Anxieties, Desires and Sylvia: From Preparation to Beginning Teacher

GREG BURNETT
University of Otago

ABSTRACT

This paper makes a case for exploring underlying anxieties and desires possessed by final year teaching students prior to seeking employment in New Zealand schools. Anxieties and desires are understood in terms of 'teaching's intimacies' (McConaghy, 2006), that is, the often unconscious and thus unspoken and unexplored feelings pre-service teachers have toward their teaching futures. Following calls by McConaghy (2006: 64), the reflections of at times controversial New Zealand educator Sylvia Ashton-Warner on her 'inner life' as a teacher, serve as both a type and a stimulus for the type of teacher reflection education students might also productively engage in. Reflective teacher practice of this type seeks to bridge the gap between the public and private worlds of teaching degree students during a significant period in their process of becoming teachers, the final year of their degrees. Reflection in this sense involves a greater ethic of care for the teaching self by addressing the silences in both teacher preparation and indeed the profession concerning teaching's intimacies. Anecdotal evidence suggests relatively high departure rates from education programmes during degree programmes and also during the transition to teaching. The exploration of students' anxieties and desires for teaching will contribute to understanding these problems.

> Miss Honey was a wonderful teacher and a friend to everyone but her life was not as simple and wonderful as it seemed. Miss Honey had a secret. Though it caused her great pain she did not let it interfere with her teaching.
> from *Matilda*

INTRODUCTION

This paper calls for an exploration of the underlying anxieties and desires that final year primary teaching degree students might have concerning their choice to become teachers and toward their teaching futures. Anxieties and desires are understood in terms of what Cathryn McConaghy (2006) considers to be 'teaching's intimacies', the often unconscious and therefore unspoken and unexplored feelings that bubble away unaddressed beneath the surface of all of us that teach. We teach in times that encourage a 'leave it at the school gate' containment of certainly teacher anxiety but also of excitability toward teaching.

It is possibly only Roald Dahl's license that allows Miss Honey to teach on regardless of her inner anxieties whereas the realities for many student teachers, teachers and lecturers alike are at times very different. What thrills and what frightens in whatever capacity of teacher we might find ourselves in are not always addressed in teaching degrees, professional development or even quite possibly in our informal social and family networks. Certainly students and teachers are encouraged to reflect upon their teaching practice – but it is reflection shaped largely by dominant technicist and socially critical discourses only. This article suggests a type of self reflection different to the commonly accepted.

REFLECTING BEYOND THE TECHNICAL AND THE CRITICAL

Becoming a 'reflective teacher' has long featured in pre-service and in-service teaching programmes (Walkington, 2005). The focus, however, has largely been on getting teachers to move from a 'technical' type of reflection, that is, how to teach well, to a more 'critical' type of reflection, that is, to encourage teachers to see themselves in advocacy roles who can help win better futures for marginalised children and their communities. Typologies of reflection indicating the desired technical to critical shift abound (see, for example, Johnson & Stevens, 2002, Valli, 1997, and Yost, Sentner & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000).

The technicism of the former reflection type is reinforced in New Zealand by regimes of accountability in Ministry of Education (MOE) curriculum frameworks, Board of Trustees (BOT) management structures, Education Review Office (ERO) auditing visits and New Zealand Teachers' Council (NZTC) registration processes. The latter type of critical reflection is seen by many as a necessary response to dominant educational and societal discourses such as neo-liberalism (Codd, 2005; Down, 2006; Smyth, 2001) that are perceived by protagonists to result in an uneven distribution of privilege across society. To be sure there is in both technical and critical reflection an inherent ethic of care for children, communities and society as a whole but silence around an ethic of care for the teaching self.

Giving ourselves as teachers a bit of thought
The social consciousness raising agenda of much critical teacher reflection, grounded as it is in critical education theory (see, for example, Giroux, 1997, McClaren, 2003, among many others), according to its own logics is lacking as an educational metanarrative. Post-critical feminists and advocates for Indigenous peoples, to name but two alternative sets of voices, have long pointed out its faulty logics – its Eurocentric rationalist nature and its clumsy readings of oppression and social agency (see, for example, Ellsworth, 1989, Gore, 1992, Luke, 1992, Matthews, 1996, Orner, 1992 and O'Sullivan, 2007). Perhaps more importantly ethically, however, is its neglect of the teaching self. Critical theory in education constructs a teacher in preparation or an otherwise experienced teacher *committed* to: children; families; communities; career long teaching aspirations; and, advocacy for those marginalised by dominant educational and societal discourses. Whatever alternatives there might exist to 'commitment' – 'self doubt' and 'ambivalence' for example – are unfortunately silenced by these dominant ways of framing up teaching.

Potentially, the movement of teachers along the technical-critical continuum, as they grow in professional competence, allows little room for an exploration of what McConaghy (2006) calls the 'neuroses, fantasies, longings, crises, affirmations, and rejections' that especially young pre-service and early career teachers experience in their study and teaching work respectively. Once when Sylvia Ashton-Warner was asked by training authorities why she was at teacher training college she admitted that she did not know (Ashton-Warner 1980:190-191). The following email, received from a 'difficult' student only several days into a teaching practicum resonates with Sylvia's response and thus speaks something of the unaddressed and quite often unexpressed needs of our students. In a face-to-face meeting with the student an explanation for the absence from his practicum posting could not be given – he instead left the programme the following day.

> I'm so sorry about today's absence, *I do not have a valid excuse for it either*. It was not my intention to miss school today and feel very bad for having done so. Please email me back to talk about the next step if there is one. Once again my sincerest apologies.

SO WHAT HAS SYLVIA GOT TO DO WITH IT?

Following calls by McConaghy (2006: 64), the reflections of highly acclaimed New Zealand educator Sylvia Ashton-Warner on her 'inner life' as a teacher (see Ashton-Warner, 1958, 1963, 1980), serve as both a type and a stimulus for the type of teacher reflection suggested here – reflections on our inner lives as teachers. This involves reading Ashton-Warner's autobiographical writing in new ways – beyond the pedagogic and, in particular, her approaches to the teaching of reading; beyond her Rousseauian views of the child; and, also beyond her at times heroic resistance to educational bureaucracy. McConaghy (2006) builds on Sylvia's psychoanalytic focus on the inner life of the child as a pre-requisite for learning and applies these ideas to the inner life of teachers and student teachers as a pre-requisite for teacher-becoming. Sylvia Ashton-Warner's reflections on her teaching – in *Teacher*, *I Passed This Way, Spinster* and *Myself* therefore offer us the possibility of encountering our own teaching in new ways (McConaghy, 2006 :63) – student teachers, teachers and teaching lecturers also.

We all teach in times of heightened neo-liberal accountability and are thus committed to an increased range of often acronymmed organisational efficiencies including predetermined AOs, SLOs, NEGs, NAGs, ERO visits, NZTC registration processes and so on. We send our student teachers out into schools a number of times across their degree spans with a similar range of efficiencies to attend to and document in their practicum folders. However, 'prac by bits of paper' covers over constantly changing but rarely acknowledged feelings about students' choice to teach. The critical theorising that gets done in response to dominant educational discourses (for example, neo-liberalism, with a focus made on access and equity for others) offers just as little in terms of care for the teaching self. Technical and critical discourses can both rob teaching of not only its 'anxieties' but its sometimes even lesser acknowledged 'excitability' also. As McConaghy (2006: 64) claims in the face of these regimes of accountability:

The return of our attentions to the intimate life of the classroom and the complex dynamics of teaching and learning encounters provoked by [Sylvia] Ashton-Warner's writings is like warm milk for impoverished teaching souls.

Myself

Like most who work and research in primary education in New Zealand, we all 'once were teachers'. Like Sylvia I recorded in written form my reflections on life and teaching over a ten year period. I have grown to identify with the way Sylvia reflects about herself as a person and as a teacher and the way she blurs the lines between the two. Her autobiographical writing has helped provide a window into my own inner life as a teacher – as a primary school teacher previously and now as a lecturer in education at the tertiary level. So in exploring students' fears and desires around teaching as a career choice I find myself very much 'inside my own research questions and methods, positioned within the object and the process of my inquiries' (Middleton, 1993: 65) reflecting on my more deep-seated feelings about the direction my own teaching has taken. This is possibly an ideal place for any researcher but particularly an education researcher to be.

Our students

Eight final year teaching degree students were tracked during their final year of their teaching degrees. The tracking process sought to collate reflections upon practicum teaching experiences that went beyond the 'technical-critical'. Practicum de-briefing sessions were used to generate discussions about feelings toward teaching as graduation loomed near. Also a modified values clarification exercise was used to graphically represent feelings toward teaching. Results from these approaches were limited. Relatively more generative reflections were made while actually teaching and in response to Ashton-Warner's own reflections, in eight major aspects of her teaching life and practice, as related in *Teacher* (Ashton-Warner, 1963) and *Spinster* (Ashton-Warner, 1958). Emerging from a series of 'conversations with Sylvia' as they taught, these reflections sought to locate teachers' anxieties and desires about their work. Each participant read and reflected on selections of Ashton-Warner's autobiographical writing as part of a practicum task or as a supplementary professional reading. These 'conversations' were recorded in journal form (Maloney & Campbell-Evans, 2002) and also in an interview based loosely on McCongahy's (2006) intimacies.

WHAT ARE TEACHING'S INTIMACIES?

Participants' spoken and written reflections were read as 'teaching narratives' (Søreide, 2006; Watson, 2006) and analysed according to a modified set of nine 'intimacies' (McConaghy, 2006: 65-88), that is, the fears and desires teachers have about their teaching in areas including trauma, difference, ambivalence, loneliness, and consolation among others. Each are identifiable in Sylvia's reflections upon her own desires and fears for teaching. As expected, the students' reflections, particularly those portions underlined, merely scratch the surface – 'remnants' of the unconscious as Elizabeth Ellsworth (1997) calls

them, unruly and hard to rationalise remnants. Remnants also that made it past the teaching degree screening interview which in part serves to eliminate the undesirable and the unsuitable for teaching, the first of many devices employed to screen out the 'unruly' in the formal structured process of becoming a teacher.

Other reasons for their barely trace-like presence might well be methodological, that is, in how can the hidden be captured anyway? Alternatively, the reasons might be ethical, that is, why should a student be transparent with me the researcher? As ephemeral as they may seem, however, they point to the possibility of other things left un-expressed. In each case, questions are raised for teaching degree students and their lecturers alike – questions that take on extra significance in the light of regimes of accountability and within discourses of quality teaching that press so heavily on all of us that teach. Can those who teach the teachers rely too heavily on assumptions that students are committed to teach? Should teaching lecturers initiate moves to bring the hidden to the surface? What if students do the initiating? What is allowable for students to express? Then, once expressed, what then? What are the implications of such knowledge for all of us in education?

The following uses the teaching degree students' responses to a series of reflective conversations about their recent teaching experiences. In each case, they were asked to describe experiences that corresponded with McConaghy's (2006) intimacies. In most cases trace-like responses of uncertainty and doubt (see underlined parts), rather than assuredness and confidence, have been identified to highlight some of the more intimate aspects of teaching. In each case the student's responses parallel Sylvia Ashton-Warner's own reflections as a teacher. Also in each case questions are raised highlighting the need for more collective thought, debate and research in this area of teacher preparation.

Testimonies

> *Yeah ... It was kind of weird because I have never had that situation, of having separated parents.*

> *I tend to be a bit worried about my inexperience ... I don't want to jump in there when I don't really know ...*

> *That really threw me afterwards actually, because afterwards it wasn't talked about ... The hardest part for me was there was no debriefing.*

Sylvia, while living and teaching in small rural communities experienced first hand the rawness of community life and became bound up in the traumas of children and families living around her. All teachers witness children in trauma to varying degrees, from the minor to the soul destroying – family dysfunction, accident, death. Witnessing and then intervening or even not intervening leaves a toll.

Perhaps students who are preparing to become teachers are not as likely to experience children in trauma to the degree teachers might who have been serving for long periods. Nevertheless, many find themselves faced with decisions about whether to intervene or not in the difficulties faced by children. The resources utilised are drawn from life experience rather than the university degree they are completing. Certainly, the focus on quality teaching and learning and outcomes allows little space for considering what to do with a fragile child. What is an appropriate teacher response to tragedy and trauma in children's lives? What of the teacher's own emotional health being drawn into that trauma? What even of a teacher's legal standing should they intervene, albeit unintentionally in a unhelpful way? How might teachers support one another when colleagues are drawn in? And, as one of our students highlighted, afterwards what can be done to help everyone reflect and debrief?

Deferrals

> *I get really worried about that. Like if sometimes I ... I don't know ... if it's ever working ... so I am quite aware of ... and I think I'm quite hard on myself.*

> *I know we are supposed to be the ones that can fix it but a lot of the time ... we can try hard ... but we are never going to have the room to get down and help.*

During her own training at Auckland Teachers College, Sylvia failed to engage with the learning theorists and conventional understandings of the teaching and learning process of the time. She would gaze out the window during lectures more absorbed in Mt Eden beyond the College than what was going on inside. At degree's end she reports being saved by the ideas of Rousseau, commenting that if his ideas were true one could almost be a teacher. Sylvia battled long with a set of Janet and John reading pedagogies that she perceived as lacking yet represented the collective wisdom about learning to read in New Zealand. The dissonance between conventional wisdom on appropriate teaching ideas and what one sees as different in one's own teaching experience is also wearing.

The tensions for teachers in contemporary times are possibly greater than they were for Sylvia. Certainly the inspectorate system and grading of beginning teachers no longer operates. Yet contemporary quality teaching discourse suggests that teachers are increasingly responsible for every child's successful learning. A teacher is expected to work around obstacles to children's learning that were once compensated for via broad government welfare policy or perhaps not addressed at all. Are there limits to a teacher's responsibility? What are those limits? When is it OK for a teacher to let go of responsibility?

Others

> *One of the girls in my class talked about her two mums breaking up ... and I was like ... 'Oh mums!' ... And I was like 'Oh, oh, okay!' ...*

> *I didn't want her to think that I agreed with what she was saying ... but ... I didn't want to shut her down ... it was a burden that night and then a few days afterwards it sat with me.*

Sylvia did most of her teaching in rural and Maori communities, adopting for the times a liberal view of cultural difference tinged with paternalism and neo-colonialism. By today's standards she would be considered almost racist in her attitudes. It is, however, the result of meeting difference that McConaghy indicates is important. It is not always easy. Ien Ang (1996) significantly points out that dealing with difference, no matter whether it is cultural, linguistic, gendered, class-based and so on, is plain hard work. It is a concession rarely conceded to in critiques of dominant social and educational discourses generally.

Our students did not single out cultural difference at all when asked about managing difference. Instead, sexuality seemed more significant as the above quotes indicate. One can feel the tensions created by a confrontation with value sets that contrast one's cherished own. Certainly societal expectations are toward tolerance, equity and social justice for all. However, in our degree programmes how adequately do we equip our students for meeting difference – difference along any axis? What skills, understandings and strategies do we give our students for participating in diverse school communities? Is it OK to struggle with difference? Are there limits to tolerance? How does one actually compromise cherished values positions?

Ambivalences

> *One time I came home and I was just ... I rang up mum and started crying and I was just ... like 'It went so bad!'.*

> *There's definitely some times when you think 'I don't really want to do this' ... you've just got to put it behind and try and put your passion in to it.*

Sylvia was not always sure why she was at teachers college and once teaching had mixed feelings about continuing. After receiving a zero grade from an inspector she vowed she would resign – but within a very short time announced that she wouldn't. Despite the fluctuations, for many years she remained in the classroom teaching before finding perhaps her own level elsewhere within education, that is, overseas and as a lecturer.

Our students experience the same fluctuations in feelings toward teaching. Some respond by leaving the programme, changing degrees or deferring. Others persevere, but all with much emotional wear and tear, again against a set of quality teaching discourses that place increasing responsibility

upon teachers for all children's learning. To what degree is transparency of feelings OK? In what contexts is it OK to be honest? When is it not OK to be honest? How to reconcile community expectations for quality teaching with personal inner doubts about competence to teach well?

Loneliness

> *I know if anything went wrong or something wasn't right I know there would be someone there.*

> *They kind of talk down to student teachers, not being experienced and things but <u>I find it strange</u> because they were all student teachers once.*

Sylvia often struggled with the many male inspectors that would come regularly to assess her teaching and programming. She also struggled with the many senior female educational figures in both her own childhood as teachers, her teacher training as lecturers, and the many senior teachers she worked under as a beginning teacher. Her life was dominated by the spinster figure. The professional loneliness she experienced, and at times social loneliness, took its toll on her as well.

Our students report varied experiences of support from more senior teachers while on practicum. Schools in close proximity to university are perhaps 'student fatigued' whereas others further away are less so. Matching a more experienced senior colleague with a younger inexperienced teacher is not a straightforward process. Unconsciously, competent senior teachers quite often have lost an ability to articulate what it is they know best, leaving student teachers sometimes alienated and spoken down to. To what degree can teachers be prepared to teach during the period of their teaching degrees? What responsibility should more experienced teachers take for beginning/student teachers? What degree of responsibility should a student/beginning teacher take in seeking out assistance and support? How much assistance is OK to ask for? What limits if any should be placed upon the system to allow for inexperienced student/beginning teachers?

Erotics

> *I tell them that I have a boyfriend and he's very romantic ... and then they go 'ooohhh, ooohhh' and they all get very interested.*

> *I think it should be a two-way thing [sharing with the children] ... but that's because I have a very mundane life ... <u>nothing I need to hide</u>.*

Recent commentaries on Sylvia's life draw attention to the intimate relationships she had with male and female friends whilst being in a seemingly loving relationship with Keith, her husband. These relationships are not explicitly expressed in her autobiographical writing quite possibly due to the socially conservative times in which she was writing. Nevertheless, in the day-to-day realities of her living and teaching she somehow managed to maintain a set of complicated emotional attachments to others and teach at the same time – or

as McConaghy suggests, did not cope well. Suppression of her homoerotic desires are possibly linked to her pursuit of what McConaghy (2006: 81) calls higher ideals such as teaching children and Sylvia's portrayal of the asexual spinster figure as the ideal teacher. It is also quite possible that competing demands of reconciling the self with the demands of children quite possibly lead to her emotional breakdown and an extended break from teaching.

When it comes to student's expressions of sexuality some find it relatively straightforward whereas others draw clear lines concerning disclosure most probably based on discussions in university tutorials about appropriate professional distance. Others share themselves, albeit in age-appropriate ways, with children to the same degree as children share themselves with the teacher. Others, either with higher or lesser degrees of self perception, feel they have nothing happening in their lives to hide. Nevertheless, a number of questions are raised. How does a teacher's own sexual expression influence teaching? How easy is it for a teacher, particularly in a small rural community, to develop and maintain intimate relationships with significant others? Just how much of the personal can be exposed to the children, fellow staff, parents and wider community whilst teaching?

Obstacles and consolations

Sleep, <u>lots of</u> sleep.

Reading has always been <u>my Selah</u>.

Sometimes you just have to <u>sit on the couch for half an hour</u>.

Sylvia admitted frequently to not wanting to be a teacher, instead a commercial artist or a musician. Yet such admissions did not seem to dampen her enthusiasm to do well for the children in her care. She would get to the end of the school day not remembering what she has said, what she is saying or what she will say next, her head full of sixty voices (Ashton-Warner, 1963: 24). Perhaps one way of dealing with such inner tension about her teaching was the series of Selahs she established in each of the places she taught. These were either small out-buildings or studios where she escaped to paint. Such distractions from teaching's emotional and social weariness are almost a commonsense necessity.

Our student teachers leave in almost all cases their urban practicum school and become absorbed once again into the relative anonymity of wider university campus social life. University social life is sometimes perceived as inappropriate by the wider city community in which the university is placed. What then can a young teacher do to relax? What is permissible under the gaze of a school community, a more conservative school community? What Selahs would meet with the expectations of parents and school communities? What sorts of Selahs wouldn't?

Survivals

> *... and so they go for their run, that* <u>*gives me time to cool down*</u>*.*

> *Bring them back into something that they know, like say handwriting or reading, or something that's sort of settling ... but they know it.*

Sylvia was deeply affected by management issues and the unruly child, often attributing difficult behaviours to the restrictive pedagogies, child/teacher relationships and school structures she worked within. There is a moment when the children are being difficult, the reading lesson is futile and inattentiveness is rising and she turns at first to tears but then later to the classroom piano. There is in the piano a comfort pedagogy that is both a means of survival for her as a teacher and a means of pushing through the problem of management. The children relate to the music and begin to flourish – but in a different direction.

Our students have developed a sense of their own comfort pedagogies although the concern seems to be more with pedagogies of control. Running, reading and handwriting can all serve to keep children's bodies regimented. What comfort pedagogies can be employed to the benefit of everybody? What comfort pedagogies can be employed that do not place limits on children's bodies and thinking but at the same time promote learning and growth yet gives the teacher some psychic space to rest when teaching is difficult?

CONCLUSION

In the first instance, explorations of primary school teachers' desires and anxieties concerning their choice to teach will contribute towards a greater ethic of care for the teaching self by addressing the silences in both teacher preparation and the profession concerning teaching's intimacies. As primary teaching degree providers we must ask how can we incorporate reflection of this type into our programmes. Is it even possible? How can it be done sensitively or ethically? Also, how might we prepare teachers for dealing with the rarely articulated contingencies of teaching of the sort that Sylvia wrestled with and have little changed? What contemporary school communities are immune from trauma and difference to name two pressing intimacies?

If the above is not motivation enough then, in more neo-liberal language, there is the economic imperative of teacher numbers and the problematics of primary school teacher attraction and retention. Anecdotal evidence also suggests high departure rates from degree programmes during study. More publicised evidence exists for attrition during transition to teaching and from teaching once started. Murray (2006) reports only 50 percent of primary teaching graduates in New Zealand find full-time teaching work two years after graduation. In addition, this cohort of beginning teachers decreases with each year of service with only 60 percent still teaching by the fourth year. In some areas of the country retention and attraction problems are pressing.

In addition, student teachers also elect to do teaching degrees for reasons other than those of: the New Zealand institutions that prepare them; the NZTC who register them; the MOE who employ them; and, ERO who monitor them. Overseas service is a likely option for many, so too employment outside

of teaching altogether. After all, the neo-liberal turn in New Zealand has contributed to increasingly non-linear school to training to work transitions across all employment sectors (Higgins & Nairn, 2006), teaching included.

To even begin to understand student teachers and the post-graduation pathways they take it is important to explore the hidden feelings, both fears and desires, we all hold about ourselves and the choice we have made to teach or at least study to teach. Finally, and perhaps more compellingly, we as education lecturers 'once were teachers' also. If we are expected to 'teach the teachers' then we are ethically bound to consider these things. After all, why are we no longer in the primary classroom ourselves or why were we never there?

REFERENCES

Ang, I. (1996). The Curse of the smile: Ambivalence and the 'Asian' woman in Australian multiculturalism. *Feminist Review*, 52, 36-48.

Ashton-Warner, S. (1958). *Spinster: A novel*. London: Secker & Warburg.

Ashton-Warner, S. (1963). *Teacher: The testament of an inspired teacher*. London: Virago.

Ashton-Warner, S. (1980). *I passed this way*. Auckland: Reed Methuen.

