Communication across distance, people and disciplines. A pulse across Taranaki, the energy province.

The Māori equivalent of Wavelength is “Iarere.” From a Māori perspective, “Te Iarere” is a positive way of communicating over vast distances.

Cover: Architectural image
Chris Hill

This architecture photograph was given a silver award at the New Zealand Institute of Professional Photographers’ 2006 prize ceremony.

Te Iarere Wavelength
As the Interdisciplinary Journal of Academic Activity at WITT, Te Iarere Wavelength provides a forum for the publication of scholarly articles and creative works from all academic disciplines and subjects of general interest. Submission Guidelines are found on the following page.

Te Iarere Wavelength is published biannually in spring and autumn by WITT, Private Bag 2030, New Plymouth, www.witt.ac.nz, ph (06) 757 3100.

Te Iarere Wavelength Committee
Ann Bride, Barbara Chamberlain, Ian M Clothier, Andrea Corbett, Christine Fenton, Paul Goodson, Lorette Rayner, Edward Smith, Tengaruru Wineera

Disclaimer
All articles and creative works published in Te Iarere Wavelength are peer-reviewed for accuracy of information (where applicable) and consistency of style and presentation. The views and creative philosophies expressed in this journal, however, are those of the author(s) and artist(s), and should not be taken to represent or reflect any aspect of institutional policy.

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SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Aim
*Te Iarere Wavelength* provides a forum for the publication of articles and creative works by current WITT staff members. Co-authored articles, in which one or more of the authors is either a WITT student or a non-WITT employee, will also be considered for publication.

Submissions are not limited to research or scholarly activity that relates directly or indirectly to WITT programmes of study. Any subject of general interest on which sensible and well-informed opinions may be expressed, and creative works e.g. short stories and graphic images, will be considered for publication.

Readership
It is intended that *Te Iarere Wavelength* is published in hard copy in spring and autumn of each year. A limited number of copies will be distributed internally to all WITT departments, divisions and service areas; additional copies will be printed if/as required.

Editorial Committee
An editorial committee drawn from Research Committee members will receive and peer-review each article or creative work submitted for publication. The editorial committee may seek specialist opinion outside its membership where this is deemed to be helpful or necessary.

The editorial committee reserves the right to accept, edit or decline any piece of work submitted for consideration, and to make suggestions for - or seek - clarification of meaning where appropriate. A call for submissions is made approximately three months prior to publication dates.

Articles (including print based creative works)
Articles may be submitted by an individual author, or under joint authorship. Articles should aim to be up to 2,500 words but longer ones will be considered.

All articles should be submitted electronically, preferably as a Word document. Articles should be presented in single-line spacing in 10pt Geneva font. Headings should be printed in bold type, in 10pt Verdana font. Any footnotes and references should follow the American Psychological Association (APA) format. Copies of the WITT APA Referencing Guide are available electronically on Moodle, in hard copy at the Learning Centre, or at the following AUT link: www.cite.auckland.ac.nz (and click on Essentials).

Articles should not normally be submitted if they have been published elsewhere. In the case of prior publication, permission must be sought and obtained from the original publisher before the article is submitted to the editorial committee. Articles should be submitted to: Thilani Nissanga, Research Co-ordinator (thilani.nissanga@witt.ac.nz).

Graphics
Any written text accompanying graphics should follow the same guidelines as per the section “Articles (including print based creative works)”, above. Graphic images themselves should be supplied in JPG or TIF format at no less than 300dpi. The requirements for submission of graphics are as per “Articles (including print based creative works)” above.
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An Irish experience by Ann Bride
This report marks the achievement of three lecturers from WITT’s Department of Nursing and Health Studies who had their work accepted for presentation at an international nursing conference convened at Trinity College, Dublin in November 2005. Ann is a Principal Academic Staff Member who lectures on the Bachelor of Nursing programme.

Growing up in the digital age by Paul Goodson
This article takes a light-hearted look at some of the issues and dilemmas facing 21st-century parents and teachers as they seek to rear and educate children in this electronic era. Paul holds the position of Director, Academic Planning, and has a strong interest in music, literature and the arts.

Not a hybrid but Pākehā and proud by Lesley Pitt
Lesley penned this response after reading and reflecting on an article that appeared in the previous issue of Te Iarere Wavelength. Here she outlines some common threads of pākehā ideology, which she sees as a cultural identity to be celebrated in its own right. Lesley tutors in social sciences and social work within the Department of Humanities and Māori.

Identifying the expert teacher by Christine Pritchard
This article developed from research that Chris recently undertook as part of her studies towards a Master of Education at Massey University. Chris poses the initial question: “Does the expert teacher actually exist?”, and examines some of the qualities and characteristics that define expertise within a teaching context. Chris is Head of Department, Vocational Services.

Guided reading and writing for adult learners: how can I assist another adult to learn to read and write? by Jan Treliving-Brown
Jan draws on her wide experience within the field of adult education and learning support to suggest ways in which tutors can assist adult learners who are experiencing difficulty with literacy. In addition to her learning support role at WITT, Jan has strong interests in creative writing and publishes book reviews regularly in the Taranaki Daily News.

Action research: a methodology to improve education and health service delivery methods by Andrea Corbett
In this article Andrea puts the spotlight on a family of research methodologies collectively known as “action research” that have particular application within the fields of health care and education. Andrea lectures in the Department of Nursing and Health Studies, and is enrolled in a PhD programme at Monash University.

He kupu maioha ki Te Māramatanga Bolstad by Tengaruru Wineera
Te Māramatanga Bolstad who died in 2006, held a counselling position at WITT, with particular responsibility for Māori students. Tengaruru has penned a symbol-rich, elegiac tribute to Te Māramatanga to commemorate a revered and loved member of the Māori community. Tengaruru is Tumu Paetaki within the Department of Humanities and Māori.

Photographs by Chris Hill
As well as teaching on WITT’s photography courses, Chris is a freelance photographer specialising in commercial architecture images. A qualified member of the New Zealand Institute of Professional Photographers, Chris won two bronze and two silver awards at the 2006 NZIPP prize ceremony.

Acrylic painting by Gerallt Jones
Trained as a pharmacist, Gerallt lectures on the Bachelor of Nursing programme. An immigrant from Wales, Gerallt was struck by the clarity of light in New Zealand, which prompted him to revive a long-held interest in painting. He finds the freedom of art a relaxing contrast to the precision involved in the science of pharmacology.

TE IARERE WAVELENGTH Issue 2 AUTUMN 2007
EDITORIAL: A CHANGING TERTIARY LANDSCAPE

Paul Goodson

Twenty or thirty years ago, the respective roles of universities, colleges of education and polytechnics (now Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics [ITPs]) were clearly – even rigidly – differentiated. “Academic” education was seen as the domain of universities; teachers’ colleges (as they were then known) trained classroom teachers; and polytechnics delivered largely vocational programmes that equipped students for particular trades and professions. The Education Act 1989 (Section 162) sets out the defining characteristics of each of these three types of tertiary education institution (TEIs).

The situation today is greatly changed from that of the 70s and 80s. More and more, universities are merging – or forming co-operative agreements – with ITPs and colleges of education. And where TEIs maintain separate identities, their actual teaching profiles are becoming less bound to traditional models. Colleges of education now run business studies programmes; ITPs now offer postgraduate degrees; and universities now advertise three-year teacher training courses.

The Education Act 1989 and its Amendments also provide for the establishment of wānanga and Private Training Establishments (PTEs). The last two decades have seen an increase in the number of wānanga – and in particular, PTEs – established under the Act, accompanied by a phenomenal growth in the number of Equivalent Full-time Students enrolled in these institutions.

Adding to this realignment of activities are new government directions signalled by reforms in the tertiary education sector that have taken place over the past three or four years. The rationale for these reforms is set out in the Tertiary Education Strategy (TES), the latest version of which (2007-12) was published earlier this year. These TES policy documents, together with new requirements for institutions to produce three-year strategic plans, are likely to set the national direction and funding parameters for TEIs in the foreseeable future.
These changes within the tertiary sector have necessarily involved a re-orientation of staff activities to reflect the new philosophies and practices. Research has always been an integral component of university academic life. Polytechnics, on the other hand, traditionally employed tutors who were competent practitioners within their chosen vocational fields, and who were able to pass on their skills to others. Emphasis in the past was almost entirely on practice-based activity, backed up by relevant trade theory. Curricula were externally developed; apprenticeship schemes flourished; and tutors were simply expected to equip trainees for future jobs within a particular industry.

Today, the ITP profile is a very different one. Many former polytechnics have re-branded themselves as institutes of technology, and this change is not merely a cosmetic one. There is a new confidence within the sector of the worth of applied technologies, underpinned by the philosophy that these technologies may be taught within an “academic” framework. And this new philosophy carries with it everything that is implied in terms of intellectual rigour, the application of research and scholarship, and structured pathways to progressively higher level programmes of study. One obvious exemplum of this paradigm shift in recent years has been the establishment of Auckland University of Technology from the former Auckland Institute of Technology.

Within the ITP sector as a whole, perhaps the most visible manifestation of these structural and philosophical changes has been a broadening in the number and level of qualifications available to enrolled students. While most ITPs continue to offer pre-entry and foundation programmes, the number of diplomas on offer is increasingly outpacing certificates; and degree programmes taught wholly by and at an ITP are now the norm rather than the exception. Naturally enough, these changes have led to revised expectations of where and how staff should expend their energies.

This issue of workload – with its train of sub-issues such as relativity, class contact hours and professional development – is constantly being debated within the ITP sector, and within individual ITPs. The traditional polytechnic tutor model provides for a defined number of class contact hours backed up by related preparation work, together with administrative duties and on-site availability to students. This model has stood up well enough for teaching most certificate and diploma programmes.
The emergence of degree programmes within ITPs, however, with their attendant requirements around research and scholarly activity, has introduced a new dimension and a range of issues reflective of this changing learning environment.

Chief among them is the question of due proportion, or how teaching staff – particularly at degree level – may pursue interests which feed directly into an institutional “research culture” while at the same time maintain those systems and requirements which sustain base teaching of core, sub-degree curricula. This tension – if tension it be – is not necessarily a bad one. It does require, however, clear determining of institutional direction, having due regard for the requirements attached to offering programmes at degree level. Herein lies both a challenge and an opportunity for the ITP of the 21st century: to ascertain where its resources – academic, personnel, financial, temporal – presently lie, and propose the direction and extent to which they may (or should) reasonably be developed in the future.
Award winning architecture photograph Chris Hill
Sharing information with senior nurses in Ireland was a privilege for three lecturers from WITT’s Department of Nursing who presented their work at a nursing conference at Trinity College, Dublin in November 2005. Ann Bride, Andrea Corbett and Khushi Mitchell were chosen from 500 applicants worldwide to present their work at this annually held, interdisciplinary research conference. As well as the presentations, there was an excellent selection of posters from a variety of nursing disciplines on display at the conference.

Nursing in Ireland is a respected profession, and 70 to 75% of applicants are school leavers. Due to this high level of interest in nursing as a profession, both school leavers and mature students are required to hold specified formal qualifications. Even with these qualifications, there is no guarantee of acceptance on to a nursing programme.

As well as the conference itself, another highlight of our visit to Ireland was meeting with nursing staff from the University College of Dublin. The four-year degree offered through the College commenced in 2003, and is presently under review. This degree is delivered by the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems, and the School is fortunate to have partnerships with associated hospitals – St Vincent’s University Hospital, the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital, St John of God Hospital and St Michael’s Hospital – for clinical placements.

University College of Dublin offers two modes of study for its four-year degree: General Mode and Psychiatric Mode. Before commencing their study programme applicants must choose the area in which they intend to specialise and eventually practise, although a small number of core papers are presented in Year One. These modes were developed to address the growing shortage in areas of nursing such as mental health, family and childcare, and intellectual disability nursing – although the latter two subject areas are not currently offered by the University College of Dublin. We were envious of the level of equipment on offer in every classroom, and the absence of headaches for University College tutors when it came to finding clinical placements!
The nursing conference itself was held at Trinity College in the heart of old Dublin, from 2 to 4 November 2005. The School of Nursing and Midwifery Studies of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Dublin was responsible for organising the conference, and overall it went well. From our perspective, any concerns about the organisation of this conference would focus on two areas: the venue and the number of concurrent sessions.

There are many old stone buildings in and around central Dublin and all hold protected heritage status. The School of Nursing and Midwifery Studies has moved from the central Trinity College campus – where visitors can marvel at the Book of Kells (an eighth-century illuminated Gospel) – to the former Electricity Department building. As old as the historic Post Office (shades of the Easter Uprising of 1910), the Electricity Department building has “protected” status, and the School has had to carry out renovations without altering the essential features and layout of the building. Fresh paint and attractive carpet did not hide the ups and downs, steps and stairs, and general convolutions involved in trying to get quickly from one area to another!

Concurrent sessions are an accepted feature of most conferences. Their availability allows attendees to select specialist areas of interest, and conference organisers to accept a larger number and range of presentations. With nine concurrent sessions running at any one time, however, and up to 13 sets of concurrent sessions per day, organisers of this conference might question, in hindsight, whether the number of accepted presentations should have been limited to more manageable proportions. In saying that, the keynote speakers were excellent, none more so that Professor Paul Durcan, Ireland Professor of Poetry, who gave an enlightened and entertaining address reading his poetry and backlighting this presentation with a magnificent slide show of pictures from rural Ireland.

Following is a brief outline of the presentation from each of the WITT lecturers who participated in this conference. Ann’s presentation was based on work carried out as part of her Master’s thesis entitled “Clinical Tutors’ Experience of Working with Bachelor of Nursing Students in Clinical Practice”. In New Zealand, clinical tutors may be employed on contract, as their familiarity with the practice setting is highly valued. They are also required to assess competencies, support students’ professional development, and provide learning opportunities for the students.
Clinical tutors are also employed because of their clinical experience and expertise that assists students to apply the knowledge learned in theory – and the professional competencies learned in the practice or demonstration laboratory – to the reality of practice. Clinical tutors are required to be familiar with the curriculum in their roles as supervisor, teacher, facilitator, guide and mentor: assisting the students to fulfil their learning requirements when in practice. They are not, however, involved in the development or teaching of theoretical components of the programme.

The prime aim of Ann’s qualitative study was to explore clinical tutors’ perceptions of their role in facilitating Bachelor of Nursing students’ learning in the practice setting. Participants were asked to share their personal experiences: both the positive aspects, and the difficulties and challenges they encountered when working with students.

Data was collected from four registered nurses, each of whom had recorded considerable practice experience. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data, from which four themes emerged: being effective; working with others; maintaining connections; and approaching learning. Each of these themes was examined in turn, to determine its scope and application. Ann suggested that an ongoing challenge for nurse educators is to provide creative ways for facilitating nursing students’ learning experiences in the practice setting.

The presentation was well received by an audience which included registered nurses from both education and clinical practice settings. Interestingly, the same concerns outlined in this limited sampling appeared to be of significant concern for nurse educators and clinicians who attended this presentation. It is evident that since nurse education transferred to educational institutions, the issue of how to provide the best clinical experience for students as they learn to apply theory to practice is still very much to the fore. One member in the audience from Ireland described a preceptor programme that had recently been put in place, similar to programmes available in New Zealand. It was also noted that there is a tendency for nurse lecturers not to be involved in teaching in clinical practice; hence the issue of linking theory to practice highlights some of the concerns discussed in this presentation.

Andrea’s presentation was entitled: “The Use of Participatory Action Research as a Methodology for the Improvement of Inter-professional Practice Development”, and is part of the work
she is undertaking in the course of her PhD study at Monash University.

Andrea noted that there are a number of definitions as to what constitutes participatory action research. Although there is general agreement that it had its origins in community development research in under-developed countries, paradoxically it is gaining increasing acceptance as a research methodology for achieving improvements in inter-professional clinical practice in contemporary healthcare settings.

A descriptive qualitative study completed in 2003 in Taranaki using focus groups and key informant interviews, examined the experience of whānau in dealing with the effects of stroke. This study showed that the experiences and expectations of whānau were no different from any other ethnic group faced with the devastating sudden onset of a major and chronic disability. What the study highlighted, however, was that whānau wanted and needed access to services which would assist them to provide a high level of care. They wanted and needed information about those services to assist them to provide caring services; and they needed skills acquisition and ongoing education and supervision that would enable them to provide more comprehensive caring services.

Using a participatory action research methodology, Andrea is carrying out a qualitative research study to develop new models of care delivery that will address the shortfalls in service delivery identified in the 2003 study.

Andrea’s presentation explained why participatory action research was seen as the appropriate methodology to use for inter-professional practice development in this area of clinical practice, i.e. health services delivery; and outlined the study design, selection of the panel of experts, data collection and analysis, and a brief summary of results and findings to date.

This presentation was well received because the study in progress is focusing on health service delivery which is becoming increasingly problematic for the deliverers of health services world wide, due to contracting budgets, expanding population numbers and client expectations. Andrea received some spirited feedback that she was able to respond to and place in the context of her current study. A further report on this work in progress was requested and will be provided at an opportune time in the future.
Khushi’s presentation was also part of the work completed for a Master’s thesis, entitled “Childbirth: a Momentous Occasion: Muslim Women’s Childbirth Experiences”.

Khushi found that in this age of constant global migration, midwives and nurses are providing care for women from diverse cultures, and it is an increasing challenge to provide care that is culturally appropriate and safe.

The aim of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of Muslim women’s experiences of childbirth utilising a storytelling approach. Three Muslim women were asked to narrate the stories of their childbirth experiences in New Zealand settings, highlighting both the positive and negative aspects of these birth experiences. Through their stories it became apparent that giving birth in a cross-cultural setting is stressful. The overarching theme in this study was the uniqueness of each woman’s story.

Data analysis identified themes that were common to all three women and those that were unique for each woman. Common themes included vulnerability of the women and the supportive actions taken by staff; and themes unique to each woman included relationships with staff, loneliness and compromise of parental obligations.

This paper was presented to an audience of approximately 25 participants (nurses and midwives) from United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada and Iraq, including Professor Paul Durcan, Ireland Professor of Poetry, and Cecily Begley, Chair of Nursing and Midwifery/Director at the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Trinity College, Dublin.

The audience response to the presentation was positive, as evidenced by the number of questions asked on the issues around the practices, privacy and dietary needs of Muslim women.

It was highlighted by the convener of the session that from an Irish perspective, the paper had come at a time which has witnessed an increase in the Muslim population of the region; and the challenge has been how best to provide culturally safe care for Muslim women. This comment was very encouraging, as the presentation had provided some insights into the care of Muslim women while at the same time raising awareness that each woman is an individual and should therefore receive individualised care.
We were delighted to have the opportunity to travel to Ireland. All agree that the contacts made with nurses internationally provided inspiration and exposure to new perspectives, and we would like to encourage nurses who are completing postgraduate studies to consider the opportunities of sharing their work at both national and international conferences. The value of nurses linking through conferences is one of the important ways that we can share knowledge and research experience.

Overall, this was a wonderful conference, with the huge professional development spin-off that we all gained valuable insights into other programmes and disciplines, enabling us to bring a new vision and ways of thinking to course delivery. Sadly, while there is a standing invitation to us, we have forsaken any dream of returning to the Emerald Isle this year; but would strongly urge other health professionals to consider any opportunity to become immersed in the Irish nursing experience, as of immense potential benefit and worth.
Towards the end of last year I came across an article in the *Auckland Weekend Herald Review*, entitled “Wasted Childhood”. The opening paragraph introduces the reader to Sarah who is “battling to keep control of 13-year-old Will’s electronic life”. Sarah and her husband have three children aged 17, 13 and nine, and between them the youngsters have “three PCs, two laptops and a tablet, three TVs, two DVDs and countless PlayStations, Gameboys and Nintendos”. The cynical among us might observe that presumably the parents themselves – rather than their children – provided all (or most) of this electronic gadgetry that is now the subject of internecine strife. Be that as it may, the thrust of the article is that allowing children a constant diet of TV, computer access and electronic games is depriving them of what they really need: family life, social interaction, and creative and artistic outlets in the real world.

The article quotes a group of 110 British teachers, psychologists and children’s authors who conclude that 21st-century children are becoming more depressed, stressed and pressured than ever before: the end product of major social, cultural and technological changes that have taken place in the last two or three decades. Paediatricians also weigh in with concerns about children’s increasing de-sensitivity to pain and suffering caused by constant exposure to graphic violence on TVs, DVDs and computer games. They also cite the “incontrovertible” link between childhood experience and brain development, suggesting that too much cybertime has an impact on young children’s still-plastic brains. Time spent in front of screens means that children are getting less time to experience first hand the world in which they live: less time for free, imaginative play; less time for direct, tangible exploration; less time for social interaction with other people.

Leading on from this article, I want to reflect on some elements of modern technology, with particular application to the way that children are taught and entertained. I’m really talking about technological developments of the last three decades, and one place to start is the computer. No-one would deny that the computer is one of the twentieth century’s greatest technological achievements. Computers are everywhere. Most of us
probably sit in front of one for at least two or three hours a day at work; and the majority of us probably have home computer systems which are also accessed by other family members.

