

SOMETHING, BORROWED: SOMETHING, NEW
Teachers' Ideas in the first five years

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ABSTRACT

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This is part of a five year study looking at patterns of continuity and change in the ideas which young teachers express about the work of teaching.

The study investigates the interaction between influences on young teachers' ideas which are external to the workplace and those which are a part of the school environment. Such influences include structural and policy changes as well as interactions which teachers have with colleagues, children and parents, in addition to the personal beliefs which teachers express.

In this paper, case studies will present major themes drawn from

written documentation and interviews with five teachers.

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Introduction

This study is the fifth in a series looking at the ideas which young teachers have about teaching. The subjects in the five studies have been drawn from 1987 and 1988 graduates of the Diploma of Teaching (Primary) at Footscray Institute of Technology.*

Drawing from the findings of earlier studies (Gay, Ryan and Wilson, 1992; Ryan and Gay, 1992; Ryan and Gay, 1993; Ryan and Gay, 1994a) it was decided to investigate issues of continuity and change in teachers' ideas about teaching and to consider particular influences on those ideas.

The teachers are members of a unique group. Having commenced their

courses mid way through a state Labor government, which espoused principles of participation and equity in education, they are now part of a state Liberal government education system which emphasises outcomes in the more traditional sense. As detailed in Ryan and Gay (1993) these teachers have seen considerable change in the education system in Victoria since 1992 with the closure of hundreds of schools and the departure from the system of thousands of teachers.

Research Background

Teachers' ideas about teaching result from contextual factors within their working environments and from individual life experiences. The active involvement of the teacher in fusing external and internal aspects of her work and ideas as a teacher is an example of the dialectical process to which Reigel (1978) refers. Reigel (1978) argues that adult development is a dialectical process in which a person operates in a state of tension between "internal" (maturational and psychological) and "external" (cultural, social, physical) forces within an interplay of other influences. (p.19).

The ways in which satisfying and productive teaching roles are negotiated and the flexible treatment of an ideas base for those roles is characterised by patterns of change and continuity throughout career. For teachers, this is akin to the development of personal teaching efficacy. Nias (1989) study of primary teachers' work highlights teachers' sense of self which is central to

* more recently, Victoria University of Technology

their personal and professional identity. Teachers are socialised into a tradition in which high value is attached to self investment and to the establishment of a personal relationship with pupils. Their self image is more important to them as practitioners than is the case of occupations where the person can be separated from the craft. From a symbolic interactionist perspective the self is seen as simultaneously socially constructed and autonomous. However, the development of

personal efficacy and of ideas about teaching is not linear. Teachers' ideas about teaching are very strongly influenced by the beliefs that teachers hold about their own capacities or abilities to act in ways that bring about student learning and development (Smylie, 1990). Beliefs about student learning and development are influenced by ideas about teaching and vice versa. Such ideas are the product of a complex and dynamic interaction of various influences. The relationships which teachers develop with the students they teach and with their colleagues have been noted by several researchers as clear influences on teachers'

ideas about teaching and their satisfaction with it. Huberman (1993) indicated that for teachers in his study "easy beginnings" in teaching were consonant with "good rapport with pupils" (p.244). Huberman reiterates the importance of relationships with students in shaping teachers' work and ideas in that he suggests that relationships with students are at the heart of most teacher motivation. For Kottkamp (1990) the centre of the work universe for most teachers is the classroom. Although Raymond et al (1992) did not solicit information about relationships with colleagues in their collection of eighty teachers' life stories, 98% of teachers wrote about intercollegial relations: 80% mentioned negative interactions with colleagues as significant and 60% perceived positive interactions with peers as special aspects of their work.

In looking at continuity and change in teachers' ideas, we are trying to discern the sense teachers make of their experiences. Teachers' ideas, identities and personal narratives accrued in this way are the product of connections between the individual, other teachers, students and parents. The connections are broader than those associated with schools and stretch back into teachers' lives. Stahl (1989) has developed a taxonomy to describe influences which collectively impact on individual development. Raymond, Butt and Townsend (1992) write that from a preliminary analysis of eighty teacher autobiographies they can discern a range of influences of parents, relatives, school teachers, the nature of home, ethnicity, religion and location and that these are continually evoked and reconstructed to establish a firm emotional and moral ground that helps form teachers' professional commitment and identity. Raymond et al (1992) present three accounts of teacher development which emphasise the importance of preteaching experiences. This pattern has been apparent in early studies in the present project where the rationale for the establishment of a teacher education program in the western suburbs of Melbourne has been described along with its acknowledgement of equity and access issues exemplified in

Government policy during the mid eighties and its selection of students "from the west to teach in the west" (Gay, Wilson and Ryan, 1992; Ryan and Gay, 1993).

The importance of teachers being aware of the influences on their ideas is made clear by McLaughlin and Tierney (1993) who comment,

Teachers have particular responsibility in constructing their narrative voice in the practice of pedagogy. They need to be aware of how history is represented or inscribed not only in

their own voices but in the voices of their students' (p.228).

Clearly, the construction of teachers' ideas and identities is complex in its design and in its delivery in interactions with students, colleagues and parents. Experiences with students, colleagues and parents are implicit within both the development and expression of teachers' ideas. Although a variety of factors at the classroom, school and community levels have been shown to be related to the development of teaching perspectives, teachers have not been viewed as active participants in determining the course of their socialization.

An example of the position of teacher socialization as an interactive process is the conceptual model of Lacey (1977) which is based on the constant interplay between choices and constraint in the process of learning to teach. Lacey proposes the construct of "social strategy" as a device for understanding the varying degrees to which teachers conform to institutional processes and reconstitute the institutional conditions in which they work.

From an examination of research literature on teacher socialization Zeichner (1986) presented evidence for the interactive nature of teacher socialization. Zeichner concluded although the socialization of teachers entails

"more than a simple expression of ideas, characteristics and capabilities that teachers bring to the workplace, the strength and direction of teacher development is clearly influenced to varying degrees by the purposes and intentions of individual teachers who do not simply acquiesce to the forces around them."

From a study of staff relationships in primary schools, Nias et al (1989) concluded that the contemporary school is embedded in a changing social and administrative context which places increasing demands upon it. Schools as organisations were described as densely populated, actively constructed, finely balanced and continuously changing. At the same time, they were stable, subject to the authority of the principal and the influence of peers controlled by allegiance to shared beliefs and values. The key to this apparent contradiction is the notion of "organisational culture" the components of which are actively constructed by members of that culture, that is, the teachers.

The contexts in which teachers' ideas develop and are revealed may influence their authenticity. Claxton (1989) for example, writes of the face (anything for an easy life) and base (deeper philosophical stance) values which teachers adopt. Stark (1991) quotes a beginning teacher saying,

As I become less genuine as an individual, I become more successful as a teacher in the system (p. 311).

In the present study, we were concerned to determine the extent to which the ideas about teaching revealed in the submitted written material would be reiterated in interviews with the teachers. The nature of ideas which teachers have about teaching has been canvassed by Stark (1991) who provides a graphic account of the beginning teaching experiences of two teachers. One, with a technocratic vision, saw her lifelong dream of becoming a teacher turn into a nightmare in one year. The other exemplified 'pedagogic caring' with concern for social justice, curiosity about the world and desire to make sense of her world. The first teacher's ideas about teaching are revealed by Stark as superficial and brittle: those of the second, grounded in more pervasive qualities of caring, hope and optimism.

Clearly, in the work being undertaken using teachers' stories, biographies and journals, it is important that teachers' ideas and the contexts in which teachers work and live are both investigated and more importantly that the influences of one on the other are considered. Consideration of teachers' ideas requires attention to the idiosyncratic and the generic; the insight and the practice. In looking at continuity and change in teachers' ideas, it is necessary to chart the points of both contact and distance between and within teachers' ideas. Kagan (1993) argues for example that 'teaching may be the only clinical profession that acknowledges and promotes uniqueness of practice.' (p.706) .

Description of the Study

For this study, five teachers who commenced teaching in 1989/1990, after having completed the Diploma of Teaching (Primary) in 1988 were invited to provide copies of all the courses, work programs, curriculum vita, applications for promotion and the like which they had developed in the period, 1989-1994. In addition to this material, the researchers drew on responses which these teachers gave in interviews in 1993 about their ideas about teaching. For several of the teachers, a 1988 videotape was available in which these teachers explained their ideas about teaching. In reviewing the videotaped and written materials, the researchers sought to determine consistent themes and also the points at which new ideas were first raised. Furthermore, in studying consistent themes, the researchers looked for

evidence of extension and elaboration of ideas.

The researchers reviewed all of the written material and drew from it themes which it was considered revealed continuity and change in the teachers' ideas about teaching in the period 1989-1994. Each teacher was then interviewed. Interviews were informal and conversational and had five main sections. During the lengthy interview, teachers (i) were asked to draw concept maps indicating their main ideas about teaching, (ii) were asked to talk about the concept maps as they drew them (iii) were shown the diagrammatic summary the researchers had made of their analysis of the written material (ref. Tables 1-5), (iv) were asked to verify or amend the summary and (v) to describe influences on the

change and continuity revealed in this preliminary analysis. The five teachers are graduates of the second intake in 1986 of the Diploma of Teaching (Primary) program at Footscray Institute of Technology (now Victoria University of Technology). The teachers were selected as representative of the students coming into the program at Footscray in 1986. Three are from non-English speaking backgrounds and all five completed their schooling in western suburban government or Catholic schools. They all continue to live in inner or western suburban areas of Melbourne and teach in schools in the northern or western suburbs of Melbourne.

Findings of the Study

This section of the report comprises a summary of ideas drawn from written documentation provided by the teachers in May 1994, videotapes made by the researchers of some of the teachers expressing their ideas about teaching recorded as they completed the Diploma of Teaching (Primary) in 1988 and from interviews conducted in October, 1994. Main themes relating to teaching were drawn from these sources and are presented graphically in Tables 1-5 and reveal individual differences among the five teachers. These themes were categorised according to evidence of continuity and change identified by the researchers and confirmed by the teachers in the recent interviews. Also, in these interviews, teachers identified the major influences on their ideas about teaching.

INSERT TABLE 1

Peter: Continuity. Problem solving in Language, Maths and Science, cooperative grouping, comprehensive curriculum, provision of real life learning experiences and catering for individual differences have remained as strong themes through Peter's teaching. According to Peter,

‘If you’re not meeting the needs of individual children, you’re not doing your job properly.

It’s your job as a teacher to cater for individual children.’

Peter spoke also of the teacher being a role model for children.

‘You have to come across as a responsible person, treating others appropriately, acting well,
setting to work, getting things done.’

Change. While Peter referred to the ongoing curriculum changes with which he had been involved during his years of teaching, he noted that the most major changes he had faced had resulted from the change of state government in Victoria. He described the increased class sizes and associated difficulties with managing group work, changed staffing profile, greater administrative demands on teachers and teachers’ increasing tendencies to work alone rather than in teams. This latter change, Peter described as a two-part development whereby team work in his school reached its zenith in 1993 when staff, parents and children joined together to save the small school from closure by the government to a situation in 1994 where across -school team work has broken down due to poor morale. It is important to note however that the infant grades team of which Peter is a part has continued to meet in 1994, often meeting after hours and in school holidays to plan . Peter spoke of the school community continuing to feel under threat of closure and unwilling as a result to initiate innovation. Despite

the turmoil, 1993 was a peak year for Peter - a year in which he

‘became a little more confident and took on more responsibilities, thought I was more
capable.’

Giving a particular example of the impact of increased class size on his teaching, Peter said of cooperative group work ,

‘It hasn’t been sacrificed but a dint has been put in the wall, so to speak’.

Influences. Peter is sustained in his teaching by seeing children’s progress,

‘very rewarding, very satisfying when you see a child has learned something new, has
grasped a concept’

Despite the gloominess in regard to government changes that Peter

voiced (for which he apologised lest we thought him eager to leave teaching) , he concluded,

“I still enjoy my teaching - seeing that light tick over upstairs.”

Peter attributed many of his ideas about teaching to his B.Education (Primary) program at Footscray Institute of Technology. These included catering for individual children, problem solving, cooperative learning, real life experiences, ongoing assessment and role modelling. Other themes in his ideas about teaching, Peter suggested were the product of both his FIT course and on the job learning. These included discipline, school policies and parental involvement while committee work was seen as resulting solely from on the job learning. Peter spoke too of learning a lot from my peers and of having hopefully passed on lot of ideas too- changing all the time as a teacher, will go on until I retire.

INSERT TABLE 2

Sandra: Continuity. Sandra's sense of community and comradeship are consistent throughout. Her respect for the individual differences of her students and for collegial working relationships with staff is clear. In describing her ideas about teaching, she said,

“I'll look at what I do at the beginning of the year: first of all, I look at the children's personalities to see how I can speak to them, teach them, get across to them.”

Sandra went on to talk about particular approaches she takes to determining the language competence of non-English speaking background children and the hearing and sight difficulties of other children. Sandra referred also to her role in facilitating children's learning, commenting at one stage that when other teachers remark on the progress of particular children in her grade, although she feels rewarded, she considers “they (the children) have done it themselves”. Sandra's valuing of parental involvement in schools and her perception that schools are community resources have been sustained through her years of teaching.

Sandra's interest in performing arts has also been sustained throughout her years of teaching and dance has come to represent a metaphor for her of good teaching and learning. Dance, Sandra suggests, helps shy

children express themselves and gain confidence, requires considerable discipline and memory of patterns and sequences, is 'learning without words and pictures' and involves 'learning about your body and how you can control it and about others' space.'

Change. A policy orientation develops early in Sandra's career and draws on her particular interests in working with parents. Her written materials include considerable information about parent and homework policies. Performing arts is a vehicle for selfdevelopment and for children's learning and is another consistent theme drawing on Sandra's expressed interest in the area. There is strong evidence throughout Sandra's documents of her teaching role being very much an extension of her life interests and values.

A major change in Sandra's teaching has been her more recent involvement in teaching teams. Having started teaching in two and three teacher schools, where, on both occasions, the head teacher fell ill leaving Sandra, and in one case with a still more junior teacher, to run the school in conjunction with the school councils, Sandra, now in her third school, finds herself working in teaching teams.

'I'm working in a team, working with other teachers - they're saying what I'm doing is good.

I'm learning from them. It's how I always wanted it to be.'

She went on to speak of the excellent working relationship she has with a more experienced teacher in the room adjacent to her own and of the benefits of team work, 'less work but you get more things done.'

Sandra described this year as her best year of teaching saying,

'I've been waiting for this to happen all along.'

Sandra refers to realising in the last year that she should undertake some more formal professional development following a break taken at the conclusion of her fourth year upgrading. Formal enrolment in the Early Literacy Program and in English as a Second Language programs are in addition to 'always seeing who I can learn something from, make myself better.'

Influences. Sandra referred to classroom themes sometimes being predetermined by 'scope and sequence charts' and to the more pervasive impact of school selected programs such as Macmillan Maths. She commented on the need she felt to adapt such materials to her preferred teaching approach which is very much determined by what she knows about the children she teaches. Sandra voiced fears that the introduction of standardised testing into primary schools in 1995 would disadvantage non-English speaking background children and also place stress on teachers to prepare children 'for the test'. The importance she ascribes to less surface approaches to learning is perhaps best summed up in a description of her response to CLOZE activities prepared by other teachers in her

teaching team. Her unease related to some children's tendency to memorise words but fail to glean the meaning of the extract, in her terms, 'cheat on their learning'.

Sandra's ideas about teaching are clearly influenced by two main factors: her own experiences as a child where she disliked primary school, faked illnesses to avoid it, felt teachers failed to provide for individual needs of children and her experiences in growing up in

a much-maligned area of Melbourne. Sandra's acknowledgment of the importance of parental involvement in schools is very much related to both of these experiences. She refers to the support her mother gave her throughout school in being involved, in asking questions about what she was doing and generally taking an interest. She harks back to negative comments she remembers teachers making about her own secondary school cohort because of the area in which they lived and comments that such attitudes prevail in staffrooms today. Sandra states,

'I think where teachers have grown up affects what they think is right. I have never wanted

to teach anywhere other than where I came from. I've always felt good about myself - I was

supposed to be a real loser because of where I grew up.'

INSERT TABLE 3

Elizabeth: Continuity. The consistent focus of Elizabeth's documentation is detailed planning for teaching and assessment of children's learning. Initially, her daily work program described the skills to be taught in each lesson, then changed to yearly scope and sequence charts covering all areas for grade three level when she became a specialist maths teacher. Cumulative records and files on each child's progress are used to evaluate her program and to plan future work. Her approach to teaching is described in terms of concrete and informal ways to introduce and reinforce concepts. Her aim is to make lessons enjoyable to motivate and interest children and to ensure some degree of successful learning outcomes.

'My main idea is to teach what the policies and guidelines say I must teach but in the most

interesting and enjoyable way possible.' (1993)

Change. Recent changes relate to Elizabeth's views on team teaching, parents and career. Team teaching resulted in a school reorganisation when Elizabeth became responsible for teaching maths to fifty-eight children in the upper school: a major change from infant classroom teaching. Elizabeth feels she has learned so much to confirm and elaborate her ideas by team teaching with the 'best teacher she has ever seen'. An example is organising the upper

grades into groups based on children's abilities rather than ages to cater for differences in their pace and style of learning.

Her negative perception of parents followed referral of a difficult child for assessment after which his parents ganged up to bad mouth Elizabeth in the school community. Parental assistance with homework is another source of conflict because parents teach old fashioned methods, yet do not come to learn about current approaches at school information nights.

Of parents, Elizabeth said,

“I feel the job would be much easier if we didn't have to deal with parents.” (1993)

Change in career aspirations are indicated by Elizabeth's membership of School Council, curriculum and administrative committees and her successful promotion. She believes that the opportunity to contribute to decision making processes and communicating this information to staff is important, although she is a junior member of the school community.

“I'm going for promotion, I feel I am ready for more responsibility. Career is so important so I feel I will go as far as I can.” (1992)

Influences. When asked to identify the major influences on her perspectives Elizabeth spoke of personal and institutional factors. Personally she feels that she has matured and improved as a practitioner through experience of teaching. Other teachers are seen as important sources of personal knowledge which Elizabeth stores away and uses when relevant. In particular, team teaching with a competent and more experienced teacher provides a model and a resource for improving her own practice.

As a staff member of a small school, Elizabeth finds she has much to do. Her involvement on School Council, administrative and curriculum planning committees provides first hand experience of decision making processes which she can communicate to other staff. The need to follow government curriculum frameworks and guidelines is acknowledged by Elizabeth who interprets her role as translating policies into a personal style of teaching.

Examples of personal influences are:

“In a way I've grown up a lot. I learned a lot at College. I feel in the first year I got byThe more you do it the better you get....I've matured a lot.” (1994)

‘That knowledge comes from other people, doing in services, finding out. It’s more word of mouth.’ (1994).

Institutional influences are explained as:

‘A lot of decisions are made. I know it’s important to be there (School Council). I know exactly what’s going on.’ (1994)

‘I have to fit in and do my job. My job is to teach the children.’ (1994)

INSERT TABLE 4

Maria: Continuity. The consistent theme throughout Maria's documentation is the attention she pays to children's cooperative learning. This is emphasised at various stages of her career. The importance of cooperation in the work of the school staff is also stressed. Similarly, assessment, which Maria referred to in her videotape presentation in 1988 has remained an important part of Maria's ideas about teaching. To quote Maria's written material,

‘Regular evaluation of programs and assessment of children is integral to effective, planning , teaching and learning. This task is not only the responsibility of an individual but also of the team. I have demonstrated my personal commitment to maintaining and sharing consistent and comprehensive assessment and evaluation records for all

children and curriculum programs within my classroom. (1994)

‘Cooperative learning constantly takes place in my grade as the children are continuously encouraged to be actively engaged in learning from and interacting with each other. (1992)

In a 1993 interview, she commented,

‘It brings tears to my eyes when I see my children working together so beautifully and cooperatively with one another. (1993)

In 1993, Maria noted,

It brings tears to my eyes when I see my children working so beautifully and cooperatively with one another.

In her 1994 interview, she said,

I love teaching. I always believe my children come first and I believe I put them first. I love teaching. It's the children - all the things we have to do because we're directed to - the children are there to learn and we're there to educate them - we have to be able to deliver quality programs to them.

Change. Maria charts the changes in her ideas about teaching according to a series of stages. These include starting in a 'grotty little room' as the ESL teacher, to taking over a very difficult Grade 5/6 mid way through the next year, to encouragement from the deputy principal to apply for (and gain) promotion and on to the point where she is now very actively involved in policy development and administration within the school. This has all occurred in a single school where Maria commenced as a young teacher on a large staff and where she now finds herself still the youngest and most recently employed on a staff much reduced in size.

Maria refers to children being her only focus in her early teaching years,

You think I have to make sure I deliver a worthwhile program to the children - didn't see my first role as leading policy teams etc. - it was children, children, children.

Referring to her increase in confidence, Maria remembers seeing others as a threat to her and sitting through staff meetings where she understood little, unfamiliar with such terms as recommendation, nominator, seconder. She is now convening program and policy writing teams 'not just a member of the team'.

I'm really glad I did the course and am now teaching - in the beginning I'd sit back but now, I'm ready to have a go, make mistakes - that's all part of it.

As newly appointed LOTE convenor, Maria is preparing to introduce Italian into the upper school in 1995 and then throughout the school in subsequent years.

Maria now articulates ideas about organizational and administrative changes which she considers would benefit teachers and learners. She recommends smaller committees, consolidation of committee tasks, more delegation of particular tasks to individuals, and team planning. Elaborating on the latter point, Maria says,

‘There are ways we could cut our workload in our team. I could say to my colleagues - you do Maths this month and I’ll do English - but we don’t and we try to kill ourselves to fit everything in.’

Influences. Maria states that although she had heard about policies and curriculum programs, it was only when she was actually involved in a school that their importance became apparent to her - ‘the real picture’.

Maria speaks frequently of the delivery of educational programs:

‘If we had no policies or budgets, no aims and objectives, lists of resources, we could not deliver our curriculum programs.’

‘If here was no structure, I think it would be very difficult to deliver a comprehensive program incorporating the different curriculum areas and key learning areas.’

Maria remarks,

‘I can now look at programs and policies and know exactly where I’m heading - which direction I should be heading in - originally it was just one great confusion. Now I have a clear understanding of what we need to do to teach the children.’

Maria refers to the importance of team planning in adapting curriculum documents like Frameworks and the Curriculum and Standards Framework to meet the needs of particular schools.

Colleagues rate highly as an influence on Maria’s ideas about teaching. She refers to the need for school staff to plan cooperatively, remarking,

ì If thereís no cooperation, itís not good for the school, for the children, for anyone - has to be that bond between the staff.î

Maria speaks of developing confidence over the past years as a result of the support given her by ìleaders in the schoolî. Maria refers to the influence on her ideas of

ìBeing on particular working parties - just talking to people about what to do, sharing ideas -

think team effort has helped me - mingling with people, discussing ways we can teach,

planning together.î

Children are another major influence on Mariaís ideas about teaching. Her description of the influences of both children and parents is businesslike.

ìEach child is different, they have a really big impact on the way I teach and deliver my programs.î

ìNot enough time in the day to fit in all the parents who want to help. Parents have a place,

donít think they can tell me how to teach or how Iím meant to deliver my program - theyíre

always invited into the room. I think they accept me as the teacher and have faith in me.

Then Iím the type who will ask them if theyíre happy how their child is going - parents do

have a good relationship with me and if thereís a problem they will come and see me.î

INSERT TABLE 5

Nick: Continuity. There are diverse themes expressed in Nickís extensive documentation of his work that focus on the school, teaching, children and parents. The valuing of childrenís

individual differences, social justice and multiculturalism are continuous themes over the period.

Teaching is expressed as:

ì Through my experiences in curriculum development, the committee structure, in services,

administration and studying, I am always up to date with current teaching and government trends.î (1993)

îI encourage in students the responsibility for their own learning, building on past understanding. I cater for individual differences, encourage risk taking and active participation. I provide a comprehensive and integrated curriculum employing a process approach to learning.î (1994)

Changes. Changes in Nickís focus are taking a more leading role in instigating change in the school, through leadership of curriculum committees, inservices and school activities. In the last year his teaching role has altered from specialist computer teacher back to classroom teaching as in his early years in the school.

At the same time his perspective on teaching has become more individualistic to ìmy own wayî and taking responsibility for every childís learning outcomes, with reduced support and collaboration among teachers. For him, a vast amount of time is spent planning curriculum content for the year, evaluating, assessing and reporting each childís progress. He describes the school community as very difficult with many single parent families, children with English as a second language or with special needs.

One example of leadership is:

îI have instigated moderation sessions therefore expanding whole staff knowledge of the English Profiles. I was leader of the committee responsible for the development of cumulative files where staff were responsible for keeping student records and work samples on a regular basis.î (1994)

An example of commitment to school needs and priorities is:

îAs a member of the Steering and Administrative Committee, I have ensured that school priorities have been identified and made clear to parents, staff and students.î (1994)

On Parents:

îI have organised parent information sessions, reporting days as well as surveys in response to those reporting days.î (1994)

Examples of relationships with children are:

I am involved in the Care Program and feel it allows me to become more aware of individual student's needs. I am further involved in student relationships within the Breakfast Club and sick bay duties. I have encouraged children to express thoughts and feelings at class meetings and at Junior School Council.

Influences: Nick identified the significant influences which impacted on his role as teacher as the Principal, the Directorate of School Education, School Council, other teachers, children and parents. He identified five changes in education which have impacted on his work. First, as the school is fairly new he became involved in developing policies, inservicing teachers and parents and special projects. Second, with the loss of high quality and experienced staff who took redundancy packages offered by the government, junior teachers like him took on more responsibilities. Third, education itself has changed with a new focus on classroom teaching of curriculum content and assessment of learning outcomes. Fourth, organizational changes in the school has made teachers responsible for larger numbers of children in multi-aged grades. There is less collaborative school planning and more work done by individual teachers. Finally, a new Principal introduced increased informal parental involvement in the school. Sadly, at the time of our last interview Nick had taken stress leave from teaching,

Influences are expressed as:

The principal basically gets the information from the Directorate and the School Council and her role is to inform me. My role is communication. Children, my teaching and parents' knowledge and support and especially discipline and things they don't know about

like computer education because parents are not up to date with all; that are important. Other teachers their support for them as well, senior teaching staff and information for them.

Concluding Comments

This study of five teachers' written and spoken ideas about teaching helps to tell the story of five young teachers' careers. In so doing, the written and spoken material reveals the impact on those ideas of personal and institutional influences (Table 6). Both the personal and institutional influences are characterised by 'something borrowed and something new'. In the case of personal influences on the teachers' ideas about teaching, influences, in some cases, link back into entrenched senses of identity and of place.

'Me as a teacher'

Each of the five teachers articulates a personal style of teaching and explains ways in which this defines their work and how other influences, such as curriculum guidelines are mediated according to this personal style.

Reading the documentation and speaking with the teachers, we hear voices with different emphases, concerns and strategies.

'Having a go'

Each of the teachers gives examples of ways in which they have responded to opportunities by taking the lead from more experienced colleagues, participating actively in school activities and being prepared to reach out and take risks after an initial survival stage. These young teachers have forged successful careers despite the many difficulties they have faced in recent years in a much changed education system. With one exception, they speak enthusiastically about a future in teaching and the ideas they have about the form that will take.

'Coming home'

For four of the teachers, there is a strong sense in their ideas about teaching of what Denscombe (1980) refers to as 'coming home'. They identify the source of many of their ideas about teaching as their initial Diploma of Teaching (Primary) program. None have moved far from home either to live or teach and most demonstrate little inclination to do so. This sense of 'coming home' is demonstrated too in other ways such as the teacher planning programs now in her native language; another who stresses multiculturalism in his work and a third who speaks eloquently of her own schooling experiences and her desire to enhance the options of those whose schooling is like her own in a much maligned area of Melbourne.

'Growing up'

Without exception, the teachers describe the impact of the passing of time on their ideas about teaching. They are able to pinpoint times of growth in confidence. For one, this was the encouragement by a deputy principal to apply for promotion and the assistance that person gave in

helping the young teacher put together a successful application. For two others, the pattern has been progressive. This has resulted from teaching to date in a single school and having the support of a strong team to take risks and make mistakes. The threatened closure of his

school was a turning point for one who found himself at the time thrust into leadership of many committees, including the all important fund raising committee. For another teacher, it was finding herself in her first two years, due to the principal's illness, the most senior teacher in the school. For this teacher, this growth experience was premature and she has delighted in the more recent experience in her new school of the type of team support she had anticipated as part of her development as a teacher.

The institutional influences of the Footscray Institute of Technology (FIT) program, government education policies and school communities have impacted on the teachers' perspectives and been moderated by the teachers' personal biographies.

From the west for the west

The FIT program introduced the teachers to newly developed government policies, current approaches to curriculum and to explicit social justice values. All of the teachers reflect the foundational basis for developing their ideas. The potency of the FIT influences varies so that one teacher still retains major ideas about children's thinking and his teaching five years later. For another, her own schooling and family were the basis for articulating her perspectives through the program.

The values espoused in the program have been worked out by the teachers in different ways. Most have supported programs such as English as a Second Language, equal opportunity, integration or student welfare which seek to redress disadvantage in their schools. The valuing of cultural diversity is expressed by one teacher as celebrating multiculturalism and by another introducing a LOTE program into the school. An approach to teaching which values the individual differences in children from diverse backgrounds is expressed by four of the teachers. For one, knowledge of each child's personality is the basis for her teaching. For another, children's abilities and interests are the basis for pedagogy and values are not seen to influence her perspectives.

The complex interaction between the FIT program and government policies is difficult to determine as the former sought to support the latter. To that extent, there was not a conflict between the influences of these institutions on the hearts and minds of the teachers. To that extent, something borrowed, something new refers to teachers' responses to government educational policy directions.

ìIn Victoriaì

In a way, government education policies and curriculum statements provide a framework and a discourse upon which the teachers have developed and modified their ideas about teaching. The language which all of the teachers use to describe their approaches to teaching and assessment is located in official curriculum documents and resources. Some examples are cooperative learning, process approaches, inclusive and comprehensive curriculum which were current in the mid to late eighties. When these teachers transported their knowledge into schools where curriculum policies and practices were being put into practice, their ideas were reinforced and modified.

The recent changes in government policy is to focus on curriculum standards and teachers' accountability for each child's learning. Moreover, the drive for efficiency resulted in funding cutbacks and fewer teachers in schools. Three of the teachers have responded to these demands by modifying their perspectives and their roles. One, in a specialist position, espouses the belief that teaching children in

ability groups is more effective in promoting learning, a practice discouraged in the eighties. Another has adopted a leading role introducing more efficient administration, organisation and new programs in her school. Yet another who took a curriculum and outcomes focus, is stressed by the responsibility for ensuring that every child reaches a specific standard. Another maintains his former perspectives by working harder and seeking the support of colleagues.

ìIn this schoolì

The school communities in which the teachers work are potent influences on the realisation and modification of their perspectives. Specifically, the teachers' interactions with members of the school community, the school culture and critical incidents are part of this process. Located in western Melbourne, the schools differed in size, staff relationships and the composition of the local communities. For all of the teachers, relationships with children were fundamental to their roles, their identities and satisfaction with their work as primary teachers. For most, team work with colleagues in teaching or curriculum planning was the impetus for adopting realistic perspectives on teaching and curriculum. Team planning and democratic decision making processes within schools provided the motivation and support mechanisms for becoming 'real' teachers. With the departure of senior staff, or in small schools, these young teachers have had opportunities to influence the policy development and decision making processes which impact on the perspectives of all staff and children.

Four of the teachers expressed a positive view of working together and communicating with parents to facilitate the children's, the teachers' and the parents' learning. An infant teacher defined her role in terms of parents by developing each child in her care for his/her parents.

For the fifth, a critical incident had hardened her view on parents as a potential hindrance to children's learning.

Consideration of influences on teachers' ideas about teaching colours in the narratives of teachers' careers by demonstrating the complexity of the influences individually and the interplay between them. At the same time, it serves as a focal point for a model of the development of teachers' ideas about teaching.

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TABLE 1: KEY THEMES AND DEVELOPMENTS - PETER

TABLE 4: KEY THEMES AND DEVELOPMENTS -MARIA

TABLE 2: KEY THEMES AND DEVELOPMENTS -SANDRA

TABLE 3: KEY THEMES AND DEVELOPMENTS - ELIZABETH

PRIVATE 198919921993Themes.....Planning
.....Curriculum scope and sequenceActivities
.....Learning an Active
ProcessAssessment.....GroupsCareerParents

TABLE 5: KEY THEMES - NICK

19911994School: Participate in Policy Planning. Curriculum initiatives
. Contribute to activitiesStaff: Share ideas,
communicate.Administrative committee
. Instigate in servicesTeaching:
. Themes, Integrated Curriculum
. Resources
. Range of Experiences
. Extend, Enrich. Effective classroom practice
. Co-operative Learning
. Enquiry, process approaches
. Cross-age tutoringStudents:
. Special Needs
. Self Esteem
. Abilities, Interests
. Background. Individual Needs
. Care ProgramParents:
. Involvement
. Support. Organise parent information
. Reporting
. Survey ParentsAssessment:
. Student Progress
. Reporting. Implement Profiles
. Assessment, Reporting CommitteeEqual OpportunityAccess for
GirlsMulticultural Education. Develop ESL Program
. Personal DevelopmentProfessional development
. School Administration
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SOMETHING, BORROWED: SOMETHING, NEW
Teachers' Ideas in the first five years

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VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

SOMETHING BORROWED; SOMETHING, NEW
Teachers' Ideas in the first five years

A Paper prepared for the AARE 1994 Annual Conference

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ABSTRACT

SOMETHING, BORROWED; SOMETHING, NEW
Teachers' Ideas in the first five years

This is part of a five year study looking at patterns of continuity and change in the ideas which young teachers express about the work of teaching.

The study investigates the interaction between influences on young teachers' ideas which are external to the workplace and those which are a part of the school environment. Such influences include structural and policy changes as well as interactions which teachers have with colleagues, children and parents, in addition to the personal beliefs which teachers express.

In this paper, case studies will present major themes drawn from written documentation and interviews with five teachers.

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with us their time, materials and ideas.

SOMETHING, BORROWED; SOMETHING, NEW Teachers' Ideas in the first five years

Introduction

This study is the fifth in a series looking at the ideas which young teachers have about teaching. The subjects in the five studies have been drawn from 1987 and 1988 graduates of the Diploma of Teaching (Primary) at Footscray Institute of Technology.*

Drawing from the findings of earlier studies (Gay, Ryan and Wilson, 1992; Ryan and Gay, 1992; Ryan and Gay, 1993; Ryan and Gay, 1994a) it was decided to investigate issues of continuity and change in teachers' ideas about teaching and to consider particular influences on those ideas.

The teachers are members of a unique group. Having commenced their courses mid way through a state Labor government, which espoused principles of participation and equity in education, they are now part of a state Liberal government education system which emphasises outcomes in the more traditional sense. As detailed in Ryan and Gay (1993) these teachers have seen considerable change in the education system in Victoria since 1992 with the closure of hundreds of schools and the departure from the system of thousands of teachers.

Research Background

Teachers' ideas about teaching result from contextual factors within their working environments and from individual life experiences. The active involvement of the teacher in fusing external and internal aspects of her work and ideas as a teacher is an example of the dialectical process to which Reigel (1978) refers. Reigel (1978) argues that adult development is a dialectical process in which a person operates in a state of tensionship.....Teams....Diplomacy in working with colleagues.....TeamsPoliciesAssessmentBudgetsDisciplineProfessional development

TABLE 3: KEY THEMES AND DