'Am I doing this?' The Reflective Educative Process of One Teacher Educator

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher education is a formal process for those who wish to become teachers. When prospective candidates enrol at a tertiary provider they often become the subjects for education researchers to study, examine, interview or analyse. These researchers then report to the wider communities through a myriad of journals, seminars, papers and forums their uncovered similarities, contrasts, ambiguities or anomalies. I am one of those researchers.

I completed my teacher training through the University of Sydney's Masters of Teaching – Primary Education in 2003 and was fortunate enough to be offered the opportunity to undertake my doctorate. I would never recommend three years of no weekends, holidays or social-life, as at this time I also immigrated to New Zealand and began full-time teaching in a decile 1 South Auckland school. I am now a kaiako (tutor) in a wananga's Bachelor of Teaching – Primary programme. As an educational researcher, I saw my tauira (apprentices, trainees, students) as opportunities to further my areas of research interests; those being teacher-role identity formation and beginning teacher mentoring. My own experiences as a student in the classroom lead to my doctorate thesis on teacher cognition and the effects of prior experience of teachers on becoming a teacher. I had every intention of continuing with this research. The tauira had other ideas.

This teacher education programme is centred on whanau. It is framed around Kaupapa Māori. This has been deliberate and explicit (Sexton, in press). Yet I approached my research study from the theoretical orientation of reflective narrative inquiry (Procee, 2006; Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Conle, 2000) using western pedagogies. A survey instrument package, which included participant consent form, subject information sheet and the questionnaire *What Was School Like?* (Mahlios, 2002; Mahlios & Maxson, 1995; Sexton 2007) was mailed to all 2008 incoming entry-level student teachers prior to the commencement of the course work. The survey instrument sought to elicit preconceived beliefs about teaching and being a teacher before any programme influences impacted on these beliefs (Brownlee, 2004; Redden, Simon & Aulls, 2007). Respondents were then going to be called into interviews about their reported responses to further explore their prior experiences as students in the classroom to see how this was reflected in how they saw themselves as the teacher. This was planned to be a three-year longitudinal study to track any changes over the course and to delve into why these changes occurred.

Three of the twenty teacher candidates returned their survey packages prior to course orientation. Orientation Week included various getting-to-know-you games and activities to build relationships for the collaborative work that was going to be encouraged in the programme. At the end of the week, two more respondents felt comfortable enough to return their responses. The remaining fifteen reported they did not feel comfortable in providing historical and personal details. Most were now just confused as their teacher education programme was presented in Kaupapa Māori but my research study was firmly grounded in western epistemologies (see Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003 for mixed-model research designs; Polkinghorne, 2005 for the phenomenological approach of life stories; Guba & Lincoln, 2005 for the paradigmatic analysis of narratives). This became most evident in the fifth week when discussing Russell Bishop and Ted Glynn's (1999) *Culture Counts: Changing Power Relations in Education*. The tauira asked me what I thought about the following:

> In the field of educational research, for example, despite Māori being one of the most researched peoples in the world, there is a great deal of evidence that many of the studies of Māori people's lives and experiences has been of more benefit to the researchers than to those who have been the objects of study. (pp 16-17)

So, being the teacher who gets caught completely off-guard by poignant questions asked by students, I re-directed the question back at them: *Am I doing this?* I had spent the summer months preparing for classes that were going to be delivered using Wharehuia Hemara's (2000) Māori pedagogies. These pedagogies were going to be explicit and consistent and yet I gave no thought to this in my research. I approached teacher education as 'be Māori in Māori by Māori', meaning Māori as the normative and using Kaupapa Māori from a Māori perspective even though I was born and raised in America of English (mother's side) and Swedish (father's) ancestry. I am not a Māori but neither am I a Pakeha. I am a non-Māori educator in a Māori tertiary provider with all of the historical, political, social, cultural and ethical facets (Vossler, Waitere-Ang & Adams, 2005; Cullen, 2005) that this implies. As I strive to provide my students with naturalistic Māori opportunities; then I must do the same in my educational research which seeks to explore how Te Ao Māori (Māori worldview) impacts on their evolving teacher-role identity.