But there’s been a growing trend over the last couple of decades for younger and younger children to be exposed to computer technology for longer and longer periods of their daily lives. We are told it’s not just a good thing; it’s virtually a requirement for every primary school to have “x” number of work stations, so that every child can become computer literate, to some degree, before moving on to secondary school. And this trend has been hyped up by television and print-based advertising for electronic technology in general, not just computers. Take telephone technology, for instance. A few years ago it was the soft-focus television ad of groups of children gazing wide-eyed at a screen, as the kindly Telecom man links them up with a school in Japan, before driving off into the sunset with Spot the Telecom dog. Now it’s feline Molly and canine Rex touting the benefits of Telecom’s Anytime Plans. As far as cute kids and cute animals (meerkats and chimpanzees just have to be winners) are concerned, Telecom has pretty much cornered the advertising market.

What concerns some clinicians and educators in all of this, is the possible effect that this sort of exposure is having on the way children are starting to think about the world around them. To state the obvious, computers are machines; and not only machines, but non-thinking, non-feeling, non-variable machines. Except in the event of a computer crash or errant virus, you turn a computer on, press a few buttons to activate the system, and you know exactly what’s going to happen. And when you press those same buttons to activate that same system the next day, and the next, you know you’ll get exactly the same result every time. If you want to do more things, you simply buy a higher specification machine or a new piece of purpose designed software, and learn how to use it. Everything is done to a predetermined programme: commands for every process produce the same set of results.

Now compare this with a child who is learning art or music, building a sandcastle, flying a kite, setting out on a picnic, or sitting round the table at a family dinner. In these situations the child is in relationship with other human beings or the environment, not a machine. Think of the language of computers: “control”, “enter”, “delete”, “shift”, “insert”, and if you get stuck, signal “help” and your problem is solved. Now think of the language
of art and music: “style”, “interpretation”, “dynamics”, “colour” “mood”, “atmosphere” and so on. These are the arts of nuance, not of absolutes: light and shade, inventiveness, creativity, experimentation, where technique is not an end in itself but the vehicle for an individually realised experience. Anyone who has ever taught a young child a musical instrument, for example, knows that the journey along the way is invariably a halting, stumbling one, strewn with the picked-over carcasses of inadequacies and mistakes. But this doesn’t take away from the learning experience; it simply confirms its real worth.

Or take the natural world which has no set commands, processes or programmes. Building a sandcastle differs every time in accordance with the density, porosity, and moisture levels of the sand; and with the rate at which the tide is advancing before the completed edifice finally collapses. And with the degree to which the child’s growing cognitive functioning and motor capabilities are imaginatively attuned to what he or she is trying to build. Flying a kite, too, can never be the same twice. When are wind currents ever exactly the same? Who can ever predict up-draughts and down-draughts, and their degree of intensity, from one day to the next?

As to picnics and family dinners, these activities run the full gamut of human social interaction. How will they begin and end: in harmony or conflict? Will relationships be strengthened or diminished? Something may be said or done that has the potential to change someone’s life irrevocably. Nelson Media statistics quoted in the Auckland Weekend Herald Review article show that from a survey group of ten to 14-year-olds, no matter how much they may curl their lips at the prospect of television-free family dinners, 40% of this group wanted more time with one or both parents. Active social interaction with other people is how children learn about the dynamics of human behaviour and relationships; whereas sitting in front of a television is learning how to interact – or more accurately, non-interact – with a screen.

Obviously there are two sides to all of this. For all the downside of the image of the toxic childhood – the young teenager sitting alone in a darkened room swigging Coke, grazing on chips and gazing blankly at a flickering screen – there are immense advantages, benefits and possibilities to be gained from the new technologies. The internet, for instance, has opened up encyclopaedias of knowledge at children’s fingertips; watching a television movie together as a family can be a positive learning experience; and no-one is likely to suggest that a group of
teenage boys who gather regularly to play Xbox games would be better off gathering to commit petty crime or experiment with recreational drugs.

But of course it’s not as simple as drawing up a list of pros and cons. Art and technology no longer stand glaring at one another across a great divide. And it would be a rash commentator who would insist that “artistry” and “creativity” remain the sole preserve of music and the fine arts. For one thing, we have all the late twentieth-century developments summed up in the phrases “creative technologies” or “the new technologies”: the fusion forms of electro-acoustic music, computer generated animation and sound effects, digital manipulation and so on. It’s these developments and achievements that produce the special effects for blockbuster movies, and countless music scores for films and advertising. Leaving these developments aside, however, I think there are some more fundamental issues at stake.

Are we in danger, for example, of signalling to children that instant mastery is what life is about? Press-button success. And if you run into a problem, click on this command or that one, and the problem is solved. Over time, as our classrooms become more and more techno-orientated, will societal consciousness become tuned into this type of thinking? Will children become more easily discouraged over activities that require effort and practice and imagination – like art and music – or even reading? And with all the effort and practice in the world, still nothing is certain. Achievement – and certainly not consistent achievement – isn’t guaranteed. It’s to do with psychological and aesthetic issues of performance, composition, assimilation and artistic creation, and of the elusive and indeterminate nature of the arts themselves.

You have to work at music and art, and be prepared to accept children’s inevitable limitations of technique and understanding – hands and mind that may seem at odds – and have a teacher alongside who is encourager, corrector, mentor and critic: all at the same time. And of course, the same could be said of a teacher of technology or any one of the trades. I wonder what signals we are sending children, however, when we read that every New Zealand primary school (and every kindergarten for all I know) should be network linked by such and such a year. We never read that every primary school should have a dedicated music and art suite by such and such a year. The values that society embraces dictate its attitudes. The child’s mind, especially between the ages of about three and seven, is highly
attuned to the realms of creativity, exploration and imagination. If the world of imagination is denied at this time, the child grows up more hooked into materialism and product-related thinking, and potentially less open to the possibilities inherent in creativity and spirituality.

I suspect that the sort of conundrums outlined in the Auckland Weekend Herald Review article, are going to become more acute in the future. Another article I came across recently in the Christchurch Press was titled “The internet in your pocket” and outlined Apple’s newest gadget the iPhone, which is a wide-screen iPod, mobile phone, camera and mini-computer all in one, “tipped to revolutionise personal communication”. According to Apple’s Chief Executive: “It’s the ultimate digital device. It’s like having your life in your pocket”. [Which, presumably, is something that is greatly to be desired.] But wait, there’s more...the next generation iPod has just landed. For only $478 Dick Smith Electronics can sell you an 8GB little hoo-dicky that stores “up to 2000 songs in 128-Kbps AAC format and up to 25,000 iPod nano-viewable photos”. In the meantime, up and down the country, children are plonked down in front of computer screens day in and day out at school; text one another for every minute they are not in class; and go home to rooms full of virtual reality pets (a gruesome concept, if ever there was one), computer games and surround sound TV. The voices of art and music; the pleas for old-fashioned parental attention; the pull of the natural world and all its wonders; are in danger of being drowned out by the relentless clamour of electronic wizardry.

Many novelists have written of imagined future worlds. A common feature in all these works is the struggle of the individual or the few against a relentless and all-pervasive force: either a political regime or some kind of technocratic beast overseeing every aspect of human existence. “Big Brother is watching you” and watching you for each and every minute of the day. It may sound far-fetched to suggest that the technological advances of the late twentieth century are leading us in the same direction. But the unthinkable has a strange way of coming to pass; and the unacceptable becoming accepted, almost domesticated. Older readers of this article might remember the film called “How I Learnt to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb”.

I’m not making a Luddite-type plea for a return to some kind of electronic-free past. Nostalgia and sentimentality are nothing more than escapist safety valves for the aphasic mind. And they are of little use in grappling with the realities of complex
cultural and technology-related issues. The Auckland Weekend Herald Review article concludes that against this backdrop of growing incursions into the home by computers and electronic games: “What parents need to do is insist their children take the antidotes: more time with the family...and most important, time on their own to explore and make sense of their world”.

These are not ground-breaking or complex suggestions. They can appear facile and lead to the type of twee sloganeering much loved by the “Listen with Mother” school of advertisers: “The best thing you can spend on your children is time”. But putting the Brady Bunch, gingham aprons and homemade apple pie to one side, it’s important to have a balanced outlook in all of this. To be thankful for the technological advances that have resulted in keyhole surgery, or instrument controlled aircraft landings, or fast and accurate commercial transactions – the list is endless; and to recognise and accept the educational, social and entertainment values inherent in the new technologies. And on the other side, to embrace the myriad opportunities we have to let our children be, well, children, within the natural world: a world so lovingly captured in children’s classics such as AA Milne’s stories of Christopher Robin, Pooh Bear and their woodland friends.

Parents have a responsibility to help navigate their children through the allure and pull of these differing ideologies. And teachers, too, have a particular responsibility to equip students with technical know-how, but also with openness to exploration, uncertainty, and even apparent failure – which is actually the seedbed for growth and understanding. Many of you will have seen the film Mary Poppins: the story of a magical nanny who enters an Edwardian household and transforms the lives of two young children by plucking them out of the stifling decorum of the time into a wonderfully imaginative world of music, dance and animation, high above the London rooftops. In the process Mary Poppins (the surrogate parent) also becomes Mary Poppins the teacher. At the end of the film the crusty father, who spends his days buried away in the sepulchral vaults of a large London bank, with a flash of insight suddenly realises what he has been missing all these years. Replying to a stern managerial command to resume his funereal existence forthwith, the father astonishes his employer and family by saying he’s not going back to work – he’s going to take his family off to fly a kite. Before Mary Poppins floated (literally) into his existence he only had his livelihood (his job); now he has gained a life.
This article is written in response to Ian Clothier’s article “Hybrid cultures: what, where and how about us?” which appeared in the first issue (Spring 2006) of Te Iarere Wavelength. I refer in particular to Clothier’s description of my culture firstly as “New Zealand European” and then as a “minority border culture” (p. 33). I am Pākehā and proud of it. In the following paragraphs I will outline what I perceive to be some common threads of pākehā culture. I am cognisant that culture is a complex concept, and simultaneously a collective ideology and unique experience. Any discussion of culture is a journey into the minefield of “identity”. However it is preferable to wrestle with a framework of cultural identity than to slide into the post-structural abyss of hybrid-ness.

The following discourse is about an alive, vibrant and evolving culture; albeit in global terms a young one. The cornerstones of pākehā culture I propose are naming – by the use of the word “pākehā” – a relatively recent history of emigration from the United Kingdom/Europe; a relationship with tangata whenua and cultural adaptations as a result of this relationship; and a relationship with, and connection to, the land which we call home. None of this is about undermining or minimising tikanga Māori or Māori people’s connection to, and relationship with, their whenua. They are different cultures; naming their differences strengthens them both.

