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Where are beginning teachers' stories
about learning to teach in culturally and
socially diverse secondary school
classrooms?

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Where are beginning teachers' stories about learning to teach in culturally and socially diverse secondary school classrooms?

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Abstract: This paper reviews the literature related to an in-depth, narrative study currently being carried out on how beginning secondary teachers in culturally and socially diverse classrooms in New Zealand shape their professional knowledge and practice. Recent governmental reports from New Zealand, Australia and the UK highlight ongoing concern about beginning teacher retention and about the variability of the quality of new teacher induction programmes. The literature explored in this paper also discusses the issues for teachers arising from recent social and technological changes and the development of new teachers' professional knowledge. Little research has been found, to date, about the perspectives of the beginning teachers. This paper argues for the need to find out, from beginning teachers themselves, how they experience and represent the professional, political, social and cultural issues they face. This is presented as necessary if we are to understand better how to harness their expertise and commitment in schools, and prepare teachers who have a positive impact on the quality of outcomes for diverse students.

Introduction

The recruitment and retention of teachers has been identified, in several countries, as a growing problem in education, as discussed, for example, in: a report funded by the Australian Government (Commonwealth Department of Education Science and Training 2002); a UK report commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (Totterdell et al. 2001); research in the USA (Gold 1996; Hebert and Worthy 2001); and research funded by the New Zealand Government (Ministry of Education 2002; Renwick 2001).

In New Zealand, there is particular concern with the recruitment of teachers in secondary schools and rural areas, and with recruiting Maori and Pasifika¹ teachers into the teaching profession. The New Zealand Government, in recognition of recruitment concerns, has introduced various initiatives, including: providing a special allowance aimed at attracting secondary teachers in hard-to-staff subject areas; offering financial assistance to attract teachers to rural areas; offering scholarships to attract Maori and Pasifika teachers; offering removal expenses to attract New Zealand teachers home from abroad; and financially assisting teachers to travel to job interviews in Auckland (which is currently seeing a staffing crisis in secondary schools).

The recruitment measures appear to have had some degree of success, in that there are increased numbers of people going into teacher preparation programmes², more teachers are returning home to teaching, and the number of immigrant teachers is rising. However a shortfall of teachers is still anticipated with New Zealand's rapidly growing population, the retirement of the aging population of teachers and the resignation of a growing number of teachers. In October this year, the Ministry of Education announced further initiatives aimed at improving retention of mathematics, physics and Te Reo Maori teachers – an annual allowance of \$2500 paid during each of the second, third and fourth years of teaching.

¹ New Zealand has a large population of Pacific Islands people – sometimes known as Pasifika peoples – coming mostly from Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga, Fiji, Tokelau, Niue.

² However in some areas of the country, the limit seems to have been reached in terms of ability of teacher education institutions to place student teachers in secondary schools to complete teaching practicum requirements.

Nevertheless, the recruitment and retention of teachers in the secondary sector continues to be a concern, especially the retention of new or young teachers and of middle management staff. The Post Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA) claims that one reason for secondary teachers leaving the profession is the pressure placed on them in administering the new qualification for senior students – the National Certificate in Educational Achievement³ (NCEA). Another concern, arising since the settlement of the secondary teachers' employment contract in 2002, is the anticipated increased rate of resignation, of technology teachers in particular, due to the exclusion of many from eligibility to attain the highest salary step if their subject qualification is not a degree or advanced diploma.

The high attrition rate of beginning teachers⁴ in secondary schools raises, for me, questions about the experiences of these teachers, during their first years of teaching and during their teacher preparation (Wilhelm et al. 2000). It also raises questions about how well they are prepared to teach in culturally and socially diverse classrooms of New Zealand secondary schools (Bishop 2000; Sleeter 2001; Sleeter 2002; Valli 2000), and questions about the ongoing development of their professional knowledge and practice, particularly during their first years of teaching (Loughran et al. 2001).

In this paper, I will briefly background current issues facing secondary teachers in New Zealand as a result of recent educational reforms and social and technological change. Then I will explore the research about: the preparation of teachers for diversity; teacher education (both pre-service and in-service); beginning teachers; and the shaping of teachers' professional knowledge. I will conclude with an argument for the need to do more to include the experiences and representations of beginning teachers to the discourse, if we are to understand how we can improve teachers' commitment to ongoing professional growth, and to remaining in the teaching profession long-term.

