An exploration of field-based early childhood teacher education in Aotearoa New Zealand

Margaret Brennan, Liz Everiss and Diane Mara

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Purpose

This study seeks to capture the reality and process of field-based early childhood teacher education using the classroom and the learning encounter as a unit of analysis. It includes a beginning focus on, but is not limited to, interactions between "student and student", "lecturer and student", "lecturer and the group", and "student and the group". The exploratory focus begins to document, describe and characterise the nature and form of field-based early childhood teacher education. By taking this approach, the study's aim is to contribute to the limited research-base which investigates the "inner workings" of teacher education programmes internationally and to provoke exploration of conceptual and methodological frameworks for future field-based teacher education studies.

Background

The Aotearoa New Zealand context and field-based early childhood teacher education

The field-based (also known as centre-based) early childhood teacher education model, where learners work in early childhood centres at the same time as they study and where work experience is integral to their programme of formal learning, arose as a pragmatic solution to a severe shortage of qualified early childhood teachers. Bell (2004), in one of the few publications about field-based teacher education in Aotearoa New Zealand, notes how field-based learners are generally those who wish to improve their practice and to answer questions that arise from the "now" of practice. She acknowledges also the value of the breadth of perspectives that these students can bring to the initial teacher education (ITE) programme and the centrality of the sustained work experience in the field-based situation. In addition, she notes how this challenges learners and their lecturers to constantly construct and reconstruct their own "working theories", an aspect she suggests that can be missing or under-represented in pre-service institutionally based programmes and about which little is known.

In most cases within field-based early childhood teacher education in Aotearoa New Zealand, lecturers, in addition to holding higher tertiary level qualifications, are registered teachers with experience and a background of teaching in a variety of early childhood education services or, as students would say, "the real world". Most lecturers deliberately and regularly bring that experience into the tertiary classroom and into their teaching. Recent experience in the sector is helpful but as lecturers also regularly visit students on their teaching experience placements, they are continually updating their knowledge and experience, albeit in a different role and through observation and discussion rather than participating in daily professional practice.

Field-based initial teacher education programmes have been key players in teacher education over a long period. The field-based model in this country has its roots in the free kindergarten movement where, until the late 1940s, student teachers worked in the kindergarten in the morning alongside qualified teachers and attended teacher training in the afternoons (May, 1997, p. 81). These training programmes, which were two years in length, were similar in nature to the later field-based teacher education programmes which are the subject of this study.

Currently, field-based ITE programmes support the implementation of the strategic plan for early childhood education, *Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki* (Ministry of Education, 2002); they were a key means of assisting the previous Labour Government to meet its goal of ensuring that, by 2012, all regulated staff working in teacher-led early childhood services were registered teachers (or 70 percent registered and 30 percent enrolled in approved initial teacher education programmes) (Ministry of Education, 2008). The current National Government has, during 2010, reduced quality targets for registered teachers to 80 percent. It is difficult to predict how this change will affect enrolments in field-based ITE programmes.

At the time this study commenced a count of field-based ITE programmes identified in the Ministry of Education Teach New Zealand publication on early childhood teacher education qualifications suggest there are currently seven ITE providers that have a major field-based focus (Ministry of Education, 2008). While data on the number of learners enrolled in these programmes is difficult to ascertain, it is known that the two largest providers of ITE with a field-based orientation (majority of students working while they study) have between them approximately 1700 students currently enrolled nationally (personal information, 2010).

Despite its long history and the high numbers of students enrolled in field-based ITE programmes, it remains an area about which little is known. For instance, Bell (2004) identifies that although it has been a popular model for more than 20 years, there has been remarkably little evaluation of its effects. Furthermore, she found that the international literature, while of interest, is not directly relevant as it tends to report initiatives involving enhanced field experience for pre-service or graduate students (e.g., Duquette, 1996; Munby, 1999, in Bell, 2004), rather than the model familiar to us in Aotearoa New Zealand where working in an early childhood centre is the main criterion for entry. Our recent literature search suggests that little has changed in the intervening period.

Positioning the study internationally

Within the international ITE context, researchers are currently arguing that the reality of teacher education programmes is more complex and contradictory than has previously been reported (Kennedy, 1998, cited in Zeichner & Conklin, 2005) and that too much research attention has been given to the outcomes of teacher education at the expense of the processes that secure them (Mulcahy, 2006). In addition, Feiman-Nemser (2001) suggests that traditional teacher education is a weak intervention that largely ignores the influence of what students bring to the learning-to-teach process, and that it is largely ineffective against the socialising effects of their first teaching job. These writers and others (e.g., Darling-Hammond & Hammerness, 2005; Grossman, 2005) are calling for more studies that explore the processes of teacher education programmes as the programmes take place, to help us understand the critical features that make them successful (or not) for diverse learners.

Cochran-Smith and Fries (2005) suggest that teacher education should be conceptualised as a learning encounter and that to understand this encounter one must pay attention to what takes place in the ITE programme and classroom. This means acknowledging that, by its very nature, the experience of learning to teach is highly contextualised, with the influence and involvement of the teacher educator and the ITE institution as much part of the process as the student (McLean, 1999). Therefore, to better understand the process of becoming a teacher, one needs to be aware of *all* of the participants in the process, of what each person brings to these encounters and of the multiple contexts in which such encounters occur, because these contexts are reflexively shaped by, and shape, the nature of the encounter (McLean, 1999).

Zeichner (1999) argues that the lack of research attention to the processes of teacher education as they occur (in contrast to pre- and post-studies), and the experiences of pre-service teachers, is related to hierarchies of knowledge and social prejudices that have historically been associated with teacher education. We would add that this view perhaps also contributes to the apparent lack of interest by researchers in exploring what occurs in the early childhood field-based ITE context. Zeichner challenges teacher educators to engage with what he calls the "new scholarship" in teacher education which has the potential to open up new lines of enquiry by drawing on a broader range of theoretical and methodological approaches than in previous approaches to research in teacher education.

We suggest that the research situation in Aotearoa New Zealand is similar, given the findings of the review of local teacher education research by Cameron and Baker (2004) who reviewed 18 New Zealand ITE-related studies. It appears that none of these studies include data that were gathered, or generated, in the cut and thrust of the ITE classroom.

The need for a diverse teaching population and diverse values

Recent data indicate that early childhood teacher education graduates are more ethnically diverse than graduates from primary or secondary programmes (Ministry of Education, 2007). Students who undertake teacher education through field-based programmes are generally mature age women who seek to combine family and community responsibilities with work and study commitments (Bell, 2004). Furthermore, it is predicted that by 2040, more than half of the students in schools will be from Māori and Pasifika communities (Ministry of Education, 2004). Today, student teaching populations are reflecting the diverse social communities in which they are asked to work. This changing socio-cultural demographic challenges teacher educators to develop responses to "different identities and values that have their origins in cultural, linguistic, class and gender differences" (Wells & Claxton, 2002, p. 9). A local example is seen in the proportional increase in young children of Māori and Pasifika descent relative to that of Pakeha attending early childhood services (Ministry of Education, 2009).

A related concern for teacher educators is the dominance of Western values, content, and methods in teacher education programmes and pedagogies (Anae, Anderson, Benseman, & Coxon, 2002; Ball & Pence, 2008; Dickie, 2000; Smith, 1999) and the corresponding difficulty of preparing student teachers to work in increasingly diverse cultural and ethnic communities. Field-based students, however, often work with this diversity from the onset of their teacher education and bring it directly into the teacher education classroom. In the writers' experience, field-based students tend also to represent the demographic make-up of their local communities. Lecturers and peers are required to respond to diversities in the programme on a daily basis through the process of field-based learning. The absence of research that seeks to explore teacher education processes in general (Moles, 2006) and the lack of acknowledgement of the challenges for teachers when working with culturally diverse communities further signifies the importance of this research project.

Consistent with the views of Gibbs (2006) that teaching is a "moral" endeavour, then, it also follows that what students are taught is worthwhile to know; that professional practice is underpinned by "right" conduct; and that teachers' work includes being advocates for social justice in increasingly complex and diverse globalised communities. Therefore, what lecturers do to assist students to make such professional dispositions their own becomes crucial.

Stephen May (1999), in considering both the international and the New Zealand context of multilingualism and multiculturalism, claims that teachers for the most part assume the discourse they use within a classroom or educational setting is culturally universal. Discourse and ethno-methodological analyses of teacher interaction and language reveal not only miscommunication but also a "silencing" of difference within education. Such communication barriers partly contribute, he claims, to poor performance and lack of achievement of minority students. In addition, while accepting that responsiveness to difference is important if educators do not also examine the role of hegemony, power relationships, social inequalities and the role of culturally relevant pedagogy and curriculum, then students from minority groups are at best simply being accommodated or assimilated to dominant discourses. As Hall (1992, cited in May, 1999) writes, there is a need for a critical reflexive position on culture and ethnicity. People come from a base of a collective (socialised) voice, a particular history and set of experiences and culture but they are not (or should not) be limited by that position.

Much of what is written about diversity in teacher education can be described as aspirational in creating student teacher awareness of the need for social justice, by engaging them in collaborative enterprises, in their becoming more skilled in power sharing and confident in the co-construction of knowledge. Analysis of ethnographic data from tertiary classrooms may provide evidence of how learning encounters therein may lead to students acquiring such dispositions and knowledge that prepare them for effective practice with children and families from diverse community backgrounds.

Pedagogy in teacher education

Definitions of teacher education pedagogy include: classroom instruction and interaction, instructional strategies, instructional discourses and the representations of content (Grossman, 2005). According to Grossman, pedagogical approaches in teacher education are critical to how and what one teaches. She calls for

more research that examines the ways in which student teachers are taught, the approaches used by teacher educators, what student teachers learn about teaching, and what they come to know and believe as well as how they engage. She suggests that data collection methods and methods of analysis in this area need to be more transparent and explicit so that research can more readily inform practice.

Kelly (2006) claims that the concept of cognitivism currently dominates teacher learning. There are limitations to this theoretical position which render it inadequate for understanding the complexity of teacher learning because it advocates a view of teacher expertise that resides in individual minds and it adopts a simplistic notion of teacher knowledge which does not count for what Schon (1983) calls "knowledge in practice". Nor does it account for what Sternberg and Hovarth (1999) call "tacit knowledge" or for a process of knowing that is stretched across people and settings (Lave, 1991). Further, by separating the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understandings from their use, a process of transfer is assumed. However, there is a substantive body of research suggesting that knowledge acquired in one setting is seldom used by learners in another setting. The problematic nature of the concept of transfer has led to it being described as the "holy grail" of educators (Resnick, 1989).

In adopting such a view of learning as acquiring knowledge, cognitivism fails to recognise a much closer and more complex relationship where knowing is distributed across teachers, students, and resources such as books and computers, and where learning is the movement from the peripheral (novice) to full (expert) participation in the work of schools (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Duquette (1997), in her analysis of seven field-based programmes, asserts that relational and enquiry approaches to teacher education are potentially rich for gaining understandings about teaching and learning and that students need to be able to question what they see, hear, believe and do and make decisions based on theory and research, not just "neat ideas" on techniques such as management of behaviour or communication. Grossman (2005) confirms also that relational aspects between teachers or lecturers and their students help to shape not only the processes of teaching and learning but also what student teachers learn.

Interestingly, recent research on adult teaching and learning identifies humour as an important aspect of relationship building in a tertiary classroom (hooks, 2009; Garner, 2006; Vlieghe, Simons & Masschelein, 2009). It suggests that the use of humour can serve as a bridge between educators and students by demonstrating shared understandings and common psychological bonds leading to a more open atmosphere in the classroom which draws groups together. Bell hooks (2009) contends that this is especially true in classrooms where there is "much that separates and diversity is the norm" (p. 72).