**NAMING**

If you listen to talkback radio you get a sense that many people would like to identify themselves as New Zealanders which, of course, is accurate as a definition of nationality. If you are a New Zealand citizen then of course you are a New Zealander; but this is not, however, a cultural definition. Under that umbrella are a huge number of cultures of which pākehā culture is just one (albeit the dominant one since the mid-1800s).

Others seem to favour the designation “European” which seems somewhat misplaced as it indicates a sense of belonging to a country on the other side of the world. I have “ties” to the other side of the world and am keenly aware of my English/Scottish heritage, but I do not belong in Bath (England) or Ayrshire.
(Scotland) from where my ancestors migrated. In fact visiting those places brought home to me the cultural differences between where my ancestors came from in the 1800s and the way I live my life, and the values I hold, in 2007 Aotearoa.

The term “tauiwi”, while sometimes being relevant in a particular context (visiting marae), is not a cultural definition but a way of denoting “different from”. I take offence at being described as “tauiwi” in relation to Aotearoa; I am not a foreigner in my country of birth. As Dann (1991) says: “I was born here, I have no other home or nationality” (p. 57). “Tauiwi” is a term that supports Clothier’s hybrid concept and fails to acknowledge pākehā as a cultural identity.

The precise origin of the word “pākehā” is unknown, but it appears to derive from pakepākehā: “mythological fairy people with pale skins” (King, 1991, p. 15). King (1991) goes on to state that “pākehā” is now a term that denotes non-Māori of European descent. It is an indigenous term that acknowledges our British heritage; but it also denotes “things that are no longer simply European” (p. 16). By using the word “pākehā” to describe our cultural identity we situate ourselves in this land and identify as Pacific people.

HAVING A HISTORY OF IMMIGRATION, PREDOMINANTLY FROM BRITAIN

“New Zealand is a nation of immigrants” (Bell, 1996, p. 7) and as pākehā we are the descendants of the colonising immigrants (King, 1985). This status carries with it a responsibility for understanding the process and impact of colonisation while not diminishing the experiences of our ancestors in their journey to this land. We all have histories of migratory journeys worthy of celebration. In relation to my ancestors these are unique and courageous stories which I acknowledge, celebrate and in turn will pass on to the next generation.

It took enormous courage for our ancestors to uproot themselves, face long and perilous journeys, and start again in a strange and largely unknown land. This is what our ancestors did (other than my great-grandfather and other “remittance men” who had no choice). I have stood on the beach at Ayr and tried to imagine how my ancestors felt as they left their homeland to face an uncertain future on the other side of the world. The legacy of this background is the value we still place on independence and self-reliance. While Pākehā are, from time
to time, criticised for this stance by people from collective cultures, it’s an attitude and attribute that I value and will pass on to our children. My self-reliance mixed with a good dose of inherited “pig-headedness” has made it possible for me to do things I would not contemplate if I was dependent on a collective group for my sense of self.

We “carry forth” the hopes and aspirations of our ancestors who tried to create a “new society” without the class barriers of their homeland. While they may not have succeeded with their egalitarian dream, part of our collective value system today is a strong belief in social justice (King, 1991). The pākehā sense of social justice and the concept of everyone deserving a “fair go” is something I am proud of as a component of my cultural heritage. It is not necessarily that we live in a totally fair and just society, but that collectively we aspire to this ideal. Our present-day income maintenance and family assistance schemes are practical manifestations of values that we hold in common.

ADAPTATION TO, AND RELATIONSHIP WITH, THE LAND

Self-reliance and an independent spirit were vital qualities if early pioneers were to survive in this country where many started out with nothing more than a block of land (which may have been acquired unjustly) and their ingenuity and strength. The tenacity and survival skills of the early British/European immigrants have been passed on through the generations. While most Pākehā no longer live in rural areas, we carry with us this pioneering history and belief that we can adapt and overcome obstacles. Long may the belief continue that we can fix anything with “a bit of number 8 wire”, even though most urban dwellers would struggle to identify one strand of wire from another!

More relevant to today’s average urban Pākehā is our passion for eating food outside. The barbecue is a practical expression of adaptation to our temperate climate, as is the way we “religiously” spend summer holidays at the beach. Traditionally building wooden houses because of the proliferation of trees is another example of our adaptation to this land.

In the same way, we have altered our farming techniques to work in the new environment. We don’t need to house our stock indoors, and we graze sheep and cattle that are suited to this land and climate, like the Romney sheep and Polled Angus cattle that my father farmed.
We seem as a cultural group to have a passion for nature; this “idea that nature is central to the way of life” (Bell, 1996, p. 41) for us. King (1991, p. 12) writes about his attachment to the land: “a feeling of deep attachment to the land and to its flora and fauna”, which parallels my own love of the outdoors. The two “churches” I have are the bush and the beach. Our belief, even though it is inaccurate, that we live in a clean, green country is a part of this concept. We are so enamoured by this view of our country and ourselves that we regularly use it as our prime tourism marketing strategy.

RELATIONSHIP WITH TANGATA WHENUA

If you accept the word “pākehā” as your cultural identity, implied in this acceptance is an acknowledgment of your relationship with tangata whenua. We are accepting a naming by the “other”. It appears that those who have difficulty accepting the use of the designation “Pākehā” are resisting being named by Māori.

A key part of our relationship with tangata whenua is an acknowledgement of “the importance...of being Maori – for the Maori” (Dann, 1991, p. 59). It is about the relationship between us and a celebration of difference, not Pākehā seeking to become Māori; this latter stance is in my opinion a “slippery slope” which those who identify themselves as “hybrids” are vulnerable to as they lack a sense of who they are in relation to “others”.

Working together to resolve the injustices following the signing to Te Tiriti o Waitangi is part of our ongoing relationship. While this process can be painful and conflictive, part of being Pākehā is to recognise history, be willing to acknowledge wrongdoings, and attempt to reach resolution: to take responsibility for reparation and healing (Knox, 1991 and King, 1985).

Dann (1991) discusses the importance of her relationship with tangata whenua and draws attention to what she has learnt. Her experience echoes my own in which my life is richer for being of this land and having relationships with Māori.

ADAPTATIONS FROM RELATIONSHIPS WITH TANGATA WHENUA/TANGATA PASIFIKA

“One essential ingredient of Pakeha-ness...is contact with and being affected by things Maori” (King, 1991, p. 19). The experience of things Māori is something we don’t have access to in
other parts of the world (King, 1991). Our contact with Māori does not make us Māori or bicultural, but contributes to our evolving culture.

Dann (1991) discusses our linguistic adaptations as a result of our relationship with tangata whenua. How many Pākehā would not know what “kai” or “kia ora” mean? Some words, such as “haka” and “hāngi” have become so “commonplace” that Pākehā do not seem aware of their origins.

If you listen to conversations of Pākehā when they meet for the first time, they often try to identify someone they know in common in order to connect and situate each other. While this is not the same as whakapapa for Māori, it is an adaptation of the concept of establishing who someone is and your relationship/connection to that person.

It is not just linguistically that we have adapted as a consequence of our relationship with tangata whenua. Following the birth of our children I asked for the whenua (placenta) to take home for burial. I noticed how matter-of-factly this was dealt with by the health professionals involved (the births were Caesarean section); it was evidently a normal part of birthing practice.

I would argue that our passion for team sport is an adaptation from our staunchly individualistic ancestry to a more collective approach. As a cultural group we value participating in a group and being part of a team. Throughout my childhood I was reminded by my parents that I had to play team sport; the sport itself seemed irrelevant. The way we have taken a middle/upper class English sport – rugby union – and turned it into something akin to religion is a testament to our belief in the importance of the team.

I would also see our self-effacing humour as something we have “picked up” from tangata whenua and tangata Pasifika and adapted. The television show “Outrageous Fortune” and movies like “Good-bye Pork Pie” are examples of this adaptation.

CONCLUSION

While each of our personal histories and identities is unique, there are some “flags” and pointers to a shared cultural story and identity for Pākehā, rather than to defining ourselves as a collection of hybrids. I believe we have a history and culture
which might be difficult to “see” at times because we are the
dominant cultural group in Aotearoa; but it is none the less
ours and one of which we can be enormously proud. I am not a
hybrid, and will ensure that our children grow up with a strong
sense of identity and pride in their pākehā cultural heritage.

References


He aha te tohu o te ringaringa? He kawakawa!
Tuku ki raro kia hope rā, e korokio ko te whakatau o te mate hue hā!
Ripiripia! Haehaea! Ripiripia! Haehaea! Tuakina
Paranitia te ūpoko o te ngārara kai tangata hue!

Tēnei ka noho i te taumata
Ka hoki whakamuri te whakaaro
Ki ngā mahi i ngā tau kua hipa atu
Ko tōu kaha, tōu te máia, tōu manawanui
Ki te manaaki i ngā tauira e whāia nei te mātauranga
Koia noho ai hei poukuia, hei pouwhakaruruhau
Mo a tātou tamariki mokopuna
Heoti anō rā, nō te Mahuru ngaro atu ai koe i te tirohanga tangata
Waiho ake ai o hoa kaimahi me o tauira hei kawe atu i ngā mahi

Nō reira, haere atu rā, te piki kōtuku, te kōtore huia, te pou whakaruruhau
Kawea atu rā, ngā mamaetanga, ngā pōuritanga, ngā taumahatanga
E tāwhia nuitia nei e te aukume o Rehua
Oti atu rā koe ki te kāinga tūturu
I tohia mai ai e ngā atūa o te pō, o te ao mārama
Hono atu rā koe ki Waitāheke, ki Waitukukiri
Ki Hine-Etoeto, ki Hine-Pūkohurangi
Horo atu rā i Aotearoa, ki tua o Paerau
Ki ngā whare o Tangaroa, tatū ki Te Tīhi o Manono

Kua tae rā anō ki to taumata, kei a koe te mātauranga
Kāti rā ki a koe e kui, haere, haere, oti atu rā
Āpiti hono tātai hono rātou te hunga mate ki a rātou moe mai rā
Āpiti hono tātai hono tātou te hunga ora ki a tātou
Tēna nō tātou katoa
“Spider” sculpture

This Volkswagen “spider” was designed by WITT art tutor Donna Willard-Moore as a 2006 Student Orientation project. Staff members and students contributed famous quotations which – along with a mosaic trail of beads – are etched on to glass slabs and glued on to the body shell. The “spider” will travel to regional town centres during the year as part of a campaign to promote WITT programmes.
Abstract

Action research is a family of research methodologies that are used in real life situations, their primary focus being on solving real problems. In health care and in education practice, action research and its derivatives – including participatory action research (PAR) – are used by personnel who wish to address a practice related problem. PAR is both participatory and collaborative, and is frequently used where a collective group is interested in transformational practice. It provides the opportunity to develop comprehensive models of service delivery in health, and better systems of student learning in education.