This discussion of the literature forms part of my justification for research I am currently undertaking with secondary teachers at the beginning of their teaching careers, looking at how they shape their professional knowledge landscapes⁵ (Clandinin and Connelly 1995). My research interest lies with exploring the narratives of these teachers about issues and representations of the first two years of their teaching in culturally and socially diverse classrooms. I expect, from this research, to be able to identify influences on the teachers' professional knowledge and practice, and increase understanding of how teaching and teacher educators can improve their role in the development of inquiring teachers, committed to teaching long term and to ensuring their students achieve.

Current issues in teaching and teacher education

Many of the current issues for teachers and teacher educators, arise through the huge technological and social changes of the last 20 or so years, resulting in:

- The international trend over the last 15-20 years to commodify education and to reduce government spending and responsibility.

³ The NCEA replaced, in 2002, the 50-year old system of external assessment for senior secondary students. This new qualification combines nationally moderated internal assessment with external assessments, and students are assessed in each of the three final years of schooling, at Levels 1, 2 and 3 of New Zealand's eight level National Qualifications Framework.

⁴ In this paper, unless otherwise stated, I use the term *beginning teachers* to mean those who have graduated from teacher preparation programmes and who are in their first or second year of teaching. I also use the terms *newly qualified teachers* or *new teachers* to mean the same.

⁵ This concept of professional knowledge comprises a wide variety of components, influenced by a wide variety of people, places, and things.

- Curriculum reforms and the greater accountability required of teachers and students to achieve a narrowing range of standards.
- The increasing diversity of the population in schools, and the need for education and teachers to be prepared for this.
- The problems with recruiting and retaining teachers in the profession.

The economic policies of successive New Zealand governments since the late 1980s led to neo-liberal educational reforms of the 1990s, as discussed in more depth by writers such as: Simon (2000), who gives a historical perspective; Olssen (2001), who writes about the tertiary context; and Snook (2000) and Jesson (2000), who look at the impact of policies and reforms on teacher education. As a result of these reforms, teachers in New Zealand have had imposed on them some major changes in terms of how education, curriculum, qualifications and schools have been managed. National educational guidelines (NEGs) were developed in the 1990s that include a national curriculum (similar to that in the UK) implemented in early childhood education through to the final year of schooling (Year 13)⁶. These NEGs also include national administrative guidelines (NAGs) that require teachers and schools to perform, in terms of student success, meeting the diverse needs of students (including those with special educational needs, the gifted and talented, and students from non-English speaking backgrounds), and meeting Treaty of Waitangi commitments, to name a few. Schools are held accountable to these guidelines, through five yearly reviews by the Education Review Office⁷ (ERO). Teachers are expected to be autonomous in the classroom and make professional judgements, and are appraised against professional standards as set out in the teachers' employment contract. Secondary school teachers are also expected to contribute to decisions about the assessment criteria and standards of the NCEA, as well as prepare and mark the nationally moderated internal assessment tasks for their students.

The move to marketized education systems internationally has also placed pressure on teacher educators with the imposition of national standards, decentralization, funding and resources (Parry and O'Brien 2000). This has led to a narrowing range of standards in the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Beyer 2000).

In many teacher preparation programmes, market reforms have led to a reduction in the time spent on social and moral issues and social justice theories, in favour of a focus on tools for teaching (Cochran-Smith 2001; Connelly and Clandinin 2000; Liston and Zeichner 1990; Snook 2000; Vavrus 2001; Whitty et al. 2000; Zeichner et al. 1996). In North America, according to some critics, the majority of teachers appear to be insufficiently prepared, and even unwilling, to work with pupils other than middle-class, white children (Cockrell et al. 1999; Merryfield 2000; Sleeter 2002; Valli 2000; Zeichner 1996; Zeichner and Melnick 1996). A variety of reasons are given for this, including: the lack of teachers of colour; the lack of experience of white middle-class teachers in urban schools or communities; and the lack of sufficient or effective preparation during preservice teacher education, for working with diverse students. However, to date, I have seen no research to establish whether this is also the case in New Zealand.