Garner (2006) also suggests that the pedagogical use of appropriate humour can act as a catalyst to reduce anxiety, decrease stress, enhance self-esteem, and increase self-motivation in students, leading to increased interest in learning and enhanced opportunities to engage in divergent thinking. However, Houston (2009) warns that humour and laughter are not innocent, and analysis which is isolated from the social context, content and meaning of the humorous event keeps the phenomenon more innocent and unproblematic than if it were contextualised. She contends that the positive educational dimension of the laughter can only be properly understood by asking "*who* is laughing *at what*, and *with whom*" (p. 215).

Grossman (2005) singles out tasks and assignments students are required to complete as other crucial ingredients of student learning because of the ways in which they focus student attention on particular areas of practice and introduce them to ways of reasoning and performing. Mclean (1999) points out, however, that the hierarchical power structures which characterise tertiary institutions, and where for the most part students hold the low power position, can restrict creative thought on the part of students and act to support the status quo where they are at the mercy of grades given to their work by a more powerful "others" such as tutors.

The findings of Munby, Lock, Hutchinson, Whitehead and Martin (1999) on field-based teacher programmes concur with the views of Grossman (2005). They found also that students had an overall preference for the practicum experience because it is "real" life and, as the placements progressed, students reported they got to know themselves better and gained confidence in themselves as teachers. The early childhood field-based model of teacher education has argued for the centrality of sustained practicum and the potential opportunities it provides for students to link theory and practice, to build their curriculum and pedagogical knowledge and skills consistent with the qualified teachers they work alongside (Cameron & Baker, 2004).

Theory and practice

The distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge about teaching continues to underpin many discussions about educational knowledge. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) distinguish between knowledge for practice—where university researchers generate formal knowledge and theory to be used in classrooms and knowledge in practice which competent teachers have and develop as they design classroom learning experiences. They pose that the type of knowledge base composed by experts needs to be mediated by teachers working within inquiry communities who theorise and construct their work to connect to larger socio-cultural and political issues. Shulman (1986) notes that the wisdom of practice or teachers' own understandings are often omitted in debates regarding knowledge bases for teaching and that the status of teachers' practical knowledge is an ongoing issue in early childhood initial teacher education.

Darling-Hammond & Harmmerness (2005) report that studies of learning suggest that learning is enhanced when learners encounter mutually reinforcing ideas and skills across learning experiences, particularly when these are grounded in strategically chosen content and conveyed through effective pedagogies. Repeated experience with a set of conceptual ideas, along with repeated opportunities to practice skills and modes of analysis, support deeper learning and development of competence.

Krieg (2010) suggests that theory can be used as a basis for testing and exploring classroom practice and that the aim should be to develop knowledge about teaching through a process of systematic inquiry on the basis that this approach creates possibilities for developing a more reliable and real body of professional knowledge. She proposes that initial teacher education needs to provide student teachers with what she terms "theoretical toolboxes" to analyse the way knowledge constrains and enhances practice and to reconsider how they work with children. These "tools" should enable teacher educators to work alongside students and to support enquiry into how they are positioned within the contemporary knowledge environment with the aim being to contest rather than simply apply knowledge that has been found by others.

To Lenz Taguchi (2007, cited in Krieg, 2010), this represents a knowledge base that is always under construction and, which allows teachers, students and teacher educators to become mediators exploring limits and possibilities of "ways of knowing", thereby blurring the gap or momentarily erasing the binary between theory and practical knowledge. The approach taken by Taguchi moves away from the certainty of truth to a position of enquiry which requires the forming and reforming of frameworks for understanding practice. These frameworks are drawn from theoretical and practical knowledge as "those who teach and learn from teaching … interpret and theorise what they are doing" (Taguchi, 2007, cited in Krieg, 2010, p.151).

Learning encounters in the tertiary classroom

According to McLean (1999), to better understand the process of becoming a teacher, one needs to be cognisant of all participants in the process and to understand more about what each of them brings to the teaching and learning encounters. Further, one needs to understand something of the multiple contexts in which such encounters occur; and contexts that are reflexively shaped by and shaping the nature of the encounter. Lunenberg, Korthagen and Swennan (2006) conclude that in order to improve the effectiveness of ITE, and especially the potential of teacher education to develop new visions of learning and related practices in their graduates, one key aspect that also needs to be carefully considered is the role of the teacher educator and educational practices within teacher education itself. Despite the teacher's important role in the ecology of the ITE classroom, there are few studies which have thoughtfully examined this role, despite the fact that these people are perceived to be responsible for the quality of teachers (Howey & Zimpher, 1990; Lanier & Little, 1986; Lunenberg et al., 2006).

Lunenberg et al. (2006) highlight the complexity of the teacher education endeavour by reminding us that a key aspect for teacher educators is that not only are they teaching students but they are also teaching students about teaching and at the same time they need to know the differences between teaching children and adults and put such knowledge into practice. In addition, student teachers, and especially those entering field-based programmes, do not have empty "how to teach" compartments in their minds—they have lived full lives, and bring extensive lifetime personal experiences to the student role, including a substantial body of

personal knowledge about the work of teachers. The importance of the teacher educator as role model also focuses attention on the meaning of the often implicit pedagogical relationship between the teacher educator and student teachers for effective learning (Wubbels & Levy, 1993). Lunenberg et al. (2006) suggest that on this basis, the processes of teacher education may be more important than the content knowledge provided to student teachers and that the way teacher educators model certain views of learning could be a more dominant factor in shaping teacher behaviour than the actual content they teach.

In relation to this, Strike and Soltis (2009) in their description of professionalism and teaching with integrity describe the concept of ethical dialogue where student teachers are more likely to own the decisions reached and to care for the consequent action. They emphasise the importance of providing opportunities for "open and undominated dialogue" (p. 125) where students are not coerced to engage in discussion and which create conditions where everyone's views and interests are respected, and taken into account. In their view, the ethical lecturer in teacher education provides opportunities for this to take place on a regular basis.

Bourke (2008), in her exploration of student learning, suggests that in situations where student experience and voice is legitimised and understood within a setting, students report feeling more in control, better connected with the institution and are more appreciative of their teachers' perspectives as part of their own process of being heard as students. The student voice and experience has been historically subordinate to the more powerful voices of the teacher, curriculum, assessment and the purpose of schooling, however, as students themselves have reported they are "excited about teachers who want to know what students think" (Fine, Burns, & Payne, 2007, cited in Bourke, 2008, p. 813). Māori learners within secondary school settings have also provided strong messages about teachers needing to care about them as individuals and as Māori (Bishop & Berryman, 2006, cited in Bourke, 2008). Bourke poses that while much of the current rhetoric in education about student engagement portrays the will and desire to have students actively participating as a learner and member of an educational community, there is little evidence in reality that institutions have changed accordingly.

Learning through field experiences

Research on the outcomes of teacher education lends support to the idea that carefully constructed field experiences can enable new teachers to reinforce, apply and synthesise concepts they are learning in their coursework in a constructive way and that different strategies bring with them different benefits and limitations (Darling-Hammond & Hammerness, 2005). Darling-Hammond and Hammerness suggest that field-based types of teacher education models allow student teachers to see and understand theory differently because they are concurrently undertaking coursework and fieldwork. These models also provide the opportunity for student teachers to deeply understand a group of students and to learn how prior influences affect what is happening in the "here and now" of the school classroom.

Cochran-Smith (1995) suggests that without connections between the classroom, school and local communities, classroom field experiences may serve to strengthen student teachers' stereotypes of children rather than stimulate their examination. Studies of experiential community-based learning opportunities confirm the positive effect of student teachers making community connections and describe how, through these opportunities, student teachers can develop positive dispositions and attitudes toward children and families which carry over into teaching (Ferfolja, 2008) and, by extension, field-based classroom discussions. Another key feature is the opportunity the field-based teaching experience provides for networking and for student teachers to build professional relationships on a number of levels through teaching in their local community and then going to class with other student teachers in small supported groups (Ferfolja, 2008).

In addition, Tania Ferfolja (2008), in her Australian study of student teachers on a sustained practicum experience, found that the continuity and sense of "belonging" experienced by students through their ongoing participation in the same schooling community quickly positioned student teachers as thinking of themselves as teachers. Here the binary power relationships apparent in the discourse of supervising teacher and student teacher, where the former is constructed as all knowing and the latter as ignorant, has shifted, simultaneously changing the power dynamic. In these contexts, student teachers are not powerless as novice teachers but were seen to have something meaningful to contribute to the relationship, at times extending to professional

development for the qualified teachers in their classrooms (Ferfolja, 2008). We propose that the changed power dynamics resulting from field-based student teachers' perceptions of themselves as teachers extends to the teacher education classroom, and that this places additional demands on lecturers who are required to operationalise their knowledge in an "immediate" way across the formal programme and classroom context knowing that their input is subject to mediation by other student teachers in the group who may affirm or contest it.

The field-based programme positioned within a socio-cultural framework is entirely congruent with current dominant early childhood philosophy, pedagogies and practices. Others from outside the early childhood sector have also identified field-based early teacher education as a significant area of research for future teacher education. For example, Kane (2005) has recommended that research into a number of features of early childhood teacher education be carried out including the specific contributions and issues surrounding field-based teacher education programmes.

Thus there is concern apparent in the literature about the reliance by researchers on approaches that explore people's "thinking" about the ITE experience rather than the 'immediate action' of the ITE pedagogical experience for all participants. This concern suggests that it is timely to undertake research which has an in-depth focus on the nature of the learning encounters which occur between lecturers and field-based students as they engage with a formal ITE programme within the tertiary classroom. In conclusion, although field-based teacher education began as a pragmatic solution to teacher shortage, we believe that it can now be justified as a pedagogical approach informed by socio-cultural theory and analyses.

2. Research design, methodology and research value

Partnership with participants

There are two core relationship layers for this project—the relationships among researchers in the project team, who came from two different teacher education providers and (b) those between the researchers and the teacher education provider, including its tutors and students, who participated in this project as the subject of the study. The teacher education provider studied (the participant institution) was independent of the researchers' institutions. Experienced peers on the project's advisory committee also contributed to the project.

The project team reached agreement with the participant institution on the terms of a partnership agreement. It was agreed that the research team would retain research leadership and data collection responsibilities for the project, with the participant institution being a research participant. A participatory, collaborative research approach was taken whereby the participant institution was not only a research subject but was also involved in the design of the project and had ongoing input throughout the data collection and analysis phases. As expected, the researchers' prior experience and interest in field-based contexts helped to make this relationship authentic and meaningful for all parties to the arrangement. The participant institution had also indicated that it viewed the project as one where it could contribute to a growth in the knowledge base about field-based initial teacher education and, more broadly, to effective teacher education. At the same time, the project provided a valuable opportunity for all members in the project to engage, at a deep level, with field-based classrooms; it provided opportunities for students' professional growth and for staff to increase their research capability and understandings; and it enabled the project team to identify possible future collaborative research.

Key aspects of the research partnership included the following:

- The project members negotiated a shared understanding of the project and the roles within the project (broadly articulated above in terms of leadership and participant roles).
- The participant institution identified the classes to be used for the project and negotiated entry to the sites for the researchers with staff and students. The research team provided all necessary background information and met with potential participants to outline the project before data collection started.
- The researchers complied with research site protocols.
- The three tertiary institutions were involved in the development of the ethics proposal and this was submitted to ethics committee of the participant institution for agreement, following approval by the Open Polytechnic Ethics Committee.
- The research team took responsibility for data collection. The participant institution was involved in data analysis through check-back processes that were built into the project plan for the duration of the research. This started with check-backs with lecturers and students during the data collection phase and continued at key points of the analysis and writing process, as agreed between partners. Information from these sessions has informed the research findings. Summaries of analysed data were also provided to participants for review and feedback.
- Representatives of the participating institutions were members of the advisory committee for the project.

Challenges for the sector

We believe that negotiating access to other organisations is perhaps more complex for research in the tertiary sector than for partnerships with schools or early childhood services. Tertiary institutions have the research capacity to undertake similar projects, are placed in the position of exposing their practices to peer scrutiny, and are subject to external imperatives in relation to performance-based research fund (PBRF) ratings which require their own staff to be research active.

Ethical concerns underpin the partnership approach taken within this project. There are ethical implications for researchers if they seek to use an ethnographic approach to explore ITE learning and teaching processes with groups of lecturers and students whom they work alongside on a daily basis. Not only is there the uneven power relationships at play between management and lecturing roles in ITE and the flow-on effect of these to lecturers' relationships with students, but also there is the risk of consequences in the area of assessment. For these reasons and to protect all parties to the partnership, the arrangement agreed with the participant institution was that it would be a "participant partner". Overall, research leadership responsibilities for the project were retained by the research team. Collaboration between the researchers and the participant partner at all stages of the research was a distinctive feature of this project.

Peer review

An advisory committee with a range of expertise was established for the project. This group was initially established to make comment on drafts and to provide feedback throughout the research process through email and face-to-face meetings. However, because of time constraints and changes in both the design and implementation of the project, the role of the committee was changed to one that had a focus on the analysis phase of the project. Membership comprised representatives from the researchers' initial teacher education providers and the "participant partner", and others with extensive research experience and/or experience in (field-based) teacher education and professional development.

Research question and rationale for study design

The research question was "What is the nature and form of field-based early childhood initial teacher education?"

To capture the nature of field-based early childhood teacher education this project moved out of the context of early childhood centres to locate the study firmly within the teacher education classroom. Field-based students spend a significant proportion of their teacher education in the early childhood centre and this is a unique feature of the field-based model. However, using the early childhood centre as the site of study would have resulted in a focus on what is more closely identified as "student practice". It was important to distinguish between the time when students are simply going about their work in their place of work and when they are being students in a tertiary classroom. Further, to capture and conceptualise the unique nature of field-based early childhood education within the scope of a small-scale study, we needed to be able to clearly make the distinction between what is a feature of the students' place of employment and what is a feature of field-based teacher education.

The classroom as both the site of study and unit of analysis allows for an intense focus on students and lecturers "doing field-based early childhood teacher education" and provides opportunity for new concepts and understandings to emerge that sit apart from traditional pre-service models. For example, the extra dimension of a student's own centre experience places different demands and challenges in front of not only the student but also the lecturing staff who need to operationalise their content in the classroom. This is often "demanded" by the student (Ord, 2007) and is a feature that needs to be explored in closer detail.

The current study aimed to collect and analyse descriptions of the process of field-based early childhood teacher education. Teacher education can be identified and described as a social phenomenon through identifying and describing the complex interplay of factors that characterise this unique process of teaching and learning. The focus is wholly exploratory in the sense that the research question is broad enough to allow for new conceptual understandings to emerge. In the nature of a small study, there is no attempt to generalise to larger populations. Instead, the study's primary aim and focus was to explore what is going on in these particular settings between these particular participants. Analysis began very early in the research process, as soon as data were collected. The researchers then followed "leads" emerging from the data or ideas about what they should start to look at more closely (Le Compte & Preissle, 1994). This emergent design and methodological decision to not limit the research question required the researchers to be flexible and informed, while allowing for a change of data collection tactics and focus, where necessary.

It is envisaged that this project will be stage one of a two-phase project that allows for other researchers to determine the focus of the second phase by what happens in the first phase. The contribution of this exploratory project to teacher education will be profiling and characterising field-based teacher education as a pedagogical model and entity in its own right. There are likely to be future collaborative investigations involving this same research team that will extend the understandings gained from this exploratory study.

Theoretical frameworks

Socio-culturalism

The overarching framework is socio-cultural although the analysis also drew on critical, discourse and interpretivist perspectives. According to Vygotsky (1978), all human action and thought is culturally mediated as cultural artefacts and tools are shaped by human practice and extended through application. In this way, past and present understandings are shared and extended. A major implication of Vygotsky's theory is that all psychological functions begin, and to a large extent remain, socially situated and context-specific (Brennan, 2005). Ontologically, this means that knowledge is changing and dynamic as it is both socially distributed and transformed through the individual's application of information. This theoretical approach both acknowledges and allows for the exploration of the highly contextualised and operationalised nature of field based early childhood teacher education.

Ethnography and interpretivism

Ethnography has its roots in anthropological and cross-cultural research and in its broadest sense includes any study that aims to describe the social and cultural understandings and practices of a group of people (Brennan, 2005). It offers a wide range of methodologies to capture holistic, detailed, contextual accounts of social phenomena (Hammersley, 1999, cited in Brennan, 2005). This form of enquiry relies on interplay between the observational data and the theories being developed which sits well with interpretivist frameworks which also view individuals as constructing meaning within a cultural framework (Hughes, 2001, cited in Brennan, 2005).

Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis enables access to the ontological and epistemological assumptions informing the method of research and also the social phenomena under study. It allows for interpretation of text with the aim of revealing unacknowledged agendas or motivation and critical analysis of established systems and ways of viewing the world (Frohmann, 1992). This approach is consistent with using verbal interaction as a unit of analysis to investigate a social phenomenon.

Research design

This qualitative study is a descriptive, exploratory case study that employs ethnographic methods of data collection and analysis to investigate the nature and form of field-based early childhood teacher education. The study's design was developed to be adaptive in nature to allow methodology to remain responsive to the sites "of" study and phenomenon "under" study and to ensure that theoretical concepts were able to emerge throughout the project.

The aim of this study was to expand theory in relation to teacher education which is consistent with the case study approach (Yin, 1994, cited in Brennan, 2005). The study's qualitative, ethnographic approach arises from a willingness to observe naturally occurring activities and practices in context (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The approach is inductive, a research methodology that is most often associated with interpretivist paradigms and qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis (MacNaughton & Rolfe, 2001).

Site of study

The site of the study was the field-based, early childhood education classroom in one tertiary education institution (the participant institution). This institution provides field-based early childhood teacher education to students studying in or upgrading to the Bachelor of Teaching (ECE).

Participants

Students and tutors from the participant institution involved in the Bachelor of Teaching (ECE) agreed to be part of this exploratory study. The researchers asked the institution to identify participant tutors, students and classes to take part in this project. The classes used for research purposes were subsequently identified by tutors in conjunction with their programme co-ordinator and head of school. Ethics approval was gained from the Open Polytechnic and the participant institution's ethics committee for researchers to observe in a total of 7 classes over a period of 5 weeks.

Ethical considerations

Standard ethical considerations applied in this study. Ethics approval was obtained from the Open Polytechnic Research Ethics Committee. The research participant partner was involved in the development of the full ethics proposal. Following receiving approval from the Open Polytechnic Ethics Committee, the proposal was submitted to the ethics committee of the participant partner's institution for its agreement with the terms agreed to for recruiting and observing students and tutors within the institution. In addition to institutional consent, consent was also obtained (with the much appreciated assistance of the head of school) from all individual participants (tutors and students) in the project. Confidentiality issues were addressed at all times. While students may sometimes have shared information about the centres in which they worked this was at no time compromising to the students' confidentiality, and anonymity was easily maintained. The identity of individual participants remains anonymous and data and analysis specific to the participant institution is not specifically attributable to or identified with that organisation. Tutors and students were given the opportunity to ask for their contributions to be withdrawn or deleted from any recording of their sessions but no student or tutor requested this (see Appendix 5). In each instance where there were new student or tutor participants, the study was explained to them and they were given opportunities to ask questions about it.

Framework guiding data collection and analysis

Burke's "dramatistic method" (1969, cited in Wertsch, 1997) offered a framework to guide the study in its exploratory focus, ethnographic design, and socio-cultural underpinnings. Burke uses five components as the generating principles of investigation. These are:

• action/activity—what is taking place?

• scene—where is this action taking place?

• agent/s—who are the people participating in the action/activity? What are their roles?

• agency—how is the action carried out? What are the means or tools that they use?

• purpose—why is the action taking? What is the intention and meaning of the activity?

Burke (1969, cited in Wertsch, 1997) argues that investigations guided by these questions allow for contextualised descriptions and characterisation of the phenomenon under study. It was with this framework in mind, and our own experience as lecturers in field-based teacher education, that we embarked on the data collection phase.

Data collection methods and tools

Data collection involved direct, detailed description of dialogue, conversations, and related behaviours, actions and artefacts recorded by three researchers across seven classes. Collection was mainly through researchers' pen and paper notes of classroom dialogue, discussion and interaction, and although audio tapes were used in some instances initially, sound coverage and clarity was uneven so recordings were discontinued. Classes were

approximately 3 to 3.5 hours in length, with 26 hours of data in total being collected by the three researchers. Researchers used check-back processes to triangulate data collection, interpretations and approaches. This was done after the first data collection session by each researcher, and then as necessary to confirm or clarify initial interpretations of data (see Appendix 1). Data collection tools included:

• audio-recording and transcription (tape recorders initially used in the classroom)

• pen and paper notes taken including researchers' field notes, including observations, journaling, and contextual information such as the description of education artefacts. (Contextualisation occurred through discussions with tutors and students and was documented as part of the notetaking process. This included observation of lesson plans that were disseminated by paper or whiteboard, and the nature of the activity that was occurring, for example, whether it was a presentation, small-group work, or tutor-facilitated.)

Field work challenges

A challenge for researchers was how to remain unobtrusive in classrooms during small-group activities and presentation-type work without inhibiting the nature of the conversation that was happening. Such situations are common teaching and learning occurrences in classroom settings and in these situations, the researchers used their discretion as to which groups to observe or be part of.

The amount of useful data collected for the research depended on the nature of the classroom session. For example, there was less interactional data from sessions where students were presenting work or when lecturers were presenting information than when there was open discussion, whether it involved lecturer to student, student to lecturer or student to student .

Data analysis

During the different phases of data collection early and consistent patterns in the data were recorded and documented, developed into detailed descriptions, followed by conceptualisation of emerging themes (Delamont, 2002). This categorising of data both conceptually and empirically meant that as the analytical process developed, these categories gave support to theory creation (Dey, 1993 cited in Brennan, 2005). The overarching approach to analysis was inductive. Data analysis occurred alongside data collection and began at the first instance of collection (Denzin, 2001). In addition, the research team met at times during the field research to discuss and triangulate interpretations, and to consolidate initial findings.

Pen and paper research notes were written up into full transcripts for analysis. Key research themes were identified and triangulated within and across categories from the data collected and agreed to by the three researchers. Identifiers were used to allow all data to be traced back to original data collection notes and researcher. Excerpts from the data were then organised into themes with the key organising theme being experience. Themes were discussed with, and verified by, participant tutors and students. Participant input was incorporated and contributed to the insights brought to the analysis (See Appendix 2). Sub-categories have subsequently been identified and located within emerging themes from the literature (See Appendices 3 and 4).

Unit of analysis

'Interaction' within the field-based early childhood teacher education classroom was initially profiled as the unit of analysis for the study. However, the depth, complexity and richness of data required us to move quickly beyond this unit to the "learning encounter". We adopted Cochran-Smith and Fries (2005) notion of the "learning encounter" which are defined as highly contextualised and relationally-based interactions and dialogues, where each person brings multiple contexts and relationships to the encounter.

Interaction captures what is happening in the present moment yet the encounter acknowledges the past, present and future experience—recognising temporal, historical, and cultural influences within every teaching/communicating moment. This interpretation aligns with Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory and other contextualists (such as Rogoff and Bronfenbrenner) who recognise the necessity of a deeper analysis when trying to capture and respond to the complexities of teacher education. To this end, the unit and research focus needed to be general in nature to account for the complex interplay of participants' actions, artefacts and practices (and ultimately a contextualised description of the phenomenon under study).

Validity

Both participant student and tutor feedback was sought on transcripts and initial data analysis relating to their organisation and the different courses and classes observed. Participants' were included in the analysis process and their responses included as analysis proceeded. In addition, all data analysis and interpretation were triangulated across the three researchers and their sites of study (Delamont, 2002; Denzin, 2001; Dey, 1993, cited in Brennan, 2005).

3. Project findings and discussion

Introduction

Grossman (2005) says that we are yet to understand the processes in which teaching and learning results in a trained teacher, but it happens. Our study asked what is happening in the teacher education classroom and in doing so responded to Kennedy's (1998, cited in Zeichner & Conklin 2005; Mulcahy 2006) challenge that research pay closer attention to the "processes" rather than the "outcomes" of initial teacher education. Our findings provide description and analysis of some of the processes occurring in the field-based early childhood teacher education classroom.

We posed the following questions:

1.What is happening in the field-based initial teacher education classroom?

2.What happens when students are already doing the very activity, they are learning about?

3.What is the nature and form of field-based early childhood teacher education?

Findings discussed in this section are descriptive and exploratory in nature. The data generated 168 recorded interactions within the initial teacher education classrooms; 128 of which drew on students' and tutors' experiences. The analysis used socio-cultural and, to a lesser extent, critical theoretical approaches, to provide an explanatory framework for findings.

Defining experience

Experience emerged as a central and organising theme in the data. In the following sections, the significance of this key finding is explored both conceptually and theoretically. We adopted Cochran-Smith and Fries (2005) conceptualisation of the "learning encounter" to understand what takes place in the classroom. Learning encounters are defined as highly-contextualised and relationally-based interactions and dialogues, where each person brings multiple contexts and relationships to the encounter. Findings indicate that students' experiences form the basis of many of such learning encounters in the field-based classroom. References to students' experiences (84) outweighed references to tutors' experience (37) and this phenomenon presents in several ways.

Conceptually, an emotional intersubjectivity appeared to frame many learning encounters and was often expressed through humour (Vygotsky, 1978). Discussions of shared experience revealed a spectrum of recognised, familiar emotions, understandings and realities. In addition, a cognitive intersubjectivity occurred through a shared understanding of the work, and acknowledgement of all the participants' (tutors and students) teaching experiences and realities.

Setting the context

The findings focus on verbal interactions and discussion in the classroom; however, all observed sessions were prepared by tutors and supported with teaching tools and artefacts such as lesson plans, PowerPoint, whiteboards, handouts, and videos. Lesson plans were disseminated on paper or whiteboard according to the nature of the activity that was occurring; for example, whether they were small or large group activities.

The participant institution chose the classes and cohorts for observation. At times different researchers observed the same session delivered by the same tutor but to a different student cohort. Two researchers observing the same sessions afforded a natural triangulation and yielded a richness of data as well as presenting the researchers with opportunities to revisit themes and topics in depth. Observations took place over the period of a month and included the following sessions:

• directed study (transition programme)

• curriculum sessions (third-year students)

• legal and ethical sessions (third-year students).

Findings: Research question 1:

The following findings relate to the first research question, "What is happening in the field-based initial teacher education classroom?"

Tutors contextualise

Tutors facilitated and at times provoked students to draw on their professional experiences. Teaching sessions often began with tutors making reference to the student's teaching experiences or context. Throughout sessions, tutors used several strategies to check that content and discussion was relevant to students' working situations. These "checking in" strategies asked students to draw on personal teaching experiences and to evaluate whether "taught" knowledge was applicable to their particular context and situation.

Tutors make links with students' local contexts

The following accounts provide examples of the many ways that tutors embedded teaching content within students' local culture and context. The teaching encounters indicate that tutors know their students very well and had genuine knowledge of their professional lives. When tutors led sessions, there were frequent pauses and invitations for students to share understandings of discussed concepts. Using this pause and invite approach, tutors actively facilitated links between students' teaching experiences and the course content. Tutors would also openly share their own thinking and experiences to reinforce links with students' local contexts.

> Tutor [T] uses the local fishermen as an example of continuing local iwi tensions. A student asks, "Is it at council level?" T discusses the difficulty for Māori of being part of local body decision making around resourcing and environments. She acknowledges this student's concern that Māori do not always have a voice or say in matters that directly affect them. [CA YR3D 11809]

> A student asks how is kōhanga changing and evolving, and if kōhanga now accept Pakeha children. Tutor says have they moved beyond the 1980 aims of preserving the language. She provides an example of a Pakeha child and his comfort and competence with te reo me ngā tikanga te kōhanga reo, and also Pakeha helping out in the kitchen at te kōhanga reo (Māori language nest). T says: "... on my last visit to the same kōhanga a Pakeha man asked me if I wanted a hot drink in te reo." [CA YR3D 13809]

> Tutor [T] discusses the vibrations of **porotiti** (spinning discs that rotate around two parallel strings) and soothing babies in utero. She says porotiti were also used for bringing worms to the surface to assist planting and propagating. A student asks if they still make traditional Māori instruments. T tells her about a stall at the local market and a man who makes and sells them. [CA YR3D 13809]

> Tutor [T] also draws on students' own experiences and her knowledge of their interests and lives. She uses a rugby match as an example of "psyching" up for fighting tribal wars and the rituals associated with challenges and preparation for warfare explaining how the ritual prepares them for the fight. [CA YR3D 11809]

Henderson (2001) supports such strategies and proposes an evaluative approach to thinking-centred education where students are awarded the complex task of engaging with community, policies, and life outside of the education sector. Teacher expertise is closely linked to the circumstances to which it pertains: not to precise situations, but to ways of thinking which will enlighten and inform their teaching situations (Henderson, 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Linking expert knowledge to local teaching situations invited students to explore and respond to cultural and ethnic diversities within their communities. Anae, Anderson, Benseman, and Coxon (2002); Dickie (2006); Moles (2006); and Smith (1999) highlight the difficulty of preparing student teachers to work in increasingly diverse cultural and ethnic communities. The tutors and students in this study, however, faced such diversity on a daily basis, and brought it directly and openly into the teacher education classroom.

Tutors facilitate students to draw on their teaching experiences

Tutors supported and facilitated students to draw on their teaching experiences using a range of strategies, such as provocation, reflection, and so on. Provocation was a particularly effective strategy as tutors proposed a tentative link between theoretical knowledge, professional knowledge and teaching realities and then left students to reconceptualise the ideas presented.

Provocation

The following is an example of the use of provocation.

> Tutor [T] prompts and questions students: "How can this be quality?" "Imagine if this is all you have to work in as your learning environment?" [CA-ER 15909 YR3D]
>
> Tutor [T] intervenes at this point and wraps up discussion and asks if with mixed age groupings if care needs to be taken with the environment. Do teaching staff need to believe in mixed age setting? A student replies that if people don't believe in mixed age settings they shouldn't work in them as it is against their philosophy. [CA-ER 18909 YR3D]
>
> Tutor [T] laughs and adds …so in a mixed age centre what do you do about babies? A student asks – do you have a carpentry area with scissors and the whole works. T asks what do you do if you have a situation between a younger and older child – would you leave it to the children to solve? [CA-ER 18909 YR3D]

Ivan Snook (2003, pp. 25–30) claims that the teacher educator has conflicting obligations, both to respect the students' own views and perspectives, while at the same time working to change them toward a better understanding of teaching and learning, and more enlightened practice. This often brings a sense of entitlement as teacher educators feel the need to change their students but at the same time they must also acknowledge them as people in their own right. Snook refers to this dilemma as a constant struggle. Provoking students' thinking appeared to counter the sense of entitlement that tutors needed to change behaviours. Tutors acknowledged teaching dilemmas but left resolution as the work of the student. This strategy was effective because "students as teachers" had already grappled with such uncertainties in their work.

Sotto (2007) supports this approach and says the linking of theory and practice is the work of the teacher who actively "problematises" the teacher education curriculum. "All knowledge begins with a question," (p. 158). That is, lecturers need to be more prepared to ask questions of students than to seek to answer them. Teachers may follow a course outline but according to Sotto, questions and enquiry techniques are what will always engage and motivate the student.

Reflection

Tutors encouraged students to reflect on their work with young children at both the policy and practice levels. A notable feature was students' immediate engagement in such tasks which seemed to provide welcome opportunities to air frustrations and queries. The implementation of policies and regulations challenged students' notions of best practice and teaching philosophies in their work as teachers.

> Tutor [T] is facilitating the discussion and encouraging students' participation. Student C: "It's a waste of teachers' energy." Student D: "It comes down to allocation, funding, management." Student C: "That's why transition must have spaces." Student D: "That's why we have to ask ... are we catering for a four-month-old ... or a six-month-old." [TPDS DGRADS 10809]
>
> Tutor [T] asks the group: "In the actual environment, how will just the adults fit – both teachers, parents coming in and out? What about the noise level? How will parents feel as they come into the space? These spaces actually are included (or cover) for the kitchen, the sleep rooms, bathrooms." [CA-ER 15909 YR3D]
>
> Tutor [T] asks: "Looking at group size how would you take all this into account? Think about space. Student B responds: "Provide things for them to access themselves." T extends: "Choices?" Student A says: "Boundaries?" T says: "Like our talk about scissors? What about independence/dependence – what allowances would you make?" Student D responds: "Flexibility?" T continues: "Even with routines you can sometimes be driven by what you need to do – to work routines need to be part of the curriculum." [CA-ER 18909 YR3D]

Sotto (2007) argues that students should be encouraged to consider a wide variety of sources, materials, relationships and relevance to real-life situations so they can come to their own understandings. Sotto says that teacher educators need to move over and let students learn where to look without telling them what to see.

Theorising practice

Students' ability to theorise practice remains central to initial teacher education programmes. Guile (2006) poses that theoretical concepts support student teachers to reposition their thinking in relation to theory and everyday teaching experiences. Conceptual repositioning offers possibilities for acting differently in both

domains and helps students to see connections and relationships between things that may at first appear to be isolated events. Pedagogy has traditionally involved presentation of theories in their "pure" form and as divorced from reality so the challenge for teacher educators is to model how this process of theory and reality are linked. In this study, students theorised their own and others' practice as part of conversations about their work and this demanded authentic appraisals of their practice, knowledge, skills and uncertainties.

> "Should a child be transitioned every 6 months or a year?" This question engenders a great deal of discussion among the students, some students claimed 6 months is too soon, you just get to know the child and there is some support for moving through with the child/ren that you are responsible for. [CA-ER 15909 YR3D]

> Student A asks question in regard to ratio and group size. She makes a statement that some centres have five separate rooms and this must mean huge transitions for children. Student B responds that she has 5 rooms in her centre. This is quite flexible but definitely, it means that children have transitions to negotiate and that the biggest transitions are from the nursery to the 2-year-olds' room. Student A adds: "I am concerned that this also means transitions for the parents". [CA-ER 18909 YR3D]

> Student C: "Why do we restrict them [children] to those age groups? We seem to restrict them to those age groups ... but why do we restrict them?" [TPDS DGRADS 10809]

> A student says how she saw tuakana/teina occurring in her centre and discusses how she was able to share and extend her understanding of this concept with a student teacher in her centre. [CA YR3D 13809]

> Student A says equity in her centre is about planning. Student B adds "and time management". Student A notes that, in her centre, they put out the games with little pieces when the little children are asleep. [CA-ER 18909 YR3D]

Application

Students were provided with activities that examined the effectiveness of policy and regulations within the context of their teaching practice and situations. Tutors acknowledged the rich diversity of experience emerging from the class and framed "differences" as truly reflective of the complexities encountered in early childhood teaching.