THE METHODOLOGY

As I read the texts of noted authors (Reason & Bradbury, 2004; Wadsworth, 1998; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003; Whyte, 1991; De Koning & Martin, 1996; Hart & Bond, 1995; McNiff, 2002; Stringer, 1999), I became impressed with the power of PAR as a methodology that had arisen out of action research and had much to offer by way of permanent change in work practices. The essential difference between this methodology and other qualitative methodologies is that the participants drive the examination of present practice and decide on a plan of action that may or may not result in an improved or altered practice. I initially failed to appreciate that both action research and PAR methodologies follow this same process. The essential difference is that action research methodologies are driven by outsiders – often persons at the top of an organisation or work hierarchy – whereas PAR is driven from the bottom by the actual participants themselves, the insiders. Another essential difference is that PAR was developed from action research concepts by educationalists such as Paulo Freire, and utilised with disempowered persons in the Third World.

ACTION RESEARCH

Stringer and Genat (2004) define action research as: “a systematic, participatory approach to inquiry that enables people to extend their understanding of problems or issues and
to formulate actions directed towards the resolution of those problems or issues.” The linking of the terms “action” and “research” highlights the essential features of this approach: testing ideas in practice as a means of improvement and as a means of increasing knowledge. This linking originates from the work of Kurt Lewin (1946). Lewin contended that the two ideas of group decision and commitment to improvement were inextricably linked. He believed that those people affected by planned changes had the primary responsibility for deciding on courses of critically informed action which would likely lead to improvement, and should be held accountable for evaluating the results of strategies tried out in practice.

While Lewin is acknowledged by many writers (Greenwood & Levin, 2000) as the pioneer of action research as a distinct research methodology, other writers attribute the concept to American philosopher John Dewey, who wrote extensively in the 1930s on the education system and the need to reform it by democratisation. Dewey analysed and wrote about reflective thinking in which practical problems demanded practical solutions, and for which the solution could only be regarded as viable when it was shown to produce the desired outcome in actual practice.

The term “action research” is credited to two men: Lewin and John Collier. Collier was the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in the United States between 1933 and 1945. He used the term “research-action” to describe social research that was cyclical in its nature: “action research and research action”. Collier believed that ethnic relationships between indigenous North Americans and the “free settlers” could only be improved by a programme of collaborative research in which both parties came together to develop acceptable solutions to common problems.

Social psychologist Kurt Lewin developed the concepts of action research that he used to explore questions raised by communities in post-war America (Lewin, 1946). It is believed (Hart & Bond, 1995) that his experiences as a Jew in Nazi Germany helped to formulate his views that resulted in the development of a democratically based approach to using the power of research in understanding and changing human behaviour. Lewin rejected the positivist belief that researchers study an objective world separate from the inter-subjective meanings as understood by them as they act in and on their world. In this way, action research not only links action and research but also
assumes an educational mission as part of the problem-solving process (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003). The approach that Lewin developed was tested and modified during the turbulent years of the 1950s and 1960s. His approach advocated the management of provocative and complex situations both critically and practically. Lewin was the first writer to state that the action research process was cyclical involving a process of fact-finding, planning, action, and reflection and evaluation (Waterman et al, 2001).

In the education sector, action research was first used by Columbia University in 1945 to investigate and enhance practice. Following several refinements, action research methodology was recognised as a valid approach to facilitating change in educational settings in the USA, Britain and Australia (Hart & Bond, 1995). Lawrence Stenhouse and John Elliot, for instance, used action research to develop innovative humanities curricula (Waterman et al, 2001). Elliot promoted an individual reflective approach as a key to understanding educational practice. He argued that the dominant paradigm supported an institutionalised division of teachers on the one hand, and an academic elite of educational researchers on the other. Elliot advocated the use of action research as a coupling strategy whereby teachers could engage as researchers and ultimately increase their level of professionalism (Hart & Bond, 1995). Schon (1983, 1987) argued that the use of reflective work in educational practice led to intentional action to improve professional practice which was then evaluated in an action research methodology. Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) spearheaded the use of Lewin’s action research in Australia. They maintained that this approach to enquiry is useful as it provides for greater opportunity and potential to effect change in practice environments. As a consequence, action research is a widely-used methodology in education practice in that country.

Health professionals, including nurses and health service administrators, are charged with maintaining high quality services to consumers. Proposed studies using the framework of PAR seek to assist health professionals to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to meet these challenges. (Conway & FitzGerald, 2004; Koch et al, 2002). Action research methodologies aim to facilitate change using a recurring cyclical process of engagement, collaboration, cooperation, reflection and evaluation.
It is useful to understand that the essential difference between action research and PAR is that action research has been undertaken by and with people who have power and control such as managers and directors of organisations, whereas PAR has been developed and utilised with disempowered people (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003; Hart & Bond, 1995).

**PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR)**

PAR arose as a separate research methodology within the critical paradigm of action research. It achieved prominence in Third World countries where it was utilised in community approaches to educational issues. Early PAR projects were concerned with marked inequalities in the distribution of resources and power between the privileged and dominant, and the marginalised and oppressed (Reason & Bradbury, 2004; De Koning & Martin, 1996). Tandon (1996) believed that six premises converge to form the methodological foundations underpinning PAR. These premises – as follows – continue to guide the theoretical principles, methodology and epistemology of PAR:

1. The debate concerning the sociology of knowledge and its implications for epistemological development throughout history. The writings of Habermas (1971) led this debate which emphasised that what we know is steeped in our historical context.

2. Adult educators in South America, among them Brazilian Paulo Freire, contended that in order to learn, the learner must have control over his or her own learning. In 1974 these educators proposed a theory of “adult learning” that promulgated the term and practice of participatory research (Freire, 1974).

3. Freire’s contribution to educational practice was informed by his pedagogical belief (Freire, 1974) that reality was not an objective truth or facts to be discovered, but included ways in which people interacted with their perceptions of truth (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003). This process of knowing, he argued, was interlinked with learning and thus gave support to the arguments promoted by adult educators in support of PAR.

4. A parallel premise in the development of PAR was the contribution of action research that challenged the existing concept of research as a static process. Rather,
PAR built on Lewin’s contention that action underpins both learning and knowing (Greenwood & Levin, 2000).

Phenomenology made the next significant contribution to the development of PAR according to Tandon (1996), as the work of phenomenologists legitimated experience as a basis of knowing. Human emotions and feelings as reported through narrative were recognised as ways of knowing. In addition phenomenologists recognised that experiential learning was a legitimate form of knowledge that could inform practice.

The question of active participation in research by the persons seeking answers to their questions was seen as a critical variable. This approach differentiates between researching “on” and researching “with” and underlines the importance of a participatory process rather than a process that is orchestrated from without.

Tandon (1996) further developed his arguments by referring to trends that contributed to the contemporary use of PAR. He referred first to how the logic of manipulation and control of nature – the basis of pure science which is expert led and has a top-down centralised model of development – has merely contributed to the continued hegemony of the ruling classes. Tandon (1996) drew attention to the role of education and its links to ideology that is a crucial instrument of regulation and control of people; moving on to acknowledge the enrichment of the theory and practice of PAR that can be attributed to some feminist perspectives.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ACTION RESEARCH AND PAR

Action research emphasises the need to act on the basis of learning and knowing. In the Australian context action research has been undertaken in the main by and with people who have considerable power and control such as teachers and managers, whereas PAR has developed with disempowered people (Liam-puttong & Ezzy, 2004).

In the education setting many would consider themselves to be disempowered and unable to influence or change any of the processes with which they are involved. There is sufficient evidence to indicate that involvement in a PAR project – exploring and seeking to improve teaching methodologies – is hugely empowering to the participants, no matter what level of the
educational spectrum they are on, be it as student, tutor or administrator (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000).

According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003) the major difference between the two approaches of action research and PAR is the relationship between the researcher and the researched. The advantage that an outsider brings to a research project is that he or she is often better resourced, educated and more knowledgeable about the potential implications of the specific project. However as Reason and Bradbury (2004) contend, PAR cannot occur without the initiative of someone with time, skill and commitment; someone who will inevitably be part of a privileged or educated group. “Participatory” by its very name, however, demands the inclusion of all people involved.

CONCLUSION

Action research has been used in the education sector throughout the world since 1945; however, research into educational processes, organisation and administration in New Zealand has been limited. It is hoped that this article will have given the reader a brief introduction to a family of research methodologies that have demonstrated usefulness in both the health services and educational practice. Within the education sector these research methodologies offer considerable scope for addressing practice related issues, and may be utilised by experienced and beginning researchers alike.

References


GUIDED READING AND WRITING FOR ADULT LEARNERS: HOW CAN I ASSIST ANOTHER ADULT TO LEARN TO READ AND WRITE?

Jan Treliving-Brown

Abstract

The Ministry of Education’s Tertiary Education Strategy 2007-12 lists “increasing literacy, numeracy and language levels for the workforce” as one of the four priority outcomes for tertiary education over the next five years. While it is possible to plan interventions on a national level (schools, businesses, workplaces, education providers and individuals) to address low skill levels in literacy, numeracy and language, much can also be done at the level of tutor/learner interface. This article provides some insights into effective methodologies and resources that tutors can utilise in responding to adult learners who seek assistance with literacy.

IDENTIFYING THE ISSUES

You are a tutor at a polytechnic, a few weeks into teaching a course to a new group of students. One of these students knocks on your office door unannounced, and asks for assistance with literacy. (These are not the words the student uses. He or she might say: “I’m having trouble with my spelling/reading-writing”.) With this contact, a new relationship has begun. There is a need now for meaningful interaction to occur between tutor and learner, tutor and language, and eventually, learner and language. Learner independence is the goal. Your first impulse is probably to contact the literacy tutor on your campus. However, there are also some basics you could employ to facilitate the learning process for the brave student who has made this first approach.

This student is one of many New Zealanders today who are experiencing difficulties with some element of literacy. The 1996 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) concluded that one adult in five falls below the acceptable level, exhibiting very poor literacy skills. Dozens of different reasons account for the large number of adults with literacy skills deficit. Failure at school, dysfunctional families, itinerancy, illness and immigration are among them. Most of these adults are well aware of their needs. They know that they lack reading and writing ability, and they genuinely wish to improve their literacy skills. Actively seeking help is a huge first step for them.
Adults are motivated to seek help for different reasons, including getting a job or embarking on study; or they may simply want to gain independence in commonplace tasks such as helping the children with homework, reading the newspaper or writing a cheque. A significant result of their efforts, in addition to increasing their literacy skills, is a positive impact on self-esteem. They will feel the benefits in every part of their lives.