RESPECTING KAUPAPA MĀORI EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

As stated, the teacher education programme makes explicit and extensive use of Hemara's Māori pedagogies but my research study *Teacher Cognition: Becoming a Teacher* made no such attempts to be relevant, meaningful, politically, historically, socially or culturally appropriate to the tauira; it was purely researcher driven. So when asked by the tauira if I was doing what Bishop and Glynn reported often happens between non-Māori researchers and Māori populations, I had to answer: *Yes.*

My initial research design had survey instrument packages mailed out to all the incoming year 1 prospective student teachers who had no personal history or connections to me. I sought to elicit their understandings and ideas

about the effects of their own personal histories on how they saw teaching and being the teacher without regards to any tikanga Mäori (customary practices, obligations, behaviours or practices that govern social practices). It should have been no surprise then that most felt threatened and uncomfortable and chose not to return the questionnaires. It should have also been understandable that after a 30-minute introduction to the purpose and reasoning behind the research study that more than half still did not feel it was appropriate to participate. I needed to re-think, re-address and re-design my study to be from a Mäori perspective.

Kaupapa Māori educational research includes establishing a whanau-of-interest, has participatory consciousness, collaborative storytelling, whakawhanaungatanga (interrelationships), is participant driven, conducted through hui, spiral discourse and somatic knowing (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Bishop, 1999). Kaupapa Māori educational research means deliberations are conducted in a whanau style atmosphere where kaumatua (elders) preside and others get their say according to who they are and positions are defined in terms of benefit to the whanau. The researcher acknowledges his or her participation and removes the distance, neutrality and objectification of the subjects. The researcher and participants conduct themselves under the pedagogy of tuakana/teina (older brother or sister/younger brother or sister) acting as mutual partners who arrive jointly at a constructed collaborative story through sequential in-depth semi-structured interviews as conversations. Relationships of trust, connectedness and commitment in a Māori context are established so that there is a sharing of power and control. Hui between researcher and participants have the aim of reaching a consensus so as to arrive at a jointly constructed meaning. These hui use collaborative storying and re-storying as a means of creating a collective response. The researcher is physically, ethically, morally and spiritually involved as well as methodologically.

As non-Māori, serious consideration needed to be given as to whether my research into indigenous culture and history is appropriate. Would I be able to conduct research in this educational setting or would my ethnicity be a barrier to accessing opinions and beliefs? Fortunately this issue has been addressed in the literature and in personal communications. Alex Barnes (2002) and Meredith Gibbs (2001) have laid the foundations for non-Māori conducting appropriate and noteworthy research within Māori communities. Meredith Gibbs quotes the positive conclusion drawn by Ranganui Walker in 1990 on Pakeha working with Māori in research partnerships to promote social transformation. This position was again stated on 23rd October, 2007 at a hui in Hamilton where Dr. Walker addressed issues raised by tauira concerning Māori and education. More importantly, my tauira addressed this issue.

While my initial research design was to address the 2008 entry-level teacher trainers it was the second year tauira who showed me the way. They were already comfortable with how I was able to facilitate discussions on Māori education, teaching and learning and showed me how to approach Māori research. I opened them up to critical theorist like Colleen McMurchy-Pilkington and Paulo Freire and they showed me Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Fiona Cram.

RE-DIRECTION, RE-DESIGN, RE-THINK

Kaua hei tupeke, me titiro nui	Do not be taken back
Kaua hei tupeke, ki ngā matauranga	Be broadminded
O tēnei reanga e taupatu nei	Do not shy away
Te Kotahitanga, aue, taukuri e	From the intellectuals
He aha i weehi ai	Why do you repel your Māori heritage
Nā ko te tauira me whakamomori	Handed down to this generation
Kia puta he ora mo tatau katoa	Crying out and protesting
	Be united, be of one voice …

(Tuini Ngawai citied in Hemara, 2005, pp. 273-274)

