent "thinking as usual" (Greene, 1995). For example, "Georgina" had been convent educated. She was both daunted and excited by the worldliness of her lecturers and soldier classmates during the first weeks of her primary school teacher training at Wellington Teachers' College in the 1940s:

Walter Scott who was such an influence on other students - I was scared to death of him . . . Because I went to university I was in a group with all rehabs and they knew everything about the world. They were men of the world. They would be talking away and I would be thinking, "Ooooooh! I'm glad the nuns aren't listening!" Our set book was *England Made Me* by Graham Greene, and I had decided that that was a filthy book. And I thought, "Mr Lopdell looks quite a nice man and why is he allowing Walter Scott to make us read dirty books?" I mean, we weren't allowed to read *The Truth* [an early tabloid newspaper with sexual content] in my house!

However, the same student, who was studying concurrently at Wellington Teachers' College and Victoria University, came to find the new ideas generated by the mix of people, including refugees from Europe, who had congregated there during the war stimulating and positive:

I found university in the late forties and fifties was an amazing place to be. It was purportedly a bed of communism in those days. It was filled with interesting people who had ideas in their heads. We had heaps of people who had really suffered in Europe and had come out here. They were talking about very interesting things that we knew very little about.

These stories tell us something about how some teachers became passionate about "thinking big" about social goals – in these examples, the relationship between education and democracy. First, there was the political climate in

which educational ideals and wartime imperatives meshed and fused in many minds. Second, there was exposure not only to ideas in books, but to people who were passionate about, or who had "lived" the ideas. There was time and space to engage with and learn from them. Val Burns (b. 1937), a student at Wellington College of Education in the 1950s, recalls the connections she made between the "thinking big" politics of life and what this might mean in terms of "thinking small" for young children in classrooms:

[They were] totally devoted to democracy. Many of them had been men who had fought at the war . . . They were out to teach us that the most important thing you could do was to enable young children to think independently and think for themselves and to learn and question. They were on about learning through activity, learning through play . . . Don't forget we had Marie Bell who was there pushing new infant methods . . . We did a lot of soul-searching about what it meant to be a New Zealander and New Zealand identity. It was cultural, it was academic, it was intellectually stimulating. It was an exciting place.

Radical role models such as Marie Bell were powerful in shaping the ideas of students at teachers colleges and our interviews revealed the widespread and long term impact key people had. Marie Bell was particularly significant because she worked across both early childhood and primary sites of teacher education:

Marie Bell took me for child development. We had to read [Benjamin] Spock [1946] who was very revolutionary in those days. I was actually fascinated . . . We also had [Edna] Mellor in a book called *Education Through Experience* [1950]. Marie was certainly pushing deeper into learning.

There was Marie Bell who was a woman before her time, I guess. I remember her being quite radical. My background was different. I guess it was my introduction to feminism. . . I was on a real steep learning curve. She used to bring her son in a carrycot with her to the [kindergarten] college . . . Marie Bell had a lot of impact on me at that time. I started to think about women's attitudes and about women's rights.

It should not however, be assumed that students wanted to or found it easy to transform "thinking big" ideas into practice. Marie Bell herself recalled that:

We got a lot of students very enthusiastic and a lot of them got absolutely clobbered when they got out into the field and I just got sick of this. It got to my gut. I felt it was just not right that these students were being clobbered right, left and centre.

Similarly, there was Lex Grey who was pioneering the teaching of child development at Auckland College of Education in the 1950s. He recalled that:

[it was] too successful in that it caught on with the students but it threatened hell out of the older teachers, so there was a strong kickback against it. Instead of students stopping fights in the playground by punishing the kids, they'd be looking more at what the feelings were that were operating and dealing with the feelings of both the children. This was an absolute "No No".

In retrospect he understands the conflict this caused:

The students were way ahead of the teachers. I didn't foresee that. I was young and inexperienced, and too brash. For most part the students found this quite exhilarating because they found they could get on with the children, but then that put them out of kilter with the staff.

Later in the 1960s when three year teacher training was introduced Gabriel Rikihana (b. 1927) a Hamilton-based Inspector recalled a similar pattern:

We saw the difference in the teachers' colleges when they went to that third year. The quality changed in those young people. It was so obvious - first of all in their work in the classroom. They were a year older but it was also their assurance with the curriculum - with being able to select appropriate vehicles for child learning. Just marvellous. But there was a corruption going on with them because they were being annihilated in the staffroom by old experienced teachers who were saying to them, "What are you doing all that work for? It's not necessary."