UTILISING RESOURCES

Until recently, there has been little in the way of original New Zealand texts designed to provide reading and comprehension material appropriate for adults whose literacy skills are insufficient for the requirements of their everyday lives. One resource developed specifically for literacy practitioners working with adult learners is Guided Reading and Writing: an adult skills manual written by WITT’s Jan Treliving-Brown and published in 2005 by New Plymouth firm Curriculum Concepts.

The book is made up of six pieces of original text, pitched along a Stage 1-to-6 continuum. Stage 1 contains simple, repetitious text. Stage 6 contains text that might be found in a magazine or newspaper as part of a feature article. Photographs accompany the text.

This book and others coming on to the market can be used as a rough guide to addressing these six stages within adult literacy. Guided Reading and Writing addresses spelling, reading and writing in English. It is not intended as a diagnostic tool; rather it gives a sample of texts and related exercises that a tutor and adult learner can explore together.

SELECTING THE RIGHT APPROACHES

Tutors can use the descriptors given below to ensure that the chosen text is congruent with a particular learner’s stage of comprehension and mastery. It is important to remember that the learner’s interests, prior knowledge and desired goals are paramount. Learners may not reach Stage 6, but with your guidance perhaps they will progress through Stages 2 and 3. The important elements are relationship and progress. The book is not intended as a catalyst to push learners through the stages. Each learner needs to set the pace and enjoy the ride.

How is comprehension tested? The purpose of reading is for learners to gain information from the written word. It is possible
to “say” a word accurately but get only limited meaning from it. Consequently, checking learners’ comprehension of text is very important. One way to start is by asking learners to outline the main purpose of reading. Many will answer with phrases such as “learning to spell”, or “saying the words”. In which case, you need to explain that the whole point of reading is to take the meaning out of the words that the writer has put on the page.

How can a tutor tell that learners have understood the text? By answering comprehension questions accurately, learners are demonstrating that they have not only read the text but also understood the meaning behind the individual words. These questions are designed to test a variety of comprehension skills and to go beyond basic recall. The majority of them are literal, inferential or evaluative.

**Literal questions** require learners to answer questions in the following formats: true/false, multiple choice, matching, ordering and sequencing, skimming and filling in the blanks. **Inferential and evaluative questions** on the other hand require learners to think beyond the words, or to “read between the lines”, picking up subtle clues that are not immediately obvious. These questions usually require learners to demonstrate an understanding of, or express an opinion on, the text in order to draw conclusions, make predictions, identify main ideas, categorise and use context to guess meaning.

There are numerous effective reading strategies you can use with an adult learner. Discussing the text before the learner reads it will give helpful clues as to meaning. Or you could make sensible predictions based on the title alone, and discuss related aspects of a particular theme. The manner in which text is read aloud (the way words are emphasised and grouped in particular ways), will also assist the learner’s level of understanding.

Some words will be known to the learner by sight, and reinforced in the text. This is the way we all read, so should come as no surprise; however the more difficult word attack or decoding skills must be consciously and systematically taught so that learners can apply them when reading independently.

Silent reading is another higher order skill which takes time to master. Here, repetition is the magic key. Learners begin to recall words when reading text a second or third time. We all know that developing high-level reading skills has a lot to do with the reading mileage that we have gained.
Further clues can be picked up from the photograph or graphic accompanying each piece of text. This isn’t evasion or a shortcut – it’s something we all do to assist our understanding of text. It is important to keep reiterating that reading is all about getting meaning from context. Adults have a wealth of experience on which they can draw to inform their approaches to reading and comprehension. To read effectively, learners need to know that they can take risks without fear of failure, and that they can often guess what a word means using surrounding clues. An alert tutor can use the word in another context to reinforce the learning that is taking place.

Learners need constant encouragement to read analytically, which requires them to predict and think beyond the written information, and relate what they read to their own life experiences. Some questions can have more than one right answer, as long as the reasoning is logical. Learners can be challenged to predict what’s coming in the next paragraph; identify a twist to the plot; or have a stab at the punch line. They need to understand that pieces of text can be effectively used for the purpose of revision.

From the tutor’s perspective, we should always aim to enhance the level of personal enrichment which is gained through reading. Learners may find particular pieces of text more appealing than others. In which case, when learners really enjoy a topic or theme, it should be possible to find related pieces from other sources that they can also read and enjoy. Texts that immediately engage learners’ attention are more likely to hold their interest and facilitate their long-term learning.

THE SIX-STAGE CONTINUUM OF LEARNING

Earlier in this article I referred to a six-stage continuum of skills acquisition in literacy. The defining characteristics of texts and principal outcomes at each stage may be summarised as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>The learner can...</th>
<th>Text is characterised by...</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognise familiar words</td>
<td>Repetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read and write short phrases</td>
<td>Supporting pictures/diagrams</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Simple sentences</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>The learner can...</th>
<th>Text is characterised by...</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use a limited range of tenses and punctuation</td>
<td>Some repetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Find meaning from context</td>
<td>Diagrams and/or lists</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manage compound sentences</td>
<td>Simple technical language and/or abbreviations</td>
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<tr>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>The learner can...</th>
<th>Text is characterised by...</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use cues to decipher unknown words</td>
<td>Longer sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manage ordering and sequencing of text</td>
<td>Wider vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Begin to make inferences when reading text</td>
<td>More complex punctuation</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Form opinions based on information that is read</td>
<td>Paragraphing</td>
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<tr>
<th>Stage 4</th>
<th>The learner can...</th>
<th>Text is characterised by...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use a range of formats</td>
<td>Organisational features (index, glossary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehend text involving a wide range of topics</td>
<td>The introduction of fact and opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employ different ways to order and sequence information</td>
<td>Complex sentence structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make inferences when reading text</td>
<td>Wider range of tenses, vocabulary, punctuation</td>
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<tr>
<th>Stage 5</th>
<th>The learner can...</th>
<th>Text is characterised by...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Begin both to “close read” and “skim read”</td>
<td>Length that varies according to the purpose of the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Condense information from more than one source</td>
<td>Material that directs the reader to other sources of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Begin to identify bias</td>
<td>More complex academic or vocational text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Write a convincing argument for or against an issue</td>
<td>Spell most words correctly</td>
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<tr>
<th>Stage 6</th>
<th>The learner can...</th>
<th>Text is characterised by...</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compare/contrast two or more texts on the same topic</td>
<td>Text written in different contexts (educational, cultural)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Draw definitive conclusions from reading a range of texts</td>
<td>Text conveying abstract concepts or theories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manage the sourcing of reference materials</td>
<td>Highly complex vocabulary and grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use specialist vocabulary relating to topic</td>
<td>Spell words correctly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use punctuation accurately</td>
<td>Use punctuation accurately</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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CASE STUDY IN COMPREHENSION

The following article is an example of the type of Stage 5 text to which a learner might reasonably be referred. The text proper is followed by a series of observations, questions, cues and clues that could be put to the learner in order to test his or her level of comprehension after reading and reflecting on the article.

Night-shift Carver

By JAN TRELIVING-BROWN

He’s a man of many talents – this father of three, business consultant by day, bone carver by night. And as for the weekends, Mike can be found at the family bach, tapping away beside the Tongaporutu River in North Taranaki. “I’m self-taught, although libraries and museums are mines of valuable information – and not only factual information; you can really feel the spiritual elements involved as you progress from bone to deer antler, stone or jade.”

Mike’s work has clearly matured from the early days around 1980 when – living in Auckland – a bone-carving friend showed him how to create simple brooches and pendants. “Wearing a bone piece was not considered particularly fashionable at the time. Thankfully we’ve come a long way. For anyone to own a beautifully crafted pounamu is a privilege now; it wasn’t quite so acceptable for pākehā back then.”

A year-long sojourn in Bristol, England in 1983 provided both the inspiration and the basic set of tools and drill necessary for the next level of carving and sculpting. The work quickly moved away from jewellery towards art. “There’s a brilliant book on the market compiled by Donn Salt, profiling 26 carvers of stone, bone and jade. It captures all of the elements – the agony and ecstasy of selecting, beginning, shaping a new piece, the bonding that occurs in the process. How these people sell a piece after all that goes into it is beyond me. That’s a hurdle I have yet to leap. I feel I may never be able to do it.”

Mike’s latest work has been inspired by his love of music and instrument-making. He’s following the lines of the traditional Māori flute (kōauau). “There is nothing extraordinary about a piece of natural bone. It’s the satisfaction attached to being able to craft it into something exceptional that is the ultimate appeal – making something exquisite out of what is essentially waste material.”

Using venison shin-bone, the process is long, smelly and arduous: boil the bone over two or three days, changing the water and adding detergent to eliminate the oils. Designing, deciding which of the natural lines to follow is the exciting part. Patterning using
gravers comes much later. Mike has experimented using mussel-shell inlay around the finger-holes. The highly polished end-product is stunning: not only to look at and to feel, but to listen to. Mike plays one of his kōauau most evenings just on dusk. “The sound is haunting,” he says. “It’s just as you would imagine – you’ve got a beautiful instrument with a variety of purposes. Māori used to play the kōauau to celebrate a birth, to encourage the crops to grow, to accompany the story-tellers, to mimic bird-song and of course at the tangi to mourn the death of a loved one.”

And how does the bird life respond to the sound of the kōauau? Two rather corpulent kererū have lined up along the power-lines overhead. They view us with suspicion. I tell Mike I’m determined to have a go at producing sound from this primitive instrument. “It’s easy,” he says. “Just purse your lips as if you’re going to whistle, hold the kōauau to one side, then feel your breath catch down the shaft....”

“I can’t whistle,” I confess. “Not much hope for you then, is there? Come on, we’ll go and see inside the studio.” The small, naturally lit room reeks of creativity. Pieces of bone obviously at various stages lie beside multi-coloured fragments of pāua and mussel. To one side is an appealing variation on the fish-hook theme. This striking piece incorporates a shank of tōtara lashed to the more traditional bone hook.

Laid out at the ready I notice a collection of the tools of the trade: the coping saw, the grinding discs, gravers or burins, burrs and the drill, plus the favourite set of finger-files. We can’t figure out why, but the bigger files are called bastard files. They’re the essential hand-tools for a specific part of the job – the basic shaping. Wet and dry sandpapers and buffers are used to complete the process. Mike is currently working on another kōauau to add to the collection he plans to exhibit.

It’s a wonderful outlet for someone who works face-to-face with people all day. “Balance in all things - hauora” he admits, “is difficult to achieve. My studio has enabled me to concentrate on my art. Isn’t it the man-thing to want to retreat into the cave at the end of the day’s hunting and gathering?”