So where is the social transformation? If I as non-Māori am to be part of the social transformation process then specific and explicit questions about the research and reported findings need to be addressed. Bishop and Glynn (1999) highlight questions relating to initiation, accountability, legitimation, representation and benefits for evaluating researcher positioning (p. 129). As this programme is delivered under the metaphor of teacher education as whanau this places myself in the whanau-of-interest along with the tauira. While I initiated the research proposal to see how this teacher education perspective affects the teacher-role identity of its student teachers, it was the tauira who set the goals, research design and questions. My original project design placed control in my hands with the tauira being offered the opportunity to participate. This assumed that I was going to be accountable to the wider educational community to disseminate the findings in such manners and methods that subject myself and the project to professional scrutiny. The design did not recognise the tauira as owners of the knowledge nor having any power in the research partnership. There was no legitimisation as the findings were going to be dependent on my interpretation of the quantitative data to generate qualitative interview protocols for each participant. There was no room for spiral discourse and collaborative storying as I wanted access to their beliefs and preconceptions as individuals. It was my needs, interests and concerns that were being sought and it was me that was going to retell their stories in their voices using their words. Justifiably the tauira saw no benefit to them; they were going to be yet another group of Māori being studied by non-Māori. I was trying to do exactly what they had asked me.

This study wants to uncover how the teacher education programme supports their emerging teacher-role identity within an organisation that is founded on tikanga Māori and uses ahuatanga Māori principles. While the programme itself is accredited through the English language medium it is delivered through Māori pedagogies. And now. so is this research study.

Smith (1999) and Cram (2001) guided the re-design of the research study. I have to start with *aroha ki te tangata* (a respect for people). I needed to allow the participants to define their own space and to meet on their own terms. They see the classroom as the best location as it is comfortable and already established as the safe place to share ideas and opinions. One-on-one interviews were not *he kanohi kitea* (present yourself to people face-to-face). It is important to front up to the community in which the research is being

conducted. This helps to place the power to define the situation in the community and not with the researcher. It allows me to remain a member of the group that we have spent more than a year establishing and forming. Similarly, the initial research design's interview protocols clashed with *titiro, whakarongo … kōrero* (look, listen, … speak). I need to listen to what is being said so as to develop an understanding before speaking. The point is to gain an understanding of what they see as impacting on them not what I think. *Kaua e takahia to mana o te tangata* (do not trample over the mana of the people) is critical to these discussions. The tauira need the opportunity to sound out their ideas. They also have to know that the dissemination of findings will be up front, open and honest as the process of *kia tupato* (be cautious) is enforced. Nothing will be reported that is going to cause issues of concern or is not agreed to by the tauira. A culturally safe environment is paramount. *Kaua e mahaki* (do not flaunt your knowledge) is vital. I want to be given access into their life stories of prior schooling experiences so tikanga Māori allows the participants to relate as Māori. The discussions need to be conducted through Māori philosophies and principles that take for granted the validity and legitimacy of Māori so that the tauira hold autonomy over their own cultural well-being. The focus needs to be on my whakarongo of their beliefs, ideas and opinions on how they see themselves in the class as the teacher.

My timeline for gathering, analysing and synthesising data went out the window. While I wanted to pre-planned what, where, when, why and who; it is the tauira who will determine what is going to be discussed, organise where the discussions take place, initiate when group discussions can and can not be recorded and authorize what will and will not be accessed. The focus has gone from what I could report to the wider communities as noteworthy to what they feel is appropriate to be given. This process is still in negotiation as I have to go back to the beginning to rebuild the whakawhanaungatanga needed.

CONCLUSIONS

Kaupapa Māori is driven by whanau, hapu and iwi with its foundation firmly rooted in Aotearoa based on the concepts of cultural customs, language, principles and ideas. It challenges the social injustices and inequalities of the dominant western culture and seeks to be a transformative praxis for Māori. Kaupapa Māori takes the position that the validity and legitimacy of the Māori language and culture is taken for granted. Therefore for those involved in education a position must be taken that the Māori world-view is authoritative and valid. For me this meant taking the position that allows the tauira to tell their story in their words in their way in their own time. I can not take the view that it is my research study. It is the process of them allowing me access to their knowledge and their willingness to have me share this insight into who they see themselves as being, what has helped to inform this identity and how these well-remembered prior schooling events have personal meaning to them.

He hono tangata e kore e motu;   A human bond cannot be severed;

Kapa he taura waka e motu.   Unlike a canoe rope, it cannot be severed.

(Reed & Brougham cited in Hemara, 2005, p. 263)

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