Codd, J. (2005). Education policy and the challenges of globalisation: Commercialisation or citizenship?. In J. Codd & K. Sullivan (Eds.), *Education policy directions in Aotearoa New Zealand* (pp. 3-17). Southbank: Thomson.

Down, B. (2006). Developing critically reflective teachers in 'wacky' times. *Proceedings of the Australian Teacher Education Association Conference* (pp. 84-92).

Ellsworth, E. (1989). Why doesn't this feel empowering? Working through the repressive myths of critical pedagogy. *Harvard Educational Review*, 59(3), 297-324.

Ellsworth, E. (1997). *Teaching positions: Difference, pedagogy and the power of address*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Giroux, H. (1997). *Pedagogy and the politics of hope: Theory, culture, and schooling*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Gore, J. (1992). What we can do for you! What can we do for you?: Struggling over empowerment in critical and feminist pedagogy. In C. Luke & J. Gore (Eds.), *Feminisms and critical pedagogy* (pp.54-73). New York: Routledge.

Higgins, J., & Nairn, K. (2006). In transition: Choice and the children of New Zealand's economic reforms. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 27*(2), 207-220.

Johnson, G., & Stevens, E. (2002.) Moving from the personal to the political in teachers' reflective practice. *Queensland Journal of Educational Research*, *18*(1), 7-22.

Luke, C. (1992). Feminist pedagogy in radical pedagogy. In C. Luke & J. Gore (Eds.), *Feminisms and critical pedagogy* (pp. 25-53). New York: Routledge.

Maloney, C., & Campbell-Evans, G. (2002). Using interactive journal writing as a strategy for professional growth. *Asia Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 30(1), 39-50.

Matthews, J. (1996). Radical pedagogy discourse: A skeptical story. *Curriculum Perspectives*, *16*(1), 39-45.

McClaren, P. (2003). Critical pedagogy: A look at the major concepts. In A. Darder, M. Baltodano & R. Torres (Eds.), *The critical pedagogy reader* (pp. 69-96). New York: Routledge.

McConaghy, C. (2006). Teaching's intimacies. In J. Robertson & C. McConaghy (Eds.), *Provocations: Sylvia Ashton-Warner and excitability in education* (pp. 63-94). New York: Peter Lang.

Middleton, S. (1993). *Educating feminisms: Life histories and pedagogy*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Murray, S. (2006). *Beginning teachers 2000-2004: Characteristics, employment trends, qualifications and subjects*. Wellington: Ministry of Education, Demographic and Statistical Analysis Unit.

Orner, M. (1992). Interrupting the calls for student voice in 'liberatory' education: A feminist poststructuralist perspective. In C. Luke & J. Gore (Eds.), *Feminisms and critical pedagogy* (pp. 74-89). New York: Routledge.

O'Sullivan, D. (2007). *Beyond biculturalism: The politics of an indigenous minority*. Wellington: Huia Press.

Smyth, J. (2001). *Critical politics of teachers' work: An Australian perspective*. New York: Peter Lang.

Søreide, G. E. (2006). Narrative construction of teacher identity: Positioning and negotiation. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 12*(5), 527-547.

Valli, L. (1997). Listening to other voices: A description of teacher reflection in the United States. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 72(1), 67-88.

Walkington, J. (2005). Becoming a teacher: Encouraging development of teacher identity through reflective practice. *Asia Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, *33*(1), 53-64.

Watson, C. (2006). Narratives of practice and the construction of identity in teaching. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, *12*(5), 509-526.

Yost, D. S., Sentner, S. M., & Forlenza-Bailey, A. (2000). An examination of the construct of critical reflection: Implications for teacher education programming in the 21st century. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *51*(1), 39-49.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DR GREG BURNETT
University of Otago

Greg Burnett is a Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of Otago College of Education. He is a firm believer in the eternal relevance of Sylvia Ashton-Warner's auto-biographical writing for all teachers, beginning and experienced, as a means for reflecting on their own practice in a different way.

Email: greg.burnett@otago.ac.nz