Two kererū swoop low past the studio window. “I’ll have my exhibition but I doubt whether I’ll be able to part with any of my kōauau.”

This piece of text could typically be found in a general-interest magazine, and presents the kind of text our learner may want to tackle. You could begin by asking why the author has called this article “Night-shift Carver”. What might this article be about?
It is refreshing for learners to encounter known Māori words, especially when reading an article about a New Zealander. Here we have the familiar pāua, pounamu and pākehā; and the perhaps less-known kōauau, kererū and hauora. Students could be asked to dwell on these rich words and their meanings, incorporating them freely into their conversation.

When it comes to comprehension, there are some obvious recall questions which would present a logical starting point, such as: What is Mike’s day job? Where is the Tongaporutu River? Where did Mike get his first set of basic carving tools and drill? What were some of the purposes of the traditional Māori flute? Can you name some of the basic carving tools?

Now is the time to read between the lines (Why do you think Mike has a hobby like bone carving?), and beyond the lines (Is there a subtle message the author is trying to get across?). Further to this is reading behind the lines (Is there any author bias you can detect? What are the author’s implied values and beliefs?).

During this process, the meanings of certain words will need to be clarified. This particular piece of text is vocabulary rich, with words such as “privilege”; “sojourn”; “compiled”; “ecstasy”; “arduous”; “corruptulent”; “primitive” and “exhibit”. Whole phrases also lend themselves well to scrutiny: “man of many talents”; “mines of information”; “agony and ecstasy”; “a hurdle I have to leap”; “view us with suspicion”; “determined to have a go”; “primitive instrument”; “multi-coloured fragments”; “a wonderful outlet”; “laid out at the ready”; “hunting and gathering”. To finish, you could ask the learner to re-name the article and explain his/her choice of title.

CONCLUSION

There is a popular saying that the best writers are also the best readers. This can apply to us all. In other words, we can use all the reading we have been doing to enhance our own writing skills. We can have a try at writing ourselves and encourage our learners to do the same. We can use new words in new ways. Or select a topic – perhaps a hobby like Mike’s – or an interest of our own. We should always aim to concentrate on creating interest at the beginning, middle and end of our piece of writing. After all, our writing is written to be read.
Ministers Trevor Mallard and Marian Hobbs stated in *More Than Words* (2001), that “high levels of literacy and numeracy are basic skills needed for participating in our high-tech, knowledge society. Strong communication skills are also the foundation for families, from whom the next generation of successful learners come.” Literacy is a key that unlocks doors; and anyone with limited literacy already knows this to be the case.

New measures and strategies are being introduced by the Ministry to improve New Zealanders’ basic capabilities in literacy. These measures and strategies will assist in changing the national literacy competence landscape. At grassroots level, however, there is much that we can do as tutors in our direct interface with students. Understanding how learning takes place; asking the right questions; and identifying the most effective techniques and activities for engaging and retaining each adult learner’s interest: this is how we can enhance students’ capabilities in literacy, and at the same time increase our own knowledge and understanding as tertiary educators.

**References**


Welsh boy on beach  Gerallt Jones
IDENTIFYING THE EXPERT TEACHER

Christine Pritchard

Abstract

Identifying those qualities, attributes and competencies that characterise the “expert teacher” is not as straightforward as it may sound. The concepts are not the difficult part, as it is relatively easy to identify the competencies and skills that a teacher requires to be effective; rather, the difficulty lies in the basic assumption that such a paragon as the “expert teacher” actually exists in the first place. This article discusses competence and expertise as they apply to teachers in tertiary education, and focuses on two of the values identified in the literature as exemplifying individuals who perform at a high level in teaching, namely: reflective practice and collegiality.

EXPERTISE AND COMPETENCIES

It is possible to identify people in all professions who perform well and whose performance is regarded by their peers as exceeding expected standards. These people are often referred to as experts. “When we say people are experts in their profession, we expect them to possess certain qualities, such as being very knowledgeable in their field; being able to engage in skillful practice; and being able to make accurate diagnoses, insightful analyses, and the right decisions, often within a short period of time” (Tsui [2003], p.1). The question of what exactly constitutes their expertise, however, appears to be undecided. Ramsden (1992, p. 12) states: “teaching in higher education is a very complicated and detailed subject. It takes years of practice to learn how to do it well, and even then you will not have learnt enough”.

There are many competencies that are desirable in a teacher. Whitty (1996, p. 89) identifies two sets of qualities desirable in a teacher: “professional characteristics” and “professional competencies”. He expands this proposition by suggesting that professional characteristics can be broken down into professional values, professional development, personal development, communication and relationships, and synthesis and application. Professional competencies can be broken down into knowledge and understanding, skills, class management, assessment and recording, and understanding the wider teaching role.
A more expansive view of these defining competencies is expressed by Turner-Bisset (2001), who highlights the following requirements:

- Knowledge of substantive curriculum areas and content
- Pedagogical skills, including the acquisition of and ability to use a repertoire of teaching strategies
- Reflection and the ability to be self-critical: the hallmark of teacher professionalism
- Empathy and a commitment to acknowledging the dignity of others
- Managerial competence, given that teachers assume a range of managerial responsibilities within and outside the classroom.

This list of competencies which was drawn up several years after Whitty’s (1996) findings shows how thinking on effective teaching has evolved. Turner-Bisset (2001) was one of the first writers to include subject knowledge among the key qualities required. Previously, subject knowledge had been overlooked in studies on effective teaching. As Turner-Bisset (2001, p. 6) suggests: “perhaps because its importance is so obvious, but more importantly, because researchers were looking for generic teaching qualities across all subjects, age-phases and teaching contexts”.

It is possible to continue assembling lists of competencies, ad infinitum. I would suggest, however, that this is a primary step. It is not simply a question of identifying those qualities that mark out the effective teacher; rather, it is the linking of these qualities which captures the essence of teaching – and which provides definition around the concept of the expert teacher. A novice teacher is more likely to focus on particular, individual competencies of the type suggested by Whitty (1996). The experienced teacher, on the other hand, is more likely to consider the expansive or holistic aspects of these qualities in line with Turner-Bisset’s (2001) conclusions, in which the interplay between the individual qualities assumes greater importance.

THEORIES OF TEACHING (I)

In order to gain a deeper insight into the concepts of competency and expertise, we need to consider some of the prevailing theories of teaching in tertiary education. A glance at the literature shows that these theories are still evolving. Ramsden (1992, p. 7) suggests that teaching always takes place within
certain contexts and always involves a particular subject: “Becoming skilled at teaching requires developing the ability to deploy a complex theory of teaching in the different contexts relevant to the teaching and learning of that subject matter”. After collating research undertaken by various lecturers Ramsden presented three generic theories that can be applied to the role of the teacher in tertiary education, namely:

• Theory One: Teaching as telling or transmission
• Theory Two: Teaching as organising student activity
• Theory Three: Teaching as making learning possible

In Theory One which proposes that teaching is the telling or transmission of knowledge, the teacher’s role is simply one of communicating this knowledge to the student. The critical factors are the amount of knowledge given to the student and the level and depth of that knowledge. The teaching skill of the teacher in imparting this knowledge rests in another compartment altogether. Failure of the student to learn is generally seen as the fault of that student. Ramsden (1992) suggests that Theory One implies all problems bound up with the teaching and learning interface reside outside of the lecturer, programme or institution.

Theory Two expands on Theory One and suggests that teaching is about the organising of student activity in which the focus moves from the teacher to the student. Teaching becomes more of a supervision process involving techniques designed to ensure that students learn productively. Expertise in teacher subject knowledge is no longer of paramount importance. The focus is not on telling or transmission but on dealing with students, making them busy, and providing the conditions that will enable effective learning to take place.

Theory Three – a more developed construct – focuses on making learning possible. This concept links the various aspects of teaching, learning, students and subject matter. Ramsden (1992, p. 114) indicates that this type of approach involves identifying students’ misunderstandings, intervening to change them, and from these measures creating an environment which encourages students to learn. The focus is on the content of what students have to learn. The teacher’s perception of his or her role in this last theory differs from that in Theories One and Two. Here the teacher identifies that knowledge of subject matter is actively constituted by the learner, and that this process of constituting reality or obtaining knowledge does not
differ irrespective of what is being learned. “Learning is applying and modifying one’s own ideas; it is something the student does, rather than something that is done to the student”.

We can identify a process of development that links each of these three theories. Theory One presents a simplified view of teaching, often held by new or novice teachers in tertiary education. After they have been teaching for a while it usually becomes obvious to them that there is more to teaching than simply knowledge transmission. Teachers at this stage – after recognising that they need to expand their repertoire of teaching techniques – often incline towards Theory Two: that of organising student activity. It is the more experienced teacher – or for the purpose of this article, the expert teacher – who has the insight to move into Theory Three territory, which acknowledges that teaching is all about making learning possible. At this level teachers start to understand the complexity of imparting knowledge and understanding; and they realise that they must listen to their students – and other teachers – in order to improve their teaching. They are able to reflect critically on their teaching abilities, and understand that in order to improve on an ongoing basis they must acquire increasingly complex professional knowledge (Ramsden, 1992).

THEORIES OF TEACHING (II)

The literature is remarkably similar in that many authors when discussing the theories which underlie teaching in tertiary education identify that as teachers’ experience grows, the theories upon which their work is based tend to develop correspondingly. Most teachers move from adopting simple to more complex theories. The manner in which teachers perceive teaching appears to change the longer that they remain in the profession.

Fox (1983) sets out four theories which are similar to those espoused by Ramsden (1992), namely: transfer theory, shaping theory, travelling theory and growing theory. The first two are simple theories and the latter two are developed theories. Transfer theory simply refers to teaching as imparting or conveying knowledge from teacher to student. Similar to Ramsden’s views around his Theory One, Fox considers that successful learning under this model results from well-prepared material effectively organised and imparted. Unsuccessful learning, on the other hand, is seen to be the fault of the student who is presumed to be poorly motivated, lazy, forgetful or unintelligent.
In the case of Fox’s shaping theory, teachers who adopt this methodology believe that teaching is about making connections: connections between various parts of the subject matter as well as connections between various aspects of the student experience (Fox, 1983). Both transfer theory and shaping theory, however, express a simple relationship between teaching and learning: simply put, if it has been taught it has been learnt. The focus is wholly on the role of the teacher.

Moving on to developed theory, Fox (1983, p. 156) starts with a view of the student as “a fellow traveler with individual and valuable experiences and abilities, motives and objectives, many of which will be rather ill-defined and disorganized and some less useful than others”. Under these circumstances the teacher’s role becomes one of helping students to get their ideas in order so that they can make sense of their experiences, and of helping them to prepare for those learning experiences that lie ahead.

Travelling theory is all about a teacher guiding or leading a student in the manner of a tour guide: conducting the traveller (the student) over a varied landscape and experiencing various situations along the way. Some situations will prove easy and some will prove difficult. In this way education is seen as sharing many of the features that characterise a physical journey (Fox, 1983).

Fox’s second exemplum of developed theory is growing theory. Here the teacher is seen as a gardener, with the student’s mind representing the area of ground. This ground is already covered with growth, some of which is worth keeping and cultivating. The teacher’s aim is to encourage the growth of certain “plants”. He or she has a broad plan as to how this development might go, but does not attempt to specify the exact outcomes that each “plant” is to achieve (Fox, 1983).

Fox concludes that many teachers never progress beyond a simple view of learning, and he suggests that this lack of development is consistent with their own simple theories of teaching. I would endorse this view and propose firstly, that poorly developed teachers tend to adhere to simple theories in their teaching practice and seldom move beyond them, thus severely limiting student learning experiences. And secondly, that more experienced teachers who were exposed to simple theories in their schooling and who have not undergone adequate teacher development, continue to employ simple theories in their practice.
To sum up, in the case of both Ramsden’s and Fox’s categories of developed theories more emphasis is placed on students, and on the contribution that each student makes to his or her own learning. Teachers who have adopted developed theories tend to speak less of teaching methods and teaching strategies and more of learning activities and learning experiences.

Exemplifying developed theories is certainly one facet or hallmark of the expert teacher. But there are other contributing factors. Ongoing professional development, for instance, both in the teacher’s particular subject area and in teaching pedagogy is essential if teachers are to undertake their role in any meaningful way and create classroom experiences which maximize learning opportunities for all students. Teachers must also develop their skills in critical reflection if they are to meet their full potential as professional educators. And lastly they must have pro-active attitudes and a high level of commitment both to the institution they work for, and to the students entering that institution.

THE CONCEPT OF EXCELLENCE

So far I have looked at facets of what constitutes competence in tertiary teaching, and identified in the literature theories from the simple to the developed which support teaching from educators: both the novice and the more experienced teacher. I will now turn to the concept of excellence, embracing two elements I cited at the start of this article as necessary if practitioners are to develop teaching expertise, namely: self-reflection and collegiality.

Tsui (2003) suggests that it is easy to identify novice teachers. They have little or no teaching experience. He also suggests that they have little or no pedagogical training. Identifying expert teachers is another matter altogether. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993, p. 4) suggest that it is harder to spot an expert teacher than it is to identify an expert brain surgeon who can remove brain tumours. “This is because unraveling what distinguishes an expert from a non expert teacher is very difficult. There is no reliable way of identifying expert teachers”.

The study of expertise began with work by deGroot (1965) who investigated the differences between chess players and chess masters. He identified that chess masters were able to recognise and reproduce chess patterns quickly and accurately, whereas less able players could not replicate this skill.
up this research, subsequent studies were undertaken on identified “experts” in fields as diverse as law, medicine, nursing, music and dance. One of the studies most frequently referred to on the subject of expertise was undertaken by Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986), who argued against the rationalist approach which viewed intelligent practice as the mere application of knowledge and rules to decision making. Referring to chess players, they concluded that chess masters do not go through all the possible alternatives (as a computer does) before deciding on the best way to move; they simply identify the most promising situation and start testing out what to do from there. (Computers cannot make these evaluative judgments.) Dreyfus and Dreyfus argued that “knowing how” not “knowing that” is at the very core of human expertise (Tsui [2003], p.10). That showed that expert airline pilots relied on hunches and intuition gained through experience rather than on their knowledge of a set of rules about how to operate the plane. Once airline pilots started consciously to operate by the rules they began to perform like novices.

Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) proposed a five-stage model of skill acquisition from novice to expert.

1. **Novice**

   Their actions of novices are guided by rules and sets of objective facts and features relating to the particular skill that they are teaching. They are usually not taught the circumstances under which the rules should be violated. They judge their own performance by how well they follow the rules.

2. **Advanced Beginners**

   Having had experience in applying the rules in real situations, novices begin to recognise that there are situational factors they need to consider when contemplating certain actions. They become more reflective; they become “advanced beginners”.

3. **Competent Practitioners**

   With further experience competent people learn how to cope with an overwhelming amount of information by utilising context-free rules and elements (Tsui, 2003). They can distinguish important from unimportant; their
actions are goal directed; and they make conscious planning decisions. Unlike novices and advanced beginners they feel responsible for their actions and are emotionally involved in them.

4. **Proficient Practitioners**

Proficient practitioners use intuition or know-how. As a result of their previous experiences they can recall similar situations and the actions that were taken at the time. Situations are considered holistically. Analytical thinking and conscious decision making occurs when they encounter information that is deemed to be important, based on their previous experiences.

5. **Expert Practitioners**

Expert practitioners demonstrate performance that is effortless and fluid. The skills they perform are part of the performer; there is no conscious decision making or problem solving involved. They adopt what works on the basis of accrued experience. The only time that the expert practitioner engages in conscious thought is when the situation is a new one. In such a case the expert makes judgments based on his or her prior experience in a manner that defies explanation or codification (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986).

Welker (1991, p. 131) introduces the idea that expertise is challenged on both scientific and institutional levels, by suggesting that all knowledge is conditional and problematic. He indicates in a recent research project that even the most expert teachers were unable to identify what they actually “do” in providing opportunities for students to learn. He confirms that similar research in other fields of work revealed similar results. “This observation reveals a new appreciation of the complexity of human understanding. Expertise appears to mean far more than having the right answers or formulating rules and principles to govern professional behavior, but refers to that sense of familiarity which though grounded in experience and practice appeals primarily to the senses of intuition and feel”.

Both Dreyfus and Dreyfus and Welker arrive at a similar conclusion that “experts” operate not primarily by form and precept, but through intuition and feel. They have a sense of “knowing” and are able to perform intuitively. Everything about the way
they operate appears effortless, and decision making is easy. I would suggest, however, that expertise can also be context specific. A teacher who is considered an expert practitioner in one institution or setting may not necessarily replicate this performance in another setting or context. In such a case, the question arises as to whether or not the teacher is, in fact, an expert through and through.

**COLLEGIALITY**

If a person can operate as an expert in one situation but not in another, what has changed? Certainly one of the prime factors that can effect contextual change is the people or colleagues working around the expert. Blunden (1996, p. 19) argues that academics function within a community of scholars. He suggests that the notion of community is complex and “in any case it assumes the importance of culture in which individual achievements can be realized”. Blunden further argues that if this culture is non-existent, individual achievements cannot be realised. This argument would appear to support my suggestion that expertise may be context specific. Historical institutional knowledge, and knowledge of the contexts in which the practitioner is operating, are other factors which may impact upon a person’s apparent level of expertise.

Blunden (1996, p. 19) also highlights other aspects of collegiality that he believes are important to the professional. He suggests that members of the teaching profession must model behaviour which is “co-operative, egalitarian and supportive” and be prepared and willing to share knowledge with others. They should not contemplate acts which jeopardise colleagues or authority. Attributes such as loyalty, tolerance of diversity, trust, honesty, fidelity and moral virtues are qualities that he believes are exemplified by the professional academic.

**REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**

In addition to these personal attributes, the concept and practice of self reflection – or to take it a step further, critical reflection – seems to me to be a key element in recognising or defining the expert teacher. It is widely acknowledged that Schon’s ideas on reflective practice have had a significant impact in the realm of education. Schon (1987) suggested that all human beings need to become competent in taking action, and simultaneously in reflecting on this action in order to learn from it. Brookfield (1995, pp. 2-7) suggests that reflective teachers
seek to probe beneath the veneer of a commonsense reading of experience; they "investigate the hidden dimensions of their practice". He asserts that reflection is all about our assumptions: “Becoming aware of the implicit assumptions that frame how we think and act is one of the most challenging intellectual puzzles we face in our lives”. He further suggests that if the teacher is able to challenge and change his or her assumptions, the consequences for learning can be “explosive”.

Reflective practice can be undertaken by the individual or in a group setting. Each has advantages and can provide potential benefits to the teacher. Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) propose that an environment characterised by openness and trust is a necessary context for group reflection. These writers also suggest that problems may be seen by the person encountering them as a sign of weakness, and that there may be a reluctance on the part of individuals to share these problems with their peers. The practice of group reflection, however, when undertaken in a spirit of co-operation and trust, can lead to professional growth opportunities and enrich professional development. Stated simply, Osterman and Kottkamp (1993, p. 54) believe that “the focus of reflective practice is professional practice”.

Brookfield (1995) extends the concept of self reflection by reference to critical reflection. He asserts that as we are never fully aware of our motives and intentions and as we frequently misread how others perceive our actions, an uncritical stance towards our practice can lead to a lifetime of frustration. He further suggests that reflection is not normally critical but becomes critical when it has two purposes: firstly, when it seeks to understand how power frames educational processes and actions; and secondly, when it questions assumptions and practices that appear to make our teaching lives easier but in fact work against our long-term interests. “Being anchored in values of justice, fairness and compassion, critical reflection finds its political representation in the democratic process. Since it’s difficult to show love to others when we are divided, suspicious and scrambling for advantage, critical reflection urges us to create conditions under which each person is respected, valued and heard” (Brookfield [1995], p. 27).

CONCLUSION
To sum up – and returning to the opening proposition – is there such a paragon as the expert teacher? If we accept the five-stage model from novice to expert practitioner as proposed by Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986), it follows that the attributes these authors adduce for their Stage Five practitioner do, indeed, define and characterise “expertise”. These experts are proficient people whose performance is effortless and fluid and whose judgments are based on intuition, feel and know-how, expressed in a manner that eludes definition. And I would also suggest that expert teachers are those who have generally moved from a mode of self-reflection to that of critical reflection, which sets them apart from their fellow teachers. I would add the rider, however, that expertise may also be context specific; and that it cannot be assumed a person who appears expert in one context is necessarily able to replicate this expertise in another setting.

Clearly there is a point – or convergence of points – at which the teacher moves from the merely competent to the expert. I have suggested that the values of collegiality and self-reflection are defining qualities in the expert teacher. But the appearance (actual or perceived existence) of these qualities does not, in itself, define “expertise”. The expert teacher is a multi-facet ed being. It takes experience, dedication to self-development, positive attitudes, beliefs and values, and commitment to students, colleagues and the institution to produce expertise in teaching. And these attributes are not static or fixed in time. They develop over time and need constant revisitation, refinement and challenge if the expert teacher is to remain “expert”. Without this ongoing reflection and commitment to change, what is deemed today’s “expertise” can easily slide back into yesterday’s “competence”.

References


