

Are we on the right track ?

Alan Ovens

Physical Education Department  
School of Secondary Teacher Education  
Auckland College of Education

Students enrolled in undergraduate physical education course at the Auckland College of Education currently have eight field based teaching experiences. This paper examines the context for their education towards teaching and highlights some of the weaknesses with the current field based approach to developing teaching skills. It also outlines the start of an action research project to develop a model which will match appropriate experiences to the student's development as a teacher.

Students have regularly cited the practicum as one of the most worthwhile and productive parts of their teacher education. For them it glitters with practicality, reality, and utility (Tinning, 1984).

Interestingly, teacher educators and researchers do not always hold the same view. The practicum has been criticised for developing in students utilitarian teaching perspectives and failing to encourage students to envisage teaching any different from the status quo (Tinning, 1988). This paper, however, is not going to attempt to review or critique the practicum. This has already been thoroughly done by others such as Zeichner (1980, 1981, 1986), Tisher (1987) and Price (1989). Instead, this paper will firstly outline the historical influences shaping current practicum practice.

acknowledging that teacher education has no independent existence. This means that to understand teacher education programmes and the teaching that goes on in them (and what doesn't go on in them which may be equally as important) is to locate them in the historical, social, economic and political contexts that shape them. Secondly, it outlines an alternative model to current practice which provides students with a systematic and progressive set of teaching experiences to facilitate their development as teachers.

The context for this paper is the undergraduate physical education course at the Auckland College of Education (referred to in this report as the College). The College is comprised of eight schools or sectors, each concerned with differing aspects of teacher or social worker education. Secondary Teacher Education (STE) is one of these sectors and deals predominantly with university graduates on a one year course (Division C). There are also approximately 70 undergraduate physical education students on a four year Bachelor of Education course (Division B). The practicum experiences of the Division B course is the focus of this paper. already become entrenched.

The Education Act of 1877 established on a national basis teacher

training in Normal Schools. The resulting regulations determined the curriculum for teacher education and outlined that Normal schools should afford prospective teachers :

1. knowledge of the subjects they will be required to teach
2. theories of education and methods of teaching
3. opportunities to practice the art of teaching.

(The New Zealand Gazette, 1878, cited in Munro 1989)

It represented the first intervention by the State to govern the training of teachers, and caused some contention. The Principal of the Christchurch school reacted to the requirement of significant amounts of time to be devoted to practical teaching by criticising teacher apprentices for their "tendency to reproduce the system of the particular school in which they were trained" (cited in Munro, 1989). This comment predates similar criticisms about contemporary teacher education (for example, see Tinning, 1988) by more than a century. More importantly, it set in motion

the principles for teacher training which, although reviewed and refined, was still "destined to define the curriculum of training institutions until the present time" (Munro, 1989; 78)

The first official curriculum for secondary teacher training was presented in the Report on 'Recruitment, Education, and Training of Teachers' (referred to as the Campbell Report, 1951). It 'acknowledged that while university graduates had sufficient content knowledge, they would need an additional year of tutoring in the "Principles and practices of teaching", "Education" and "Physical Education". While this year was based in a Teacher Training College, there was to be a close relationship with schools :

"We emphatically agree with the accepted view that practical experience in the schools is an essential element in teacher education. It illuminates and gives meaning to the 'students in-college studies ... the amount of time spent in the schools must be substantial' (Campbell, 1951; 78-79). Munro notes that "In nearly all respects the curriculum matched that referred to as the 'McNair/Institute curriculum in Britain... with the exception of the emphasis placed on 'extra-classroom activities' " (1989; 83). This exception reflects the differing conception of the role of the teacher. Physical Education was included not for the benefit for the student teacher, but because NZ teachers were expected to do more than just teach. "All post primary teachers are 'expected to take part in the running of the extra-classroom activities (sport, clubs, & societies) that are now an important feature of the schools" (Campbell, 1951; 132). The 1964 report of the National Advisory Council on the Training of Teachers (referred to as the 'Aikman Report) was a response to the continuing severe shortage of secondary teachers. There was a recognition of the need to "explore the possibilities of training groups of people who had 'hitherto not thought to have a contribution to make in post-primary schools" (Aikman, 1964; 37).

Their recommendation was to establish a new training division to be known as Division B so that students could undertake concurrent university study and professional preparation for teaching. Students would graduate after three years (the length of time was variable dependent on prior education) with a Trained Teachers Certificate and could either complete their university degree or go straight to teaching. Such a course it was argued "... could become more effective as a course of professional training and at the same time enable its members to strengthen their academic qualifications (Aikman, 1964: 45 - 46). The training of physical education teachers under this scheme started in 1968 at the College.

This brief summary of teacher education outlines how the State governed structure for teacher preparation was formed and indicated that it has not changed profoundly since 1877. Any new course of teacher education, like Division B, would be shaped by an ideology that reflects the original edicts; that teacher training should comprise of courses in subject knowledge which would then later be taught to pupils, educational theory and teaching method, both increasingly dominated by psychology, and liberal amounts of time in school to practice teaching.

in terms of their policies towards teaching practice, with the experience described as an opportunity to relate theories taught in college to the classroom. The teaching practice is seen as an opportunity to give students a wide range of in-school experiences, e.g. school location (rural and city), types of school (private, state, multicultural), and age level taught (from form 1 -7).

In addition to a nationwide ethos, the College also has its own specific institutional history. There exists within the College a tradition (bound with similar historical inertia) that influences the way teacher education students will be educated. This "collective ethos" is manifest in the rules and procedures intrinsic to the operation of the College curriculum. In other words "this is the way we do things around here". That governs the way knowledge is structured in courses; the way credit is awarded; and even the way staff and students are recruited and selected. Kirk

(1986a) suggests This sedimented tradition must therefore function as a fundamental constraint on teacher education, not necessarily as an inhibitor of change, but most certainly as a factor in structuring or shaping any change that may take place" (p 160) This sedimented tradition was influential in the development of the Division B Physical Education curriculum.

The curriculum of Division B Physical Education in 1968 saw students studying courses examined by the New Zealand Association of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (NZAPHER) for their subject knowledge, papers at Auckland University for other subject knowledge, and courses at the College for education and teaching method. In addition they spent time in schools. The original physical education studies consisted of stage 1 and 2 papers in History, Principles, and Sciences of Movement.

The emphasis was on giving students an appreciation of the "place of movement in the curriculum". Educational philosophers (such as Pestalozzi and Froebel) were studied from the perspective of the place of physical education in their thinking. As College staff changed there was an increased emphasis placed on movement sciences (Anatomy, Physiology, Motor learning, etc). History and Philosophy were de-emphasised. As the course numbers grew there was increasing pressure on the NZAPHER examination system (a system using voluntary examiners), and growing dissatisfaction with Auckland University. There was an unusual paradox in that students were recruited with Physical Education as their major teaching subject, but this received little recognition within the degree they were majoring. There was an ongoing effort to have physical education courses taught in either the Medical School or the Education Department. Auckland University refused to recognise physical education as an academic discipline. Massey University then emerged as a viable alternative. It was expanding its programme and already had a well organised extramural programme. Two staff appointments gave their Education Department a predetermined philosophical acceptance of physical education. Clem Hill had worked at Otago University alongside the School of Physical Education and could accept physical education as an academic study, and Ray Adams had actually done specialist training in physical education.

Massey University agreed to incorporate papers into its Bachelor of Education Course that could be developed by Auckland College staff on physical education content studies and teaching method. Massey would provide extramural papers in education. A 're-vamped' course was developed which would see students studying for a Degree in Education and a Diploma of Teaching concurrently

New Zealand society has undergone much social and cultural change in the last 40 years. Teacher Education itself has undergone changing relationships with the state and society. This next section locates teacher education in a political context and examines the way the curriculum is influenced by political pressures.

Educational discourse in the 1950's could be labelled 'traditional' (Jesson 1990) It was characterised by a concern for the transmission of knowledge, hierarchy, school spirit, continuity, discipline and the disciplines. A feature of this discourse was the lack of recognition that particular subgroups are different in any other way from the dominant white, middle class, male cultural norm. Within this framework education has an assimilationist reproductive function, with the aim being to overcome disadvantage by bringing everyone into the culture of the dominant society.

The Maori and Feminist political discourses, in particular, were influential in challenging these accepted norms and providing a foundation for educational change. Although both were active throughout the early part of the century, they were assisted by the protest politics that emerged around the world during the 1960's. The key features of which were

anti-authoritarian, pro-individual and anti state (Jesson 1990).

Maori discourse is concerned with Maori interests, land, language, and culture. As the *tangata whenua*, the Maori were concerned that their culture not only prospered, but also, in the spirit of partnership that the Treaty of Waitangi was signed under, that there was an equal sharing between Maori and Pakeha. Within this discourse there are three key concerns. Firstly, Maori sovereignty - the ability to determine their own destiny. Secondly, Maori language - ensuring that the language did not die out. Thirdly, Maori success - recognition that "success" is socially determined, and that under the present system Maori were seen to be failing (Walker 1987). Education in particular was seen to be unable to meet Maori needs because of its institutional racism aimed at keeping the status quo.

Feminist discourses were influential in the teaching professional itself, and feminist ideas spread rapidly through the 1970's. Demands for equality were seen as "fair" and "common sense"; women were seen to be suffering from some structured disadvantage that equal access to education had not overcome (Jesson 1990). Liberal Feminists wanted to change the stereotypes and attitudes that maintained women as passive, quiet, submissive, gentle and dependent. At another level, radical feminist discourse was criticising the socialisation role of an education system based on patriarchal principles. Education was seen to play a significant role in the construction of male supremacy and in perpetuating male dominance and control (Kenway 1992). Education (or more particularly socialisation) was seen as the cause of the problem, therefore education could be a solution. The proposed solutions included providing role models, having women in positions of responsibility, changing textbooks, and teaching assertive behaviour. (Middleton 1988). Feminist discourse became influential in the educational arena, and specifically in the curriculum debates as feminists gained power as key members of the teachers unions, the educational bureaucracy, and the political parties (Jesson 1990).

The result was that by the 1980's education was perceived as liberating, and concerned with the rights of individuals and subgroups. Educational discourse could be characterised as "personalistic" (Codd 1985). During the early 1980's much of the public discussion about education focussed on policies concerning the official, or "core", school curriculum. In 1984 the Minister of Education announced there would be a review of the core curriculum for schools.

When consultation and extensive debate about the aims and purposes of education, "It was immediately lauded by the political left while provoking strong criticism from the right for its 'liberal and costly' proposals" (Codd 1990, p.193). The document presents a liberal-progressive view of education, focussing on the individual learner, with a strong emphasis on school and community based planning of the curriculum

within guidelines approved by the state. Following the election in 1984 the new government was on two contradictory paths (Jesson 1991) "On the one hand they were committed to the curriculum review and policies they were elected on, "while on the other they were struggling to control a burgeoning fiscal debt". In attempting to "contain the fiscal crises the government exercised stringent controls on all areas of the state expenditure (Codd 1990). In reaction, a new discourse, labelled the "New Right", rose in political influence through the 1980's which "has sought to change the relationship between the "state, the economy and civil society" (Lauder 1990; 1). Within this discourse education is "perceived as a product or commodity, and as such could be made more efficient, competitive and "economical". Michael Apple" has outlined how the New Right itself has contradicting ideologies. "The Neo-liberal ideology is concerned with privatisation, competition and letting market forces "rule. In contrast the Neo-conservatives are concerned with central control, and nationally determined curricula. The result is a paradox of wanting 'market forces' to rule while also pursuing policies of affirmative action for those disadvantaged by competitive individualism. As "Middleton, Codd and Jones (1990) observe "Contradictions between the unfettered individualism of New Right reforms and state intervention for equity

characterise recent educational policies in this country" (p x).