So far, we have mentioned "theory" in the sense of the philosophical, sociological and psychological strands that together made up the movement known as "progressive" education. We have shown how ideas in books were brought to life by gifted teachers and in vibrant classrooms in which students could engage and debate the "big ideas." But sometimes it was the sheer personality, even eccentricity, of a lecturer that fired students' imaginations. Several of those who trained in the one-year secondary programmes at Christchurch Teachers College during the 1960s remembered John Moffat, as "the most interesting lecturer around the place. He taught about mythology – Greek mythology. He was entertaining, especially when he padded round in his saffron shorts. He was just beginning his yoga phase." His message for some was enduring. One man, who later become a successful secondary school principal, recalled:

He was a very memorable character. He was just honest, outgoing, peculiar, idiosyncratic, an exhibitionist; all good fun. He got on well with the students and they felt that they were given good value from

him in his own way. There was no other lecturer like him . . . I think his message was, "Go and be yourself!" Because he was himself. He was unique, and that was the way he would teach, as well as he lectured us. And if you accept that, by implication you'd be yourself. And that's I think the best piece of advice I've ever had . . . I can remember in my first job . . . the then head when I first met him said about the importance of being yourself which I think was a very, very good piece of advice. In my early days I tried to be different in various ways, and I didn't succeed, until I realised you have to do your own thing, your own way. And I suppose that the thing about Moffat, to put it quite succinctly, was that he was himself.

The imperative to "be yourself" underpinned many students' experimentation with political, as well as purely educational, ideas. They began to make connections between economics, history, politics and education. Sometimes these connections came about as students related their course content to current events. For example, Hone Wilson explained how his passion for Māori empowerment through education had been fuelled at Auckland University in the late 1970s:

With papers like Anthropology we looked at culture and all that sort of thing - injustices. New Zealand history cemented my view that I had to do something about it . . . We were getting very political then, the Māori - the Black Panther movement; Bastion Point [1977] and all those sorts of things . . . Certainly university made me more aware politically of what was happening in this country.

However, it was not only course content that fuelled students' imaginations at universities and colleges, but the chance to become involved in what were known as extra-curricular activities. Max Galu (b. 1947), a Samoan-born New Zealander, was studying at Auckland University in the 1960s and encountered Māori people there who were later to become high-profile activists, artists, intellectuals and professionals working for Māori education, land rights, language and culture:

University in 1967 was a real eye-opener. Some of the people in the Māori group that we had were Donna Awatere, Syd Jackson, Syd Melbourne, Winston Peters. They were all there. I was in a Māori Club. There was no Samoan Club, the only club was the Māori group, and Pat Hohepa took it, Peter Sharples, and all those people who were very militant later on. We went to Mount Eden prison, and played there . . . we went in and we performed, and it was really sad. I couldn't believe all these handsome Māori guys that were there - young. It wiped me out.

Georgina Kerr, a kindergarten trainee teacher, was in the same Māori Club at the same time and recalled:

That was my life blood when I was at college. What actually happened at Arney Road in Remuera [Kindergarten College] was incidental to what was happening to my life . . . I used to sit there sometimes in lectures and look at my friends . . . You know everyone is so nice and unaffected by life. We were all going to have coffee one afternoon and instead I took them on a protest march. I thought we might jazz things up a wee bit. We had people putting things over their heads and wearing sunglasses and putting scarves around their necks. I just wanted them to get out of college.

These vignettes can only give a few glimpses into the deeper analysis *Teachers Talk Teaching* provides, but suggest a view that educational life-histories, when contextualised historically, politically and sociologically, can help student teachers explore the constraints and possibilities of their own and others' lives and view teachers and students as active and creative educational theorists who do not merely mimic what has gone before. Rather, they create new amalgams of the theories and concepts that they encounter in the course of their professional and personal lives and create pedagogies and educational strategies that are uniquely their own.

THEORISING THE DIVERSITY OF EXPERIENCE

The final chapter in *Teachers Talk Teaching*, called "Revolution and Reaction" records the experiences of teachers in the lead up, duration and aftermath of the 1989 education administration reforms. Blamed as the "foot in the door" for market-led education the reforms are now a decade on and as stated earlier, still gaining momentum. Beneath the outward "revolution" of administrative change, this chapter also charts as living realities other significant revolutions in teaching. These years saw a diversity of voices and experiences in the field of education given a space not previously allowed. New groups, many in the field of early childhood, sought access to teacher training. For example, Kahu Katene set up a Kohanga Reo in 1982 at Tuhikaramea:

When I saw all these children come in, about 25 of them, I looked at my Kuia and I thought to myself, "Yeah, but what are we going to be able to do with these children, they need more than love and hugs and waiata and legends, and they need more than to be taken for walks and told about nature and all those things pertaining to Māori. How am I going to go about teaching them other things, and how am I going to understand their different age groups? (Katene, 1989, p. 6).

This was happening outside of any state education institutions and Māori groups such as Kohanga Reo were at the forefront of challenging the content of Māori children's education in New Zealand. Rita Walker (b. 1953) who now works in university early childhood teacher education recalled her own teacher education in Kohanga Reo:

We wanted our children to know their whakapapa. We wanted our children to acknowledge karakia as part of their day. We wanted waiata. We wanted story telling. We began with a mihi . . . We decided we needed to find out for ourselves first before we began implementing what we perceived as things Māori. The reo was very important and there was the realisation that language development was really important. As we learned more about Māori things we began implementing them, like Rangi and Papa. We did this when we were children but we never knew it as that. It was conceptual to our parents . . . It was a developmental thing we had to go through ourselves. No one could tell us. We had to figure it out.

Through the Kohanga Reo movement it was mainly untrained Māori women who forged new approaches to Māori immersion education. Subsequently, teacher education institutions began to look more critically at the content of their programmes and were forced to respond to the demand for bilingual and immersion teachers by ex-Kohanga parents. Wiremu (Bill) Anderson (b. 1945) started teaching at Hamilton Teachers' College in 1988 and continued working there after its amalgamation with the University of Waikato in 1991:

We had reo papers and tikanga papers. We had also established the marae. It had a whole lot of exciting things. I was here when that was happening. Then Charmaine Pountney came as Principal [1989-92]. Her kaupapa was to promote things Māori and you only had to mention something to her and she would go, "Yep, that sounds pretty good". Suddenly we were on a whirlwind. It was exciting for our Māori Studies Department because, with every programme that we established, we had to have teachers to teach it.

A different but parallel story from the 1980s, and also illustrative of the diversity of the teaching experience, was the integration of childcare into the field of teacher education. The inclusion of childcare workers broadened the definitions of the work and site of teaching; the age of children educated, and cared for, by teachers; and similarly, generated debate about the appropriate content and staffing of teacher education programmes for very young children (Carr, May & Mitchell 1991; May 1997a, 1997b). There were different perceptions of what was the work of an early childhood teacher. Carol Nicholson (b. 1942), a childcare supervisor, and later a university lecturer in teacher education, had originally trained in playcentre:

I can't say I ever called myself a teacher. I can never remember thinking that I was a teacher. Maybe because I had informal training and because of playcentre philosophy.

Tony Holmes (b. 1946) worked as an adviser to childcare centres :

I've always been an advocate for the term teacher. I was always looking for components of a programme which were educational yet

I found people that didn't have any awareness of what they were doing as educational. They saw themselves as carers and saw themselves as just providing those components of care, security, risk free safe environment.

Georgina Kerr (b. 1947) recalled some of the perceptions of combined teacher union conferences in the 1980s:

Suddenly people started coming to conference with spiked hair and it was just too much! In kindergarten there was a revolution. I can still see the older faction sitting there beside themselves. We had opened it up to all early childhood and we had "those" childcare people coming.

Teacher education has now become much more diverse in branding and the vignettes above are just glimpses into the complex transformations that have occurred. For example, market reforms of the 1990s mean, too, that teacher education programmes can now be delivered by multifarious institutions in the private and public sector.

Teachers Talk Teaching ended in mid-decade. The issues facing the current teacher education students are moving on but life history accounts of previous periods of change and turmoil provide useful theoretical frames for coming to understand the experiences of one's own time. As teacher-educators we are anxious for our students to be well-informed about the nature of the system they are to work within – the theories that have given shape to it and within which new approaches are created. Across the western world, the past two decades of restructuring have generated a huge body of research reports and critiques by educationists. However, most texts based on critical engagement with policy have tended to engage with the documents created by policy-makers. As such, they conceptualise educational change and debates "from the top". Teachers and pupils have been rendered invisible or conceptualised as puppets with strings pulled by policy-makers (e.g. Codd, Harker & Nash, 1990; Middleton, Codd & Jones, 1990). In contrast, *Teachers Talk Teaching* presents a different understanding of the dynamics of educational history and, we suggest, a useful tool for reflecting upon and understanding the "thinking big" of political processes as well as the "thinking small" about the world of children, families and classrooms.

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