In New Zealand, the reformed educational imperatives focused, on the one hand on efficiencies and standards (influenced by pressure from the new right), and on the other hand have responded in part to calls from the radical left by legislating for equity policies in education (Simon 2000). In 1988 the Royal Commission into Social Policy recommended major changes to educational policy, aimed at improving outcomes for Maori and Pasifika people. Since then,

⁶ In New Zealand schooling begins for most at the age of 5 years beginning with Year One. The five years of secondary schooling begin at the age of 13 years, with Year 9 and goes through until Year 13.

⁷ The agency responsible for reviewing schools' compliance with the requirements placed on them by the Education Act (1990).

work has emerged about: Maori and Pasifika achievement in education; Government attempts to improve achievement of Maori and Pasifika students; Maori and Pasifika initiatives in education; what is actually working in Maori and Pasifika education; different ways of viewing the “problems” and solutions; and recommendations for change in education and teacher education (for example, Bishop and Berryman 2002; Fa'afoi and Fletcher 2001; Ministry of Education 1998; Te Puni Kokiri 2001).

Over the last few years, Bishop and teams of researchers/teachers (Bishop and Berryman 2002; Bishop et al. 2002) have been engaged in a Ministry of Education funded project aimed at exploring the experiences of Maori secondary students about what influences their achievement. The researchers have successfully used the results of this narrative inquiry⁸ – that is, their analysis of the students’ stories – in professional development programmes with the teachers, to change the way they think about their students and how they go about teaching them. This research highlighted that systemic change and deficit theorising have not worked over the last century in New Zealand, but that working with teachers, having them deconstruct their own deficit theories, and having them change their focus to developing constructive relationships within their classrooms has had significant results in terms of student achievement. The results of the second part of this research are to be published by the Ministry of Education shortly, and will show the steep upward movement of the motivation and achievement of the students involved.

Johnston and McLeod (2001) also challenge the way in which the dominant Pakeha culture is normalized within the school context. They explore ‘the disruption of hegemonic spaces’ and propose a view of Maori education that involves all participants – Maori teachers and students *and* Pakeha teachers and students – in the relationship. L. T. Smith (1999), too, discusses a Maori approach to research, known as *kaupapa Maori research*, which provides a way for Maori to reclaim research for, by and with Maori. This methodology is grounded firmly in Maori ways of thinking and being. In her discussion, Smith explores the thinking of a number of other prominent Maori researchers (including G. H. Smith, Bishop, Glynn, Pihama and Irwin), who have been involved in the discussion about reclaiming Maori ways of knowing, identity, whanau and self-determination. Durie (2003) also provides a framework for looking at Maori educational goals, principles and pathways.

Teacher education, registration and professional development in New Zealand

The vast majority of secondary teachers in New Zealand complete a one-year post graduate qualification, which is designed for people with relevant subject qualifications – mostly degrees, but also advanced trade certificates or diplomas for technical or arts subjects. Few secondary teachers undertake longer qualifications, although, a number of two-year programmes or conjoint (subject and teaching) degrees are now offered. While many teachers complete their teaching qualification immediately following their degree, a growing number are coming into teaching from a previous professional career, such as engineering, science, business or in the arts.

On graduating with a teaching diploma or degree (that has been approved by the New Zealand Teachers Council⁹ – NZTC), teachers apply for provisional registration and are awarded with

⁸ They found that the deficit theory dominated teachers’ thinking about Maori students’ achievement, and that this was impacting negatively on relationships within their classrooms, and, as a consequence of this, on the students’ attendance and achievement.

⁹ The NZTC is responsible for the registration, disciplining and deregistration of teachers, and for professional leadership and approval of teacher preparation programmes. Teacher registration is compulsory for all primary and secondary teachers, and will be phased in over the next 10 years as a requirement for early childhood teachers. The NZTC replaced the Teacher Registration Board in February 2002, taking on the extended responsibilities of discipline and professional leadership.

full teacher registration if they can demonstrate that they have undertaken a suitable programme of professional development during their first two years of teaching, and have met the standard required to become a fully registered teacher (as defined by the NZTC). Provision of this professional development is the responsibility of individual schools, and varies from school to school in content, structure, quality and quantity. While in many schools the lead comes from the school management (through structured programmes and mentoring for beginning teachers), it is also common for the teacher to take responsibility for ensuring that they receive satisfactory guidance and professional development. The decision to grant full registration is made by the NZTC, based on reports from the school and evidence provided about the programme of professional development undertaken.

The professional development offered to teachers in New Zealand schools is somewhat haphazard. Since the Second World War, the government has funded a teacher union managed committee to organize refresher courses¹⁰, taught by teachers themselves. Advanced studies in education, one-off workshops or seminars on high interest topics, and subject association conferences are also offered by a wide range of educators and organizations.

More recently, in-service professional development for teachers has been contracted out by Government, to the original six colleges of education, which have large infrastructures and a history of delivering advanced studies programmes for teachers. Part of these contracts includes funding for professional development programmes targeted specifically at beginning teacher support.

What is available for professional development in New Zealand largely focuses on curriculum, behaviour and classroom management. I would argue that it is necessary to go beyond the delivery of tools such as these to have teachers explore professional and political questions in a more philosophical, in-depth way, in order to achieve understanding and commitment by teachers to addressing social and cultural issues in education (Bishop and Glynn 1999; Sleeter 2002; Snook 2000).

In addition to these professional development courses, the Government also provides funds for special projects related to issues of concern or new policy. For example, the Ministry of Education is currently funding a number of schools to implement literacy and numeracy programmes. In another project, a number of multicultural schools located in urban areas of poverty have been working together in the last few years in a Government funded project aimed at increasing the achievement levels of the students (the AIMHI¹¹ project). As stated earlier, another Government-supported research and professional development project has focused on improving the achievement and participation of Maori students through talking to Year 9 and 10 students and working with teachers to increase their effectiveness in the classroom (Bishop and Berryman 2002; Bishop et al. 2002).

Over the past three years, the New Zealand Government has also funded a programme of training and development for all secondary school teachers in preparation for the introduction of the newly introduced senior qualification – that is, the NCEA.

Beginning teachers

While extensive research has been carried out about preservice teachers, far less has been written in New Zealand or elsewhere about the early years of teaching. Discussion in the research about beginning teachers to date includes: questions about the impact of teacher preparation or induction programmes on teachers' practice on the job (Goddard and Foster

¹⁰ Teacher Refresher Course Committee (TRCC)

¹¹ Achievement in multi-cultural high schools initiative

2001; Hebert and Worthy 2001); evaluation and descriptions of the nature of support and guidance for newly qualified teachers – including the structure and components of induction programmes or the lack of programmes or support (Levin 2001; Perez et al. 1997; Williams et al. 2001); problems and concerns of new teachers – such as survival, stress and time management (Lang 2001; Meister and Jenks 2000); and the process of skill and knowledge development – for example, in planning and behaviour management (Sardo-Brown 1996). The majority of these studies relate to between one and five teachers, over a time span of less than one year.

Very little has been written, about the experience and representations of newly qualified secondary teachers, or the development of their professional knowledge and practice, in particular with respect to their pedagogical thinking (Doecke et al. 2000; Goddard and Foster 2001; Gold 1996; McGee 1999; Puk and Haines 1999). Furthermore, there are insufficient longitudinal studies anywhere, let alone in New Zealand, about teaching in diverse communities that move beyond exploring attitudes of teachers of preservice teachers, to finding out what happens once they move into teaching positions and influencing change (Sleeter 2002).

In New Zealand, there are a number of studies (completed or in progress) about primary beginning teachers. For example, Grudnoff and Tuck (2002) explored the views of first year teachers and their mentors as part of a series of studies; Lang (2001) looked at the survival experiences of first year teachers; Smales (2002; Smales and Watson 2002) explored first year primary teachers' perceptions of "self as teacher"; and Langdon (2001) explores principals' views of new graduates.

Studies about beginning secondary teachers are sparse and include: the exploration of induction experiences (Brown 2001; Cheng and Pang 1997); the influence of teacher preparation and more experienced colleagues on their socialization into the profession or their departure from it (Brown 2001; Loughran et al. 2001; Weiss 1999); a limited amount about professional knowledge development (Doecke et al. 2000); and very few studies about working in diverse classrooms (Birrell 1995; Martinez 1994). Most of these studies are case studies with between one and five teachers. As far as I can tell, in New Zealand my own research is the only study, to date, about secondary teachers in their first years of teaching, apart from Mansell's (1996) survey of year one and two teachers, and two linked studies funded by the Ministry of Education. The two Ministry studies looked at beginning teachers' (primary and secondary) perceptions of their teacher preparation programmes (Renwick 2001), and what they liked or disliked about their work and the support they received in their first two years of teaching (Ministry of Education 2002). Renwick's study was linked to concern about the high attrition rate of early career teachers in New Zealand and reflects concerns in Australia (Commonwealth Department of Education Science and Training 2002), the USA (Feiman-Nemser 2001) and the UK (Totterdell et al. 2001).