> Students have been given copies of the regulations. Tutor [T]: "Remember I need to see the (relevant) regulations in your report. The 1998 regulations will apply until the renewal of licenses and then the 2009 amendments apply". T asks each group to share one example from their list with the rest of the class and students to critique one which is not specific; for example, adequate space, safe space for crawling, holding babies under 6 months when feeding, no more than 25 under 2s at any one time. [CA-ER 15909 YR3D]

> Tutor [T] says: "Let's go back to group size and ratios. What do babies need?" Student A responds 2.5 sq metres. T says: "Do you know how big this is? Let's test it out." Students have a go at sizing this. T reminds them that adults are included in this space and that it excludes areas not for play or where there is fixed equipment. T suggests that by the time adults are in the space there is not a lot of room left for children. [CA-ER 18909 YR3D]

> Tutor [T] brings class back together to feedback to group and discuss thoughts on ratios and group size. Student A feeds back that for 9 babies her group thought that 1:3 should be the ratio. T says: "Good, what group size?" Students say they haven't had a discussion but that 9 seems a good figure. Group 3 give feedback and agree that 1:3 is a good ratio and relate this to "Prime Times" and that 9 to 10 should be maximum group size for babies. T asks: "What about toddlers?" Student B responds: "Our toddler room is 1 to 3 years so not so clear and makes it difficult to come up with an answer." Student C interjects that her toddler room is also mixed. Student A suggests a mixed infant/toddler ratio. Student D suggests a group size of 18–20 and ratio of 1:4. T says: "Yip". Student E suggests a ratio of 1:4–5. [CA-ER 18909 YR3D]

Darling-Hammond and Hammerness (2005) identify a key element for successful learning as providing students with the opportunity to apply what is being learned. The richness of classroom dialogue and discussion was partly due to students having an ongoing supply of practice-based experiences to explore. Conversations were about teachers talking teaching, as students collectively reflected on how things worked in their centre.

Tutors draw on their own experiences

Experience-based learning is an effective way of learning about a new subject or discipline or becoming attuned with practice (Munby, 1999). Lave and Wenger (1991) also talk about the importance of joining communities of practice, showing how learning occurs through apprenticing with others who are already

part of a particular culture or community. Tutors in this study openly and generously shared their professional experiences with students. At times this took the form of empathising with students regarding the demands of study. Tutors, finding themselves in the company of teachers, often reflected on their personal teaching philosophies, and discussed teaching strategies they themselves had used. Identification occurred at several levels. Tutors identified with students as fellow students, as teachers, as colleagues and as people.

Tutors share their personal experiences of being a student

Tutors identified with students' challenges. A common strategy was to personalise information with phrases such as "what we have to do is..." One tutor reported to students that she too had been a student "here" so she knew how it worked.

> Tutor [T] discusses the requirements of the contract [between student and supervisor]. T personalises instructions and uses phrases such as "I would..." and "in my own research"... and "I'll tell you a little about my experience..." Personalisation also takes the form of including self as part of the group through phrases such as "what we have to do is..." [TPDS DGRADS 10809]

> Tutor [T] reads instructions from the course outline and relates the research procedures to experiences of being a student undertaking own research. T continues to personalise requirements: "I like open communication ... So that's what I see under that section ... I know it might be hard to meet face-to-face..." [TPDS DGRADS 10809]

> Tutor [T] relates this point back to own experience as a student researcher and being supervised. [TPDS DGRADS 10809]

Dianne Mulcahy (2006) conceptualises teacher education pedagogy as being constructed through a relationship with the "teacher and the taught". This construction is manifested both materially through teaching tools and artefacts, and socially through discussion and interactions. She terms these exchanges as "intra-actions" because they occur through a range of modalities and across a range of spaces. Issues of power also apply and Mulcahy reflects on the prevalence of didactic pedagogy where knowledge is transmitted to students. She agrees with Edwards and Nicholl (2004) that changing power–knowledge relationships requires the simultaneous changing of pedagogical practice. Mulcahy is committed to "relational thinking" which is characterised by inclusive and interconnected thinking. Tutors often entered into shared learning spaces with students and adopted "relational thinking" in their teaching. Intra-actions were also evident when teachers related to students on both social and professional levels.

Tutors share their personal and professional experiences

> Tutor [T] is discussing the concept of making mistakes and its place in Māori culture. She says, "We (identifying as Māori) always see mistakes as more learning ... when a child makes a mistake ... it is learning..." T also discusses how children are exposed to many aspects of life and the notion of collective learning. [CA YR3D 11809]

> Tutor [T] discusses the modern traditional methods of tapping when tattooing. She shares her own experience of wanting a "ta moko" and going home to ask permission from her family. One of her nannies tells her that she is not yet ready for the traditional ... "but you can have this one..." [CA YR3D 11809]

> One of the tutors shares her experience of her partner and children being Māori and how she has had to re-examine many of the things she took for granted and how she copes with racism. She says she has continued to be open and finding out about his life and values. She shares experiences of her own family's reaction to her choice of husband. [CA- BC 11809 YR3D]

> Grossman (2005) writes that the array of relationships among teachers and students will affect the quality of the student teacher experience across their programmes. A major concern for Ball and Pence (2006) is the "lack of representation of non-Western values, content and method at all levels of education" (p. 47); an issue also expressed locally by Linda Smith (1999). This lack of representation and invisibility adds to the difficulties that students find when learning to teach, and even those for whom the content of teacher education programmes is culturally familiar, can find learning to teach difficult (Ball & Pence, 2006).

> Tutors in this study assuaged the invisibility of some cultural experiences by inviting students to share in the tutor's own culture, and the related benefits of this cultural capital. One tutor provided many examples from her work with kōhanga philosophies and practices to illustrate for students the challenges and possibilities when teaching "non-Western values" in mainstream education.

Tutor [T] introduces the emergence of kōhanga reo and says this was the beginning of the language revival. T reminds them of the song, "…needing to hold on to what they had…" [CA YR3D 11809]

Student B says: "so their experiences were not respected…" Tutor [T] does not reply directly but continues to outline political issues and tensions including changes in demographics and social circumstances e.g., both parents having to work and not being able to be involved in kōhanga. [CA YR3D 11809]

The tutor outlined some of the possible reasons those who are not Māori do not understand or appreciate what they perceive to be the Māori way of doing things: "Too much mihi: not enough mahi". She shared her experiences working in centres where having a supportive manager or supervisor was very important, she encouraged her and walked alongside her to ensure her skills and knowledge helped the centre to link with their Māori community and parents. The tutor also said she had had experiences as a manager herself where not all colleagues were on the same wavelength, mainly Pākeha but also Māori. [CA- BC 11809 YR3D]

The tutor shared her experiences of a local school consulting with parents and the inappropriate ways in which they sought parent feedback (written questionnaire) and how they interpreted low rates of return as lack of interest by the Māori parents. She alerted students to not make assumptions about parent interest and involvement - that we have to find ways of involving parents that are comfortable and appropriate to them. [CA- BC 11809 YR3D]

Grossman (2005) argues for finding a better theory that could be a different kind of tool to understand teacher education processes. We need a theory that would help explain or interpret the relationship between the pedagogies of professional education and features of professional practice. Such a theory could describe how students learn not only from their own experiences, but from the experiences (and modelling) of others such as lecturers. Our findings suggest that tutors, through sharing their personal and professional experiences, "modelled" ways to be an early childhood teacher and also how to think about early childhood teaching.

Tutor [T] in terms of facilities what you are required to have (by regs) is not really enough for under 2s- these are the minimum but you (we) can do better! Unfortunately in my experience it comes back to money. [CA-ER 15909 YR3D]

Tutor [T] says, "I have worked in such an environment and it is very hard. Mixed ages can work well if staff are well-trained and believe in the benefits of mixed ages." [CA-ER 15909 YR3D]

Tutor [T] draws on personal experience by referring to her own research on mixed ages to suggest it can work well if the environment is appropriate. [CA-ER 18909 YR3D]

Tutors relate to students as teachers

A characteristic of learning encounters was an absence of power. We observed tutor-led sessions yet there remained an easy and respectful relationship between tutors and students. Students appeared to value tutors' opinions and confidently engaged in professional discussions and were accepting that tutors did not have all the answers. Tutors, on the other hand, did not claim to know, and frequently enquired about, students' experiences and professional opinions.

Re: providing for quality (belonging) within a centre and providing for infants and toddlers. Tutor [T] says that is where strategic planning comes in. How will group size affect this? If there are too many children we can't be responsive to too many at once, like 3 at once. But to my mind the experience of teacher is (very) important. [CA-ER 15909 YR3D]

Tutor [T], "These are all the things we do as teachers, setting it up … but girls already go to the dolls… McNaughton says be careful that you are (not?) transferring to other areas … but if it is "natural" why are we "fighting it". Stereotyping is something we need to be aware of. [CA-ER 15909 YR3D]

To understand the process of becoming a teacher, one must also strive to understand teacher educators, the intricacies of their relationships with learners and the contexts within which these interrelationships are constructed (Cameron, 2007). Smith (2005) suggests that behaviour change appears to be influenced to the extent that behaviours and values held by lecturers, associates, or colleagues is observed and adopted by the student.

Tutors share personal perspectives and professional philosophies

Tutor [T] I have visited a centre where it works but young babies need protection from others, they need a safe floor area. Children need support to solve problems and staff have to be available to assist (engage). [CA-ER 15909 YR3D]

Tutor [T] sums up that she gets a sense that people have a preference for small groups and 1:3 ratios. Obviously

9 children and 3 adults will mean a crowded space and the likelihood that parents won't be quite so welcome. A student adds that it also means there are fewer children to interact with and this could affect children's socialisation. T suggests that it is reasonably unnatural to have that many children together. [CA-ER 18909 YR3D]

Tutor [T], "We need to look with new eyes. The centre needs to be a place to be loved and cared for, and working with families and parents/whānau." [CA-ER 15909 YR3D]

"I have talked about dreaming this to be possible…it can happen." [This is the tutor's view in response to considering the ideal of quality and the reality of life in centres.] [CA-ER 15909 YR3D]

Tom, cited in Smythe (1987, p. 10) and Gibbs (2006) say that what students are taught must be worthwhile to know, and that professional practice needs to be motivated by "right" conduct, thus suggesting that teachers' work includes being advocates for social justice. Furthermore, teacher educators can assist students to make such ethical dispositions their own. Tutors recognised the diversity of communities in which students worked, and supported them to respond accordingly, through making clear their own positions and philosophies in relation to a range of issues. Evidence suggests that students considered, and at times, adopted these professional positions and dispositions as their own.

Findings: Research question 2

The following presents the findings for the second research question: What happens when students are already doing the very activity they are learning about?

Students seek and share teaching experiences

Students were genuinely interested in each others' teaching experiences posing and resolving dilemmas arising from their teaching experiences. Disagreement tended to reach some form of consensus after examination and negotiation of the issues involved. Students openly offered professional advice and support to each other and their diversity of teaching experiences provided opportunities for multiple interpretations and possibilities for practice.

Students share experiences of implementing regulations and policies

Optimum group sizes for each age (students in small groups). Student says: "Where I work, age range, ratios, group size. We have 1:6 for under 2s, 18 months is too old – from 16 months old the children in our centre get bored." Tutor [T] asks for students to discuss and try to reach a consensus about size. [CA-ER 15909 YR3D]

"In our centre we always feel we are observed all the time"– a comment in reference to another student asking in their group: "Who knows when you are following/not following the regs?" [CA-ER 15909 YR3D]

Student: "We found that with the addition of just one extra teacher/adult we got uneven groups, extra lunch breaks working around it … greater volume of teachers and especially having 4 teachers used to working together, plus adding a new person … changed things." [CA-ER 15909 YR3D]

Group 1 to 2: "Where should you find the complaints policy in a centre?" One student replies: "ours is on the wall." Another student says that it should be in a folder. Group 1 say that it should be on the wall beside the licence. All laugh and discuss. Another student in Group 1 asks, "if not on wall, can go to the book…" [CA-ER 18909 YR3D]

Sotto (2007) argues that it is the nature of humans to strive to resolve ambiguity and incongruity and they will work to do so. Regardless of the teaching approach used learning needs to be based on evidence and coherent and consistent otherwise learners can rush into resolution before evaluating evidence for themselves and experiencing insight. Tutors provided students with professional evidence (such as the early childhood regulations and national curriculum) on which to base their discussions. Students subsequently shared frustrations of implementing regulations in their centres that were not always congruent with their notions of good practice, their personal teaching philosophies or what they were learning in class.

Students share their wider experiences of teaching

Tutors encouraged students to extend discussions on the basis of their interests as well as teaching experiences.

Student says that when she began working in childcare it was about social services. [CA YR3D 11809]

Tutor [T] shows another image of porotiti and takawairore (spinning, humming instruments). Student asks: "... can we make these?" T replies: "why not?" Student A says: "We used to make those in England but with buttons." [CA YR3D 11809]

Student A says: "In the centre where I worked in the UK we worked with partitions as it was quite flexible and that the children seemed to quite like it". Student B notes that it can work well and means staff don't get "stagnant". Student D suggests that the problem is that staff aren't attached to any area. Student C adds that a benefit is that children see all staff. Student B suggests that it depends on which side of the fence people sit and gives an example of kindergarten teachers who don't necessarily know about working with babies. [CA-ER 18909 YR3D]

Students C and Student D discuss resources, studies and where to find them. They share stories about TV programmes, what they have heard, read in relation to their own studies (gender?) "do girls need ... what do girls need? ... Do they need dress ups ... to play outside ... I read raising girls, I have read it and it's about relationships, behaviour management but I would love to have the research to know what girls should do ... in the programme ... would it say what girls should do?." [TPDS DGRADS 10809]

Students collectively reflect on their professional experiences

The group is discussing the wisdom of having the same ratios for one-year-old and three-year-old children. A suggestion is made of 1:6 for toddlers by Student A. Student B: "... not sure about this..." Student A says that you need to change the space as well. She asks Student D, "What is your infant and toddler room like?" Student B describes it. Student A responds with "... right – they're not separate rooms though?" [CA-ER 18909 YR3D]

Student C: "Why do we restrict them [children] to those age groups? We seem to restrict them to those age groups ... but why do we restrict them?" [TPDS DGRADS 10809]

Student, "I have been studying this for my spiral…the teacher moved the boy instead of the girl... I think it's because we are a female staff we stop the boys from being physical…they say we like you because you are very physical, get down and do the scungy stuff." [CA-ER 15909 YR3D]

Students frequently engaged in what Mulcahy (2006) terms a "problem-based approach to pedagogy" where problems of interest and relevance are explored and unpacked. Using this approach, there are no "right" answers. Resolution is temporary and may require re-visiting. Within problem-based approaches to pedagogy, there are multiple knowledges which must be brought to bear in addressing issues. Understanding is gained through collaborative processes.

Students seek information about other students' teaching experiences

Students enjoyed hearing about others' experiences and would use sessions as opportunities to seek information about a range of early childhood services, centres and philosophies.

Student C: "But are they like that at Montessori?" Student D: "Yes but they are not ... um ... I'll find out what they need ... what boys need ... to find out their specific needs I mean..." [TPDS DGRADS 10809]

"Do girls have special needs...do they really need to do the dress up thing...is that clear enough?' Student C replies: "But they don't need it ... do they? They probably have it at home." Student D: "But isn't that how they make sense of the whole thing?" Student C: "Looking after the baby just like Mum?" Student D: "But maybe boys don't need that ..." [TPDS DGRADS 10809]

The conversation [about gender differences] continues back and forth with the two students discussing, debating ideas, finding and flushing out their differences in philosophies, beliefs, and understandings regarding their own experiences in relation to gender and early childhood practices. [TPDS DGRADS 10809]

Findings: Research question 3

The following sets out the findings related to research question 3: What is the nature and form of field-based early childhood teacher education?

Humour

A key to understanding the process of teaching and learning in teacher education programmes, is examining the array of relationships among teachers and students that inform the quality of student teacher experience across their programmes. We found "humour" and "experience" to be closely related and interdependent concepts that characterised the nature and form of field-based early childhood teacher education. We have discussed the significance of experience throughout the findings; however, humour appeared to capture the "essence" of the field-based classroom. Humour "mediated" experience (Vygotsky, 1978) and linked the cognitive and affective. Humour-based interactions and learning encounters arose out of shared understanding and recognition; it was "funny" because the experience was immediately recognised, shared and understood by all participants. Humour created instant unity as others "know" and "understand" each other's teaching reality. This mixed sense of fun and relief created a climate of acceptance and equity of learning (Brennan, 2007a, 2007b). In the following sections, we offer little analysis other than placing the following data within themes. We have intentionally left the scenarios and examples to speak for themselves.

Tutors use humour to build rapport

Student A responds: "I think it is great but I don't think... [parts of her dialogue are inaudible but she appears to be challenging the directive nature of supervision] I hear her say... "no...no...no ... I know you have to be there but..." Tutor [T] continues to clarify role and the nature of the supervision... "will I do house calls ... no probably not..." [TPDS DGRADS 10809]

T (tutor) asks: "Do you want me on your back on the whole time? Or do you want me to stand back?" Three of the six students say in unison: "Stand back ... stand back..." [nervous laughter]. [TPDS DGRADS 10809]

Tutor [T1] paraphrases, offers suggestions as to how students could approach the task. She asks each tutor what their groups discussed and gives tentative examples of what the assessment might look like for that area of research. She has a light, humorous, conversational style. Students laugh frequently. T1 says, "...for example in T2's group you could do a literature review..." Tutor [T2] replies, "...you must do a literature review..." T1 responds, "...not you could...you must..." Everyone laughs. [TPDS DGRADS 10809]

Student asks, "... so who can put a rahui on... who has the power to do this?" Tutor [T] replies, "kaumatua and tohunga?" Student asks, "Is it legal? [after some clarification she is asking if it is legally binding]...what say if I was ignorant and took pippi from Kawhia..." Tutor replies, "Good question... [laughs]... you would find out..." Everyone laughs. [CA YR3D 11809]

Tutor [T] tells the students that she loves the stories and the use of humour in teaching. She says that it "makes" you learn things regardless of occasion or purpose of lessons. She gives her brother-in-law as an example and says the Kaumata joked in te reo about him saying, "He must be a good provider because he sure ain't good looking..." [CA YR3D 11809]

Tutor [T] calls out, "... time for a break... you look like you are going anorexic..." Everyone laughs. [CA YR3D 11809]

Tutor [T] informs students of Hirini Melbourne's book and makes a joke about 'chanting women' and bird calls. I note how frequently she uses humour and how ready the students are to laugh and enjoy the jokes. [CA YR3D 13809]

Tutors use humour to diffuse or redirect

The tutor focuses on the broader concepts and principles of Māori learning yet students' questions often concern detail. They want to know how to spell and pronounce words, and the 'exact rule' for certain protocols. She, however, continues to impart the wairua rather than the details. A group of students persist with the details and the tutor finally says, "I am not tainui." One student asks, "Why does whaikorero have a capital W?" [referring to the word written on the whiteboard]. She replies, "I hiccupped when writing it up." Everyone laughs. [CA YR3D 13809]

Tutor [T] has a list of words and concepts on the whiteboard. She calls out in Māori and the students reply in English, for example, she says whanau and the students reply family, aroha – love, waiata – song and so on. She sets the students the task of making up an action for each word and/or concept. There is a lot of laughter and innovation

as students 'act out' each concept. Students cannot come to an agreement about how to enact "purakau" (stories/ myths). T facilitates students' differences and makes a joke about enacting wairua (spirit). She observes a student throwing her head back and making a glug, glug noise and T says, "…now we don't mean that kind of spirit…" Everyone laughs. When enacting 'taonga' (treasure) a student makes a possessive, grasping movement. T laughs at the cultural interpretation/slip and says, "Ooooh… keeping it for yourself then…" [CA YR3D 13809]

The tutor notes there is a chocolate fish each for the winning team. There is a brief discussion about 'virtual' chocolate fish and does she really have them or is she tricking. The tutor says that she delivers and has been a student here so knows what they are talking about. [CA-ER 18909 YR3D]

Students use humour to build rapport

Student A and student B write on the whiteboard and discuss between themselves but in front of the wider class their differences of understandings regarding the concept/term of "whakatauki". Student A comments out loud, "Hey I didn't know I could write on a white board!" [CA YR3D 11809]

The class is discussing the regulations for early childhood centres and the tutor has developed a quiz format to go through these. The students find intriguing and amusing about where indoor temperatures are measured (1.5 metres from the ground); how long are menu records kept. A great deal of hilarity at the implication of one regulation that centres need a fence around the kitchen area! [CA-ER 15909 YR3D]

[The class had previously been divided into 8 groups and students had been asked to prepare and act out a group scenario using te reo Māori. The whole class session was the final presentation of these with a combination of costumes, unusual props, amusing scenarios. Students all enjoyed this session.] One group acted out "The Little Red Hen" and in this presentation she asked each of the animals in turn to come and help her make a cake. Of course they would not so she mixed up the cake herself. The group had make a model microwave oven and at the crucial moment the oven door opens and out pops a real cake [that a student had prepared that morning at home]! The class roar with laughter and the cake is cut up and passed around the class. [CA -TRM 15909 YR3D]

The free flow of the conversation allows students to explore the different forms of heating that centres use and the effectiveness of them – all seem interested. The tutor interjects and says 'let's make a start'. Group 2 respond to the tutor that they have one more to do. Student in group one jokingly says – that's a point for us/ they're leading you on T! [CA-ER 18909 YR3D]

Humour arises as part of happy and relaxed interactions

The tutor commends the students' recall of past sessions' content. The class at large joke and congratulate themselves on what good listeners they are. [CA YR3D 13809]

The tutor asks the class if they have noticed 'Tawhaki's vine' in the hub (learning centre in the library). A student replies, "No too busy eating…" [CA YR3D 13809]

Everyone participates although the tutor leads the activity. A final activity is when she calls out the Māori words/ concepts for the actions and asks the group to enact them. She calls out the words faster and faster and everyone is working hard to keep up. There is lots of laughter as the students all get tangled up with actions and words. [CA YR3D 13809]

Someone in group 2 sneezes then turns to group one and ask what the word is in te reo for 'bless you'. Student in group one who is obviously quite competent in te reo Māori responds 'tihi'. Student in group 2 says 'tihi' to the student who has sneezed. [CA-ER 18909 YR3D]

Summary of findings

In conclusion, in the field-based initial teacher education classroom and the unit of analysis of in this study, tutors contextualised students' learning within the issues and parameters of their own communities. Tutors engaged in processes to facilitate students' learning through drawing on their personal and teaching experiences to enrich more formal learning informed by professional literature, knowledge, and research. Tutors used a range of teaching strategies including provocation, reflection, and theorising practice and also asked students to apply taught knowledge to their own teaching situations. Such strategies were mediated within a relational pedagogy where tutors related to students "as teachers" through tutors articulating personal perspectives and sharing their teaching philosophies and practices. Students, in turn, sought other students' teaching experience often exchanging perspectives, realities, and practices. Students continually reflected on commonalities and differences in their centre practices resulting in rich professional dialogues. A significant feature of interactions

and discussions was the tutors' and students' use of humour. Humour appeared to mediate learning and teacher encounters and experiences and create a professional rapport. Humour was borne out of recognition and delight that others understood and had experienced similar situations and dilemmas.

Discussion

Grossman (2005) asks that teacher education research more closely examines the ways in which student teachers are taught, the approaches that teacher educators use, what the student teacher learns about teaching, and also what they come to believe and know. She argues that teacher education methodology needs to be transparent in its approach so that research can more usefully inform practice at every level. This study began to explore and explain some of the processes and practices taking place in the field based early childhood teacher education classroom.

To understand the process of becoming a teacher, one must also strive to understand teacher educators, the intricacies of their relationships with students, and the contexts within which these interrelationships are constructed (Cameron, 2007). McLean (1999, p. 56) describes a holistic connection between teachers and learners, so although students set out on their "personal transformation" into becoming a teacher, this does not happen in isolation. Allard and Santoro (2006) claim that too often in teacher education programmes, when markers of identity such as gender, ethnicity, race, or social class are examined, the focus is solely on developing student teachers' understandings of how these discourses shape learner identities yet overlook how these also shape teacher educators' identities. Our findings suggest that in the field-based teacher education classroom, tutors' and students' personal and professional identities inform each other as they collectively engage in the work of teachers.

Students bring teaching experiences directly into the classroom

Learning to teach is complex (Goffin & Day, 1994; Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Moon, 1998). Processes are highly personalised and idiosyncratic and in effect begin before, and continue after, the period of initial teacher education (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). We conclude that in the field-based classroom, however, the "process" is constant as students bring their daily experiences of teaching directly into classroom. Learning involves a cycle of evaluation, collective reflection and internalisation of "taught" content as students assess the possible "fit" of new knowledge with their personal experience of teaching. This cycle of inter- and intra-internalisation (Vygotsky, 1978) partially explains the nature and form of field-based teacher education. However, understanding the process of becoming a teacher, requires acknowledgement of all participants in this process and a clear understanding of each participant's contribution to the learning encounter (McLean, 1999). Furthermore, we were mindful of May's (1999) assertion that teachers generally assume that the discourse they use within an educational setting is culturally universal, with concerning effects for students. May talks about a "silencing" of difference in education, which leads to a lack of engagement by students from minority groups and contributes to poor performance. May's assertion is challenged in our findings. We noted that responsiveness to difference was evident in the field-based classroom as pedagogy and curriculum included and involved students' contributions. In turn, tutors were knowledgeable about the diversity of early childhood communities in which students worked. Tutors seemed aware of and responsive to the range of work situations, families and communities that students brought to the teacher education programme.

Field-based teacher education is a highly social activity

A key finding of this study is that field-based teaching and learning is a highly social activity. We address Kelly's (2006) concern that "cognitivism" currently dominates teacher learning but remains an inadequate concept to understand the complex nature of teacher education. Kelly argues that cognitivism takes a simplistic approach to knowledge that overlooks significant concepts such as knowledge in practice (Schon, 1983), "tacit knowledge" (Sternbeg & Horvarth, 1999) and "distributed knowledge" (Lave & Wenger, 1991) across people and settings and contexts. Our findings suggest that both teaching and learning in the field-based classroom is mediated within and distributed across a web of relationships. Many people are present

in the classroom, constantly informing and enriching dialogue. In addition, tutors frequently draw on their past teaching experiences and openly share personal and professional lives. Such sharing creates a culture of collegial support, where teachers together simply go about the business of talking teaching. The simplicity of the learning encounter in the field-based classroom, however, belies the multi-faceted, contextualised nature of tutors' and students' interactions which encompass social, temporal, and cultural influences that extend well beyond cognitivist understandings. Interactions are mediated with cultural tools reflective of diverse teaching communities and experiences.

The authenticity of experience

Our findings explored the intersubjective moments that occurred through tutors' and students' honest sharing of experiences, uncertainties and knowledge. Experience (whether it be the students' or tutors') appeared as significant from the outset and a concept that required careful exploration within the findings. Experience was employed by tutors as a teaching tool and platform for lessons and discussions yet it was more than this. Shared experience was borne out of the tutors' and students' common understandings of the realities, challenges and rewards of early childhood teaching. It created a professional intersubjectivity that allowed for a depth of discussion more likely to found among colleagues; than student and teacher. Furthermore, our findings suggest that tutors' and students' personal and professional experiences were of equal significance within the learning encounter; blurring the more traditional boundaries of teacher and learner. And this concept required some unpacking. In this our findings are congruent with Ferfolja's (2008) study of student teachers on a sustained practicum experience. Ferfolja found that the continuity and sense of belonging experienced by students through their ongoing participation in the same educational community positioned them well to perceive themselves as teachers rather than students. Traditional power relationships shifted as the tutor is no longer constructed as knowledgeable and the student as novice. Student teachers in both Ferfolja's research and our own study contributed meaningfully and knowledgeably to the professional relationship.

But the student is already a teacher

We observed the most interesting of situations where the tutor "has been" an early childhood teacher but it is the student who "is" the early childhood teacher. This situation created demands on both parties yet at the same time opened up possibilities for authentic encounters and "equity of learning" characterised the field-based classroom. Tutors and students were asked to operationalise each learning encounter and this brought an immediacy to theory and knowledge (Ord, 2007). Students received information and related it directly to their own situations and experiences as teachers, while tutors were demanded to make the information relevant and reflective of students' diverse teaching situations. Krieg (2010) argues that this should in fact be an aim of all teacher education programmes. Krieg concludes that teacher education programmes need to support student teachers to develop knowledge through systematic enquiry to develop a more reliable and relevant body of professional knowledge for teachers. She argues that students should be provided with "theoretical toolboxes" to understand the way that knowledge can both constrain and enhance effective teaching practice. Within this approach, knowledge is contested rather than applied and constantly evaluated in light of its usefulness for the student's work with young children and their families. Taguchi (2007, cited in Krieg, 2010) says such approaches allow teachers, students, and tutors to become mediators of knowledge through exploring the limits and possibilities of "knowing" blurring the binary between theory and practical knowledge.

Generosity is a characteristic of the field-based classroom

Henderson (2001, pp. 8–11) describes three basic precepts that characterise student teacher learning. The first is "intelligence" which materialises as thoughtful subject learning; the second is "generativity" expressed as the self as a lifelong learner, and thirdly "generosity" as is seen in social interaction with others. In our findings, it is this third aspect, generosity, that characterised the nature and form of field-based early childhood teacher education. To return to Taguchi (2007), taking an approach that moves away from the certainty of truth to a position of enquiry challenges the traditional roles of novice (student) and expert (tutor). Working in this way requires a generosity on behalf of tutors to share power and the role of "expert". Our findings

provided many examples of power sharing, often evidenced in learning encounters characterised by humorous recognition and support of each others' teaching realities. We observed the generosity of tutors creating a "relational pedagogy" (Mulcahy, 2006) founded on open sharing of both positive and challenging teaching experiences leading us to agree with Lunenberg et al. (2007) that the processes of teacher education may be of greater significance than the content knowledge. Lunenberg et al. highlight the importance of making these processes transparent as the way in which teacher educators model learning is more instrumental in shaping teacher behaviour than the actual content taught. We conclude with Lunenberg et al. that teacher education programmes should pay close attention to learning process and relational pedagogies as well as professional content and knowledge.

Inverting and the problem of "transfer"

Feiman-Nemser (2001) has identified the problematic nature of "transfer" for initial teacher education where knowledge acquired in one setting is seldom used by learners in another setting. Our study contributes to this debate. In the field-based classroom, transfer is inverted as students arrive with the knowledge and experience and are then asked convert or translate theory accordingly. We pose that teacher education subsequently becomes an exercise in trying to make the practice fit with the theory rather than the theory fit with the practice. The task in field-based teacher education is one of understanding the multiple ways in which practice is mediated as the field-based student moves from knowing how and what, to also knowing why.

Cochran-Smith and Fries (2005, p. 84) argue that teacher educators should pay closer attention to theories of learning that recognise the interrelatedness of the learner and social, cultural and historical influences. Within this approach, learning is considered to be a social phenomenon that extends beyond the individual, which in practice means that teacher thought is constructed in social situations, yet enacted by individuals (Miller Marsh, 2002). Shared and sharing experience is central to teaching and by no means a new concept in terms of effective teaching. Perhaps field-based classrooms just offer many more opportunities for this to happen.

Humour as mediator of experience

Experience and humour emerged as an early focus of this study. Humour mediated experience. bell hooks (2009) writes humour serves to create a more open atmosphere in the classroom and that this is especially true when students are learning new ways of thinking and knowing. At these times humour becomes a mediating force. Interestingly, in our study humour often arose out of students recognising knowledge in light of their experience. Garner (2006) states humour enhances learning as it creates a bridge between educators and students by demonstrating a shared understanding and common psychological bond while Houston (2009) argues that in laughter we are confronted with truth. Our findings indicate that humour creates an environment where open and honest dialogue can take place. We also conclude with bell hooks that humour helps to create and sustain bonds of community and laughter often characterises an experience of equality (Vlieghe, Simons, & Masschelein, 2009).

"Experience" as a central organising theme in this study requires further definition and critique. We signal here that uncritical use of the term experience is problematic if we fail to recognise that the concept of "shared experience" has the potential to both include and exclude participants. Assuming all students share experience and engage in professional intersubjectivity has the potential to reproduce dominant educational discourses and practices. In this study we have drawn on contemporary phenomenological understandings of experience to understand the relationship between discourse and lived experience. We have sought to understand the nature of the tutors' and students' subjective experience within the context of political, social, and cultural influences influencing subjective experience, yet have struggled to capture this complexity. We take the view that experience is complex and changing in nature. Participants are "constructed by experience" yet also "construct experience" (Jackson, 1996; Young 1990 cited in Loveridge, (1999). Experience is "experienced" differently among individuals yet can be articulated and constructed collectively within professional frameworks which hopefully will continue to challenge dominant discourses in early childhood teacher education.

A question we are left with

Finally, if experience is significant for initial teacher education, what happens when there is an absence of experience to draw on or relate to? And, what happens when the experience being shared is not recognised by students who are currently engaged in the teaching experience? This is a question that requires further exploration in order to more fully understand field based initial teacher education programmes, processes and practices.

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Appendix 1. Triangulating data

Triangulating data

Data Analysis Procedure for Triangulation/Validation of Themes

July, 2010

MEMO NOTE TO RESEARCHERS

CODING

At the end of each data example is one of our initials to indicate who collected this piece of data – so all data although now 'cut up' can be traced back to its original source. Feel free to check it back with your own or others' 'whole' transcript if you need to.

I've also indicated (n) of examples for each category in the table and also in the data itself by the category headings so you can quickly get an idea of significance. Remember though with qualitative research frequency is just one measure of significance. Sometimes insights arrive with just one example and a concept emerges.

PROCEDURE

1. Please could you read all data within each category and under each heading.
2. Note if you agree with where I have placed data within the named categories (or not).
3. We need to record percentage of inter-researcher agreement so please take notes if you agree or not with where I have placed data examples. I haven't developed a template for this as I imagine you will find it easier just to use your own system. All I need is the numbers. If you disagree briefly note why.

EMERGING THEMES ACROSS ALL DATA

1. The field-based classroom and the discussions which occur therein are bedded in 'lived experience'.
2. Teachers teach who they are and from their own experience and students engage with this when it is authentic and relevant
3. Authentic and lived experience through working in centres is a powerful catalyst for extended discussion and deep engagement with issues that utilise a broad range of perspectives and understandings. Space is provided by lecturers for deep consideration of theory and practice. Students' contributions as teachers in their own centres are valued.
4. The field-based classroom requires students to be open-minded and to directly engage, consider and respect diversity. This happens through engaging with the broad range of philosophies and topics offered for discussion by their peers.
5. Students have agency in the learning process which is legitimised through their experience of practice in licensed early childhood settings with qualified and experienced 'others'. They are able to draw on their own and others' experience to inform the debates which occur as a natural and ongoing part of the teaching and learning process.
6. The thinking and transformation processes undergone by students as they engage with new ideas are clearly evident and can be acted on in a meaningful way by lecturers and other students. Students have a strong curiosity about other' teaching experiences – they seek to learn from each other as well as their lecturer. This has the potential to make the teaching experience both more challenging and easier for lecturers. It challenges lecturers to be current and knowledgeable about diverse practice while at the same time it allows them to facilitate aspects of the teaching role themselves.
7. Lecturers are more often facilitators than transmitters of knowledge – a transmission stance is taken only when there is core knowledge essential to the lesson plan to impart.

8. Respectful and responsive relationships underpin an effective teaching and learning experience for students. Lecturers and students work in a partnership where there is shared respect for the knowledge and experience each individual brings with them. Lecturers respect the student experience and make space for this within their classes – it is an important part of the teaching and learning process.

9. Power relations appear to be absent in most cases. Lecturers and students tend to operate as 'professional equals'.

10. Humour is an integral part of the shared teaching and learning experience for lecturers and students – it appears to help cement strong respectful relationships between lecturers and students and to create a bridge for two way interactions built on mutual respect and trust. The humour arises out of shared teaching experiences and appears to create an emotional and cognitive intersubjectivity between students and lecturers.

Appendix 2. Participant consultation feedback

Notes from Consultation Hui with Academic Staff

21 April 2010

1pm -3pm

Attendees

Diane Mara & Liz Everiss (Researchers), Acting Head of School, lecturers

Purpose of hui

To seek input and agreement from lecturers to categories used to identify the nature of field-based classroom interactions. Research themes from preliminary data analysis presented for discussion. Tutors advised that their input would also contribute to data analysis.

General discussion

- Keeping current can be a challenge for lecturers and is important given students ongoing engagement in practice/centres.

- Students are quick to understand concepts because of the prior knowledge they bring to the classroom – the area of observations aptly illustrates this. Students share their experience and it benefits everyone.

- There are issues associated with practicum and the dissonance sometimes between 'best' practice and the reality of what is happening in a centre the issues identified are related to. Students are not necessarily in a powerful position in the relationship to negotiate a position/ change.

- Students navigate 'best' practice issue as students and employees – when graduate enter the sector having engaged with everyday issues.

- Agree that assessment can be used to motivate students. Can also be limiting as can inhibit students from engaging with 'learning for the sake of learning'. It is sometimes difficult to teach beyond the assessment.

Themes

1. Tutors and students using humour

    - Agreed that humour is important to help people to 'open up'/ share information about themselves.

    - Linked to second theme of tutors sharing own/ personal experience.

    - Humour can be used to reduce the power differential leading to flattened hierarchical structures in the classroom. Noted though that through assessment tutors retain the more powerful position.

2. Other themes – general comment

    Tutor drawing on/responding to students' experiences

    Students responding to tutors experience

    Students sharing work/centre experiences

    Drawing on/ sharing own cultural experience

    Tutors drawing on contemporary shared experience

    - Every student is a resource to help the tutor – students are also tutors. This can be especially useful where students have recently participated in professional development. Tutors need to be able to share 'power'/ co-construct with students and identify moments to hand over to students/ know when to draw it back.

    - Lecturers create opportunities and specify requirements.

    - Tutors need to have skills to draw knowledge out of students. When done skilfully it creates a culture for opening up – this takes time and requires tutors to build a classroom culture where students want to participate/ contribute.

- Flexibility is important – Tutors need to be flexible enough to capitalise on student contributions/ recognise moments where it is important to follow the student lead and deviate from the lesson plan - 'unreturnable' moments.
- Co-teaching is important – planning and timing are important for this. Some modules are taught together e.g. Health, Wellbeing and Development and Māori Culture. Co-teaching across these topics allows partnership to be modelled.
- In teaching experience modules tutors work closely with students and through this gain understanding of students' work contexts.
- 'Community of learners' concept connects whole cohort group – evident in management of session when whole intake was present. Small groups allow collegial debate and sharing among diverse students and lecturers.
- Discussed the notion of aspiration in relation to teaching – tutors agreed that teaching is about the ideal and that it is up to students to realise the ideal.

Outcome
- Lecturers agreed to the themes presented.
- Lecturers endorsed the research process and findings to date.

Liz Everiss

Diane Mara

Appendix 3. Data themes (1)

Table A3.1: Data themes/analysis frequency of incidents/examples

THEMES	MB	LE	DM	TOTAL
Using humour	21	8	2	31
Tutor sharing own/personal experience	12	3	12	27
Tutor drawing on/responding to students' experience	16	8	4	28
Student responding to tutor's experience	3	1	2	6
Student sharing centre/work experience with student/s	23	8	11	42
Drawing/sharing own cultural experience	8	0	5	13
Tutor drawing on contemporary shared experience	6	2	4	12
Tutor sharing aspirations/inspiring students	0	2	6	8
Students sharing aspirations	0	0	1	1

UNIT: Key organising theme is "experience" with n128 incidents from a total of n168 incidents.

STEP 2: TLRI DATA ANALYSIS SUB-CATEGORIES

USING HUMOUR (n3)

Tutors (n2)
- Tutors using humour to build rapport/communicate/teach (n13)
- Tutor using humour to diffuse or redirect (n5)

Students (n2)
- Student using humour to build rapport/teach (n8)
- Students using humour to build rapport or cover embarrassment (n2)

Tutors and Students (n1)
- Humour arising as part of relaxed and happy interactions between tutor and students (n6)

TUTOR SHARING/OWN PERSONAL EXPERIENCE (n4)
- Tutor sharing professional experiences and perspectives (n17)
- Tutor sharing own professional experience of culture (n8)
- Tutor sharing personal experience of culture (n5)
- Tutor relating/drawing own learning/teaching experiences (n4)

TUTOR DRAWING ON/RESPONDING TO STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES (n6)
- Tutor making links with students' experiences and context (n21)
- Tutor facilitating/provoking/supporting students to draw on/learn from their own experiences (n18)
- Students sharing and drawing on professional experiences and knowledge (n13)
- Tutor providing information (n4)
- Tutor clarifying professional role and knowledge (n3)
- Students sharing cultural experience (n2)

STUDENTS RESPONDING TO TUTORS' EXPERIENCE/KNOWLEDGE (n1)
- Tutor sharing cultural knowledge and inviting response (n4)

STUDENTS SHARING EXPERIENCES WITH STUDENTS (n4)
- Student sharing professional experience/s (n8)
- Student sharing work experience with other students (n7)
- Student interaction apart from or in spite of tutor input (n3)
- Tutor inspiring motivating students (n1)

TUTOR AND STUDENT DRAWING/SHARING OWN CULTURAL EXPERIENCE (n1)
- Tutor and student drawing/sharing own cultural experience (n25)

TUTOR SHARING ASPIRATIONS/INSPIRING STUDENTS (n2)
- Tutor sharing aspirations/inspiring students (n5)
- Tutors motivating students (n2)

Appendix 4. Data themes (2)

Table A4.1: Original and current categories/themes emerging from data

ORIGINAL	CURRENT
STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE	**STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE**
Students sharing experiences with students (n23)	**Students Share Their Experiences With Each Other**
Student interaction apart from or in spite of tutor input (n3)	Experiences of implementing regulations and policies
Tutor making links with students' context (n21)	Wider experiences of teaching
Tutor facilitating/provoking/supporting students to draw on or learn from their own experiences (n24)	Reflect on and share their professional experiences
Students sharing and drawing on professional experiences and knowledge (n5)	Seek information about other students' teaching experiences
Tutor providing information for students (n4)	
Tutor clarifying and professional role and experience (n3)	
Students sharing cultural experience (n2)	
TUTORS' EXPERIENCE	**TUTORS' EXPERIENCE**
Sharing professional experiences and perspectives (n16)	**Tutors draw on their own experiences**
Sharing own professional experience of culture (n8)	Tutors share their personal and professional experiences
Sharing personal experience of culture (n5)	
Relating/drawing on their own experiences of learning (n4)	
Students Responding to Tutors' Experience/ Knowledge	Relate to students as teachers
Tutor sharing cultural knowledge inviting students' response (n5)	Reflect on/share professional perspectives and philosophies
Tutor and Student Drawing/Sharing Own Cultural Experience	
Tutor and student sharing/drawing on cultural experience (n24)	**Tutors Contextualise**
	Tutors make links with students' contexts
	Tutors facilitate students to draw on their teaching experiences through: Provocation, Reflection, Theorising Practice, Application
Using Humour	**Using Humour**
Tutors using humour to build rapport/communicate/ teach (n12)	Tutors using humour to build rapport/communicate/ teach (n12)
Tutor using humour to diffuse or redirect (n5)	Tutor using humour to diffuse or redirect (n5)
Student using humour to build rapport/teach (n8)	Student using humour to build rapport/teach (n8)
Humour arising as part of happy and relaxed interactions (n6)	Humour arising as part of happy and relaxed interactions (n6)

Appendix 5. Information sheet and consent forms

Information sheet for lecturers and students

<div align="center">

Information Sheet (Lecturers and Students)

The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand

Centre for Education Studies, 2009

Teacher Learning and Research Initiative (TLRI) Research Project

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Title: An Exploration of Field Based Early Childhood Teacher Education in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Kia ora

We would like to invite you to participate in our study. This information sheet explains the aims, purpose and requirements of this project.

Aim of Study

The main aim of our research is to learn more about field based (or centre based) early childhood teacher education. A unique feature of this model of teacher education is that students spend a significant amount of their time in the early childhood centre. We will observe and collect data on teaching and learning interactions to assist us to understand what takes place in the classroom. This focus will allow us to explore students and lecturers 'doing field-based early childhood teacher education'.

Research Focus

Our research question is, "What is the nature and form of field-based early childhood initial teacher education?"

Data Collection

We will visit your classroom on three or four occasions and observe student and lecturers interacting. At times we may also record interactions using an audio-recorder then transcribe these audio-tapes; however, most of our data will be collected using pen and paper notes. We will be in your classroom for a total of 10 hours over three or four separate visits and intend to carry out observations during May and June 2009. Although there are three researchers involved in our study one researcher will be assigned to collect data in your classroom.

Validity

You will be given the opportunity to provide feedback on our interpretations of what we have observed, and your feedback will be included in the data analysis, and final report.

Ethics

The identity of all students and lecturers will be anonymous as we will not identify individuals. The contributions of students to classroom sessions who do not wish to be part of the project will not be recorded. All data containing your contributions will be securely kept at the Open Polytechnic during the research project and only the researchers will have access to this data. When our study is completed key findings will be sent to research participants on request and may also be presented at conferences or in education journals.

Research Team

The members of the research team are Dr Margaret Brennan, Liz Everiss and Dr Diane Mara. All are experienced in field-based teacher education as teachers/lecturers, researchers, and also in academic leadership, and management roles.

Consent

You do not have to participate in this study if you do not wish to. Participation is entirely voluntary. Only students and lecturers who sign consent forms will be participants. Even if you do agree to participate, you can change your mind and withdraw from the study up until the end of the data collection phase. Tape recorders will not be used if a student in the group has not consented. You may withdraw from the study at any time until the end of the data collection period, that is, 1 July 2009.

If you sign the consent form this means that you are agreeing to the following. Please indicate that you have read and agreed to each requirement through ticking the box alongside each phrase:

• You are happy for us to observe and record your interactions with students and lecturers in your classroom

• We are able to record and transcribe interactions using an audio tape recorder (lecturers or students may ask that the tape recorder be switched off at any time)

• You are happy for us to observe and record programme material that will help us to clarify and/or provide context to observational data

• Participant lecturers will have access to raw data (on request)

• Participant students will have access to data in summary form (on request)

• All participants (both students and lecturers) will have the opportunity to provide feedback on data interpretations and analyses

• You may request to receive a summary of the findings of the study when completed

• Agree to the publication of the findings of this study in academic or professional journals and/or presentations at academic or professional conferences with the understanding that any references that could identify students or lecturers will be altered or removed

• Understand that you may withdraw from the study at any time until the end of the data collection period, that is, **1 July, 2009**

Your questions are most welcome and please feel free to contact Margaret Brennan, Liz Everiss or Diane Mara at any time.

Phone contacts and email:

Margaret Brennan margaret.brennan@openpolytechnic.ac.nz

Liz Everiss liz.everiss@openpolytechnic.ac.nz

Diane Mara dmara@eit.ac.nz

If you agree to participate in this research, you will need to complete the Consent Form attached and return it in the postage paid envelope to....

Consent form lecturers

CONSENT FORM FOR LECTURERS

I have read and understood the Information Sheet detailing the purpose, aims and requirements of this study. I agree to being involved in this early childhood research project according to the requirements outlined in the Information Sheet.

Name: ————————————————————————————

Signature: ————————————————————————————

DATE: ————————————————————————————

NOTE: Please keep one copy of the Information Sheet for your records and return one copy with the signed and dated Consent Form.

Consent form students

CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENTS

I have read and understood the Information Sheet detailing the purpose, aims and requirements of this study. I agree to being involved in this early childhood research project according to the requirements outlined in the Information Sheet.

Name: ———————————————————————————————

Signature: ————————————————————————————

DATE: ———————————————————————————————

NOTE: Please keep one copy of the Information Sheet for your records and return one copy with the signed and dated Consent Form.