The influence of the New Right can be seen in the way the government then handled the results from "the monetarist agenda called for policies that would effectively reduce educational expenditure and fragment existing structures and patterns of interest representation" (p 200). Task forces were set up to investigate every sector of the state education system in order to make it responsive to the changes in the educational needs of "the community and the objectives of the government" (Middleton, Codd and Jones 1990; viii). As one educationalist noted after working on one of these reviews "It was clear from the outset that there was more than one agenda involved and the educationalists on the Task Force were obliged to defend there position against those "driven by economic considerations and perhaps even more by the constraints of the Public Sector Act" (Ramsay 1992; 8)

As these task forces reported back, government policies were quick to follow. The Picot Report on the administration of primary and secondary schools ("

followed by the ministerial policy statement "

compulsory education and training ("

and Training"

the most radical restructuring of the educational system in 100 years (Codd 1990).

By locating the curriculum in its historical and political contexts it is possible to begin to understand why the course is shaped the way it is. A curriculum is a compromise between the various competing forces influencing it. It is possible to highlight the implications for the students participating in the course, and specifically on practicums.

Firstly; the introduction and development of the Division B Physical Education curriculum in 1968 would be constrained and shaped by two key forces, namely the national ethos on teacher education and the institutional ethos of the College. The new curriculum would not start from scratch, but instead fit the national formula of subject studies, educational studies, and liberal amounts of teaching practice. The College was already training secondary teachers under the Division C curriculum, and so this would become a template for the Div B curriculum. This influence, by tradition rather than explicit policy, continues today and is most evident when considering teaching practice. The Division C programme:

1. has influenced the practicum to be "short but many", that is, field based teaching experience is divided up into several practicums of 4 - 6 weeks long each. For Division B students this means 2 practicums per year, resulting in a total of 8 practicums over their four year course.

2. controls the position of the teaching practices in the College Year. Division C choose the position based on the best result for their programme. Division B are influenced to follow.

3. schools students can go to. This has been a debatable point, since in reality the number of schools available to students is limited by the number of students each school agrees to accept. In the first practicum Division C students are placed in schools first and Division B students placed in the remaining available places. For the second practicum all students (both B & C) select which schools they would like to attend, and are placed if places are available.

4. influences how associate teacher's will relate to them. Associate teachers tend to treat all students as university graduates with good subject knowledge, and don't differentiate between students on different courses. As a result students receive the same type of feedback and support irrespective of whether they are a first or third year Division B

student or a Division C university graduate.

5. influences the way lecturers critique a student's teaching when they visit.

rely on a traditional style where they visit students, observe them teach, and write a report for the student which outlines some advice and opinions on the lesson.

6. controls the feedback of information from the school to the College. Teachers fill in the same report form used for Division C.

While Division C tends to dominate Division B, this influence is covert rather than overt, with current practicum practice

associate teachers, they tend to also perpetuate the tradition. This format of teaching practices may not always assist students through a developmental sequence to foster critical pedagogical thinking. It has in the past been organised more as an apprenticeship for students, with emphasis on technical competence. There has little recognition of the limitations of teaching practice as raised by Price (1989), Zeichner (1980, 1986) or Tinning (1984, 1988).

Secondly; teacher education has had a changing relationship with the state. An analysis of the language used to describe teacher education recruits reflects this changing relationship. Recruits were originally paid "teacher trainees" who were starting out on their careers. The College was part of the Department of Education, which selected the trainees. With the move away from training to the perception of teaching came a change in name from Training College to Teachers College (Knight 1992). During the 1980's the teacher education was shifted from professional education to tertiary study. Recruits were now classified as "students" who would now be required to pay fees. In less than a decade recruits went from being paid professional trainees to fee paying student.

With education restructuring, the 1990's has seen the rise of the "client" who is now "buying" a "product" from the College. The New Right discourse is evident here. Teacher education has been reduced to a commodity or product which can be bought. In line with this discourse Colleges of Education have to become more cost effective and efficient, with competition one way of achieving this. The possible outcome is to have several teacher education institutions, each providing courses in teacher education, with market forces and competition controlling the quality of the product. It is difficult to determine in this scenario, however, who is the actual client, since it may not necessarily be the student, or the government. Research by Stephenson and Stonehouse (1990) indicate that schools have clear perceptions of the "experiences, skills, and personal qualities beginning teachers need to bring to their first teaching appointment" (p 1). The influential market force may be which teacher education institution's students secure employment. As a consequence the perceptions of Principals may ultimately determine teacher education curriculum. However, regardless of the question of who is the client, the College has to prepare itself for possible competition in the market place, and this is an influential factor in any change in the curriculum.

Thirdly; with the restructuring of education and predominance of New Right discourse, the traditional position of the College in the education system is changing. The curriculum for teacher education is also changing, not for educational reasons, but for political and economic ones. Stephenson and Aitken (1992) have outlined what they see as



“tensions” in teacher education today. Among those identified the following are particularly pertinent to this discussion of the practicum

1. College based teacher education versus School based teacher education
2. Professional education and development versus Apprenticeship training
3. Holistic preservice education versus portable units of learning

They note that while the Secondary Teacher Education has traditionally placed greater emphasis on the former, there are pressures (both implicit and explicit) to move towards the latter. Although some have attacked such pressures to move as “mindless imitation from overseas” (see Knight 1992), the College has begun to prepare itself for “attacks” on its philosophical position.

which will match appropriate experiences to the student's development as a teacher. It is an attempt to remodel the practicum programme in response to the historical and political contexts outlined in the first part of this paper. It is important to state that we are at the start, and so much of what is outlined here will be subject to ongoing evaluation and modification. It also may not restructure the practicum as radically as Kirk (1986b) or Zeichner (1990) would recommend, but the historical, political, and social forces influencing the Division B curriculum are constraints inhibiting radical change.

Initially we were keen to emulate the practicum curriculum outlined by Taggart (1988) The idea of a sequential and systematic development of teaching skills agreed with the behaviouristic orientation of the department, and was consistent with current practice. Instead of radically restructuring the Division B curriculum, however, it was seen as more prudent to make small changes, that is attempt to maintain the positive aspects and modify the negative of the current model. In this manner it was decided to stay with the eight field based practicums. Instead the initial modifications would attempt to control the field context for each practicum, that is, control the experiences students were receiving on each teaching practice. We felt we could make improvements by structuring a set of developmental experiences students would pass through that would facilitate their development as teachers.

In this new model there are five experiential stages which the students move through over the eight practicums. These stages are :

1. Active observation - the student watches an associate teach, identifying appropriate teaching skills and behaviours.

form of focussed or unfocussed observations.

2. Assisting Teaching - the student starts by shadowing the teacher and progressively takes increasing responsibility for parts of the lesson .
3. Supervised teaching - the student teaches the lesson with the associate setting learning outcomes and assisting. Student aims to establish basic teaching skills

4. Active teaching - the student teaches the lesson with more autonomy over lesson content. The associate actively observes and provides critical feedback. The students aims to refine specific teaching skills.
5. Independent teaching- the student has full autonomy over lesson and unit content. Reflective teaching and critical analysis are encouraged in the student teacher.

The way students move through these stages during teaching practice are as follows :

/Assisting Supervised Active Independent

Observation Teaching Teaching Teaching Teaching`

This means that within each practicum the student can move between several structured experiences.