For me, the problems of teacher attrition also raise questions about factors that influence teachers' retention and their commitment to quality learning outcomes for their students. For example, is it that there is a lack of transfer of preservice learning into teaching and that this has a low impact, long-term, on teachers' commitment and motivation (Baker et al. 1997; Flores 2001; Sleeter 2001)? Or is it, as Levin and Ammon (1992) and Levin (2001) suggest, something other than the "wash out" effect (Lortie 1975)? The results of Levin's longitudinal research indicates that all the teachers in the study progressed, over several years, in their pedagogical thinking¹² to higher levels. It is possible that whether or not wash-out occurs is dependent on the efficacy of the programme in which the teacher participated (Levin 2001; Levin and Ammon

¹² Levin used the Ammon and Hutcheson model of pedagogical thinking that includes four components – *behaviour, development, learning and teaching* – which ranked teachers at one of five levels – *naïve empiricism, everyday behaviour, global constructivism, differentiated constructivism and integrated*.

1992). They claim that the programme that the teachers in their study completed was successful because it was longer than normal, emphasized ongoing teacher reflection, gave a thorough grounding in constructivist theory, was small, developed a meta-level understanding in the student teachers that they were developing as teachers, and used graduates as master teachers. These graduates returned to the programme to teach/talk/model as part of their own continuing professional development. The Michigan State University researchers also claim that it is the conceptual orientation of the programme, rather than its structure (National Center for Research of Teacher Learning 1993) that determines the quality of the teaching carried out by its graduates.

Another suggestion about the impact of teacher preparation on retention and commitment comes from Feiman-Nemser (2001) and Hebert and Worthy (2001), who claim that the length of a teacher education programme may also impact on first year teachers' survival or pedagogical thinking. It is more likely that the quality of the learning experience in teacher preparation and the quality of the induction programme offered to beginning teachers is most important (Levin and Ammon 1992; Valli and Price 2000). In New Zealand, most teacher preparation programmes for secondary teachers are one year long. Valli (2000) also suggests extending the teacher education programme into the early years of teaching. I believe that this has much to recommend it given claims by Goddard and Foster (2001), Hebert and Worthy (2001) and Lang (2001), amongst others, about the importance of the first years in establishing the foundation for commitment, satisfaction and effectiveness in teachers. However, the results of these studies are inconclusive about this.

The teaching culture of the school is also significant in influencing the shaping of beginning teachers' professional knowledge landscapes, their job satisfaction and length of time they stay in the profession (Corrie 2000; Flores 2001; Williams et al. 2001). Williams et al. (2001), in their study investigating the relationship between the success of newly qualified teachers and the level of collaboration in the school, identified three types of school culture experienced by the teachers – individual, structured collaborative and spontaneous collaborative. They found a strong connection between success and collaborative cultures. In an Australian study, aimed at building a collaborative culture amongst first year teachers, Corrie (2000) found that the teachers tended to engage with colleagues cooperatively but in isolation within their classrooms, rather than collaboratively working together with them on projects to improve schooling and develop professionally.

Weiss's (1999) study in the USA, also found that a school culture that supports collaboration and teacher participation in decision-making was most strongly related to higher morale, stronger commitment to teaching, and intentions to remain in the profession. She recommends providing supportive workplace conditions during a structured induction year to socialize new teachers into a collaborative and participatory work ethic that sustains commitment.

Individual characteristics of the teachers may also be a determinant influencing the success of new teachers. For example, Hebert and Worthy (2001) challenge the characterization of the first year of teaching experience as being necessarily negative. As they point out, the literature frequently cites concern about first year teachers being overworked, having limited time for reflection or dialogue, struggling to survive as they come to terms with "reality shock", feeling isolated and receiving little feedback from colleagues.

In their research Hebert and Worthy (2001) found a particular teacher, however, who did not fit with this model as a first year teacher. There were a number of factors they found that enabled this teacher to have a successful year despite the school providing no additional consideration or mentoring for new teachers. Hebert and Worthy claim that her familiarity with the school prior to beginning teaching, her success in fitting in with its culture, and the energy and time commitment she was able to give to the job were major factors in her success. They also

suggest that having newly qualified teachers central to the research, obtaining descriptions of the biographies of teachers, and looking at successful new teachers, will enable educational researchers to understand better what works. Goddard and Foster (2001) also recommend carrying out research about successful teachers in their early years and examining their experience over time in the context of the workplace.

There is still an observed dominance of the “sink-or-swim” approach to induction for first year teachers (Feiman-Nemser 2001). Unlike any other profession, newly qualified teachers are expected to take on the same responsibilities as those with 20 years in the classroom from the first day of the job (Carter and Francis 2000; Feiman-Nemser 2001). This approach to induction is also a concern given the high level of attrition amongst new teachers (Day 1999; Feiman-Nemser 2001; Goddard and Foster 2001).

In New Zealand, schools are provided with an additional 0.2 staffing to allow first year teachers an extra day per week for professional development, and 0.1 staffing for second year teachers¹³. Compare this with the UK’s mandatory 0.1 time allocation in the first year only (Totterdell et al. 2001) and the reduced teaching load experienced by approximately 30% of Australian first year teachers (Commonwealth Department of Education Science and Training 2002). For first year teachers in New Zealand, as for elsewhere, support is variable, depending on the school’s attitude to professional development and teacher induction (Commonwealth Department of Education Science and Training 2002; Lang 2001; Wideen et al. 1998). In New Zealand, involvement at the workshops provided by regional professional development centres for beginning teachers is voluntary, and is dependent on the school releasing staff.

First year teachers are sometimes described as being at the survival and developmental stages in their formation as teachers (Lang 2001). What happens in terms of professional development in the early years of teaching, according to Gold (1996), is divided into instructional (survival) and psychological (personal and professional). I agree with her, and also with Puk and Haines (1999), about the need to support teachers through this stage in order to prevent attrition and discouragement from creativity, innovation and inquiry.

I also agree with Valli and Price (2000) and Wideen et al. (1998), who argue that an approach that is context specific (within the school) is important for the induction of teachers. Collaboration between schools and teacher educators is also recommended by Feiman-Nemser (2001), Gold (1996) and in the Australian report (Commonwealth Department of Education Science and Training 2002) as a way of integrating the school context and a teacher education perspective and knowledge, as well as recognising the continuing task of teacher education in teaching.

What form support for newly qualified teachers should take, I would argue, is a matter that needs further debate, a debate which includes more of the perspectives of these teachers themselves. The Australian report (Commonwealth Department of Education Science and Training 2002) is one study that explores, in depth, feedback from beginning teachers and their mentors, the research about effective programmes for beginning teachers and models for good practice. In New Zealand Lang (2001) talked with primary teachers about their progression to survival in the first year of teaching; Smales (2002; Smales and Watson 2002) explored first year primary teachers’ concepts of ‘self as teacher’; and Grudnoff and Tuck (2002) talked to primary teachers and their supervising teachers during the first two years of teaching in a series of studies to provide feedback about the quality of the programmes offered by their institution.

¹³ Currently (in 2003) the number of teaching contact hours in New Zealand secondary schools is normally 22 out of 25. With changes to the secondary teachers’ employment contract this will be reduced over three years by one hour per year. By 2005 teachers will teach a maximum of 20 hours per week. In 2003, first year teachers have had 17 hours of contact and second year teachers 19.5 hours. By 2005 these hours will reduce to 16 and 18 hours respectively.

I would contend that what is also needed is an exploration of how teachers shape their professional knowledge and practice, if teachers and teacher educators are to understand how teachers can remain committed to improving the learning of their students. I would also argue, that this exploration needs to be explicitly linked to the socially and culturally diverse context of the classrooms in which teachers are located. Furthermore, research about newly qualified secondary teachers is urgently needed, in particular that which explores the stories of these teachers themselves.

The shaping of teachers' professional knowledge

A number of suggestions have been explored as to how to engage new teachers in shaping their professional knowledge and practice (Wideen et al. 1998): by ensuring that these teachers are involved in conversations about teaching rather than being presented with propositional knowledge; by schools changing their culture and context; and by teacher preparation being more effective in engaging student teachers in examining their deeply held beliefs. Through providing the space for conversation and collaborative meaning making, teachers can engage in discussion and debate about professional and political concerns in education.

I am interested in going beyond understanding views of the influence of teacher preparation and support programmes for beginning teachers to finding out also how *all* of the teachers' life experiences have contributed to the shaping of professional knowledge and practice, and what influences this shaping.

The literature on the professional knowledge of teachers is wide-ranging and diverse, and covers such work as that on: how teacher knowledge can be improved (for example, Darling-Hammond and Sykes 1999); definitions of teachers' professional knowledge (Day 1999; Levin and Ammon 1992; Wideen et al. 1998); how teachers' knowledge is enacted in their teaching (Clandinin and Connelly 1995; Ethell 1998); how teachers' professional knowledge is developed in the context of the school (Olson and Craig 2001); and how beginning teachers (preservice teacher education students and newly qualified teachers) develop their professional knowledge (Doeke et al. 2000; Russell 1993).

There is a significant amount of literature about teachers' professional knowledge development (Clandinin and Connelly 1995; Cole and Knowles 1995; Loughran and Russell 1997; Palmer 1998; Schon 1983) and the ways in which beginning teachers are supported. This includes: guidance from mentors¹⁴ (Carter and Francis 2000; Feiman-Nemser 2001; Lang 2001; Moran et al. 1999; Perez et al. 1997), or guidance from school-based programmes and external in-service programmes (Commonwealth Department of Education Science and Training 2002; Totterdell et al. 2001). However, very little has been written, to date, about the shaping of the professional knowledge of teachers in the early years of teaching, particular about secondary teachers (Brown 2001; Doecke et al. 2000), or their work in culturally and socially diverse classrooms (Birrell 1995; Martinez 1994; Quartz 2003).

One study that does explore the area of beginning secondary teachers' professional knowledge development is that by Doeke et al. (2000). This study aimed at gaining the perspectives of newly qualified secondary teachers on how their Australian teacher preparation programme influenced their development as teachers, and how this development progressed into their early years of teaching. The researchers found that the teachers were eager to take the opportunity in group interviews to swap stories about their experiences, and to jointly produce meaning from these experiences and that as a result of sharing their stories, the teachers critically examined their work and further shaped the knowledge about the complexities of their work.

¹⁴ Also known as *tutor teachers, teacher tutors, mentor teachers, and induction teachers.*

Flores' (2001) study also explores the development of new teachers' professional knowledge in relation to their personal biography and school culture. She confirmed the findings of others (Corrie 2000; Weiss 1999) that the workplace has an important role to play in the shaping of new teachers' attitudes towards teaching and the construction of knowledge and meaning in relation to their teaching practice. Her findings also supported those of Lortie (1975) that the influence of their background as students was important, and she advocates challenging teachers, early in their career, to reflect on and analyse their own beliefs as part of the development of their professional identity.

Martinez (1994) and Birrell (1995), in their single case studies, take a rare look at the way new teachers respond to cultural differences in their classrooms. Martinez explores the knowledge of one second-year teacher working in an indigenous Australian community. She raises concerns about the lack of preparation provided during pre-service teacher education programmes for teachers to work in culturally diverse schools, and about the ways in which more senior colleagues impact on new teachers' perceptions of the kinds of expectations they can have for the academic achievement of their students.

Birrell examined how one white American beginning teacher responded to black youths' ethnic behaviour in school, and the ways in which the teacher viewed cultural identity, without reference to the students' different experience. Birrell also claims that teachers need to be better prepared to work in diverse classrooms, during their teacher preparation.

McAlpine and Crago (1995) present a more optimistic example where they work with a first year primary teacher in a remote, indigenous community in Canada. The teacher engaged in conversations with the researchers, which assisted her to work out ways of implementing her own socially just teaching values in her classroom. She challenged her own assumption that she and the students shared their cultural experience, and developed more culturally appropriate and effective ways of working with them.

Quartz (2003) also offers a powerful story of how an undergraduate programme, which aimed at developing the students' understanding of social issues in high poverty areas, was effective in improving the retention rate of teachers in Silicon Valley schools, and in increasing their ongoing commitment to enhancing the chances of their own students' educational and social future.

Conclusion

Recent concerns expressed by various governments about the problems of recruiting and retaining teachers, particularly in the secondary sector, have led, in New Zealand, to a number of initiatives to entice teachers to enter, or stay, in the profession. The literature about the reasons for the staffing difficulties suggests that recent technological and social changes over the last 10-20 years, and the resulting marketization of education have impacted on teachers' desire or commitment to remain in the profession. For example, many teachers are leaving because of curriculum and assessment reforms, increased accountability placed on teachers to have students achieve a narrowing range standards, and the issues associated with the increased diversity of the population in schools. One particular area of concern is the high attrition rate of (secondary) teachers in the early years of teaching.

My aim in this paper has been to develop a case, through examining some of the literature, for exploring the experiences of new secondary teachers, as a way of understanding better how the teachers, teacher educators and schools can harness their expertise and prepare teachers who are committed to having a positive impact on quality outcomes for diverse students.

The literature that exists about beginning teachers is largely related to preservice teaching and what does exist about those teachers in their first few years, is mostly about primary school teachers. While some of this literature explores the views and experiences of the teachers, it tends to focus on their remembered perception of their preservice experience or their perception of their induction experiences, and, sometimes, about their views of issues in teaching or aspects of their developing practice. There is very little, to date, about newly qualified secondary teachers, especially in New Zealand. Research about how beginning teachers develop their professional knowledge in the context of their work in diverse classrooms and communities is even sparser.

While I have discussed some of the literature related to support systems offered to teachers in their early years, the focus of my interest is on the shaping of the professional knowledge and practice of newly qualified secondary teachers – how they experience and represent the professional, social and cultural issues they face, and what influences this development. I argue for the need to undertake studies similar to that carried out at Monash University (Brown et al. 1997; Doecke et al. 2000; Loughran et al. 2001), where new secondary school teachers gathered in group interviews to discuss the impact of their teacher preparation programme on the construction of their professional knowledge. There is a need to understand more of the experiences and representations of these teachers and to explore all the influences as they represent them.

I also see a need to follow teachers (and their professional knowledge development) over time (for at least the first two years of their teaching), to find out what keeps them inspired (or not) to continue teaching in creative ways that optimize students' opportunities to learn.

Because of the changes in society and education (discussed earlier), research needs to be firmly set in the context of these changes, such as curriculum reform, increasing diversity, professional accountability. In New Zealand this means, for secondary teachers: teachers' experiences and representations of the implementation and philosophy of curriculum and assessment (including NCEA), of working in academically, socially and culturally diverse classrooms, and of working within the context of the Treaty of Waitangi (as a founding document of the nation).

This year I carried out the first set of conversational group interviews with beginning secondary teachers with these considerations underpinning my questions. While the in-depth analysis of what the teachers discussed is yet to come, I can state that NCEA was big, in terms of their questioning of assessment practices, the relationship of this to teaching practice and the impact of the changes on teachers – especially on their colleagues who have become used to thinking about senior school assessment in a very different way. The teachers interviewed spoke frequently about the politics of school administration, and pragmatically about diversity, in the context of discussions about how they as teachers can manage the demands of teaching classes of students with wide ranging socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and with a variety of social, emotional and academic pressures.

Some of my motivation for this research comes from my own conviction of the importance of work by kaupapa Maori researchers (Bishop and Berryman 2002; Durie 2003; Johnston and McLeod 2001; Smith 1999) in demanding real change and commitment from all teachers and schools in order to stop what I see as our education system's failure to provide equitable academic and social outcomes for large numbers of Maori students. What we are learning from these, and other educators, is invaluable for our thinking about improving the outcomes for all students.

I am also motivated, as a teacher educator, by the importance of relentlessly working with preservice teachers to challenge and inspire a commitment to enhancing the achievement and participation of all their students, and of endeavouring to reduce the chances of new teachers

succumbing to Lortie's (1975) "wash-out" effect, through working with them collaboratively (Feiman-Nemser 1996) and through keeping the dialogues about teaching, learning, education, and issues of social and cultural diversity going. This research aims to find out how this can happen in New Zealand through listening to the stories of new secondary teachers, and developing a picture of what fires them up (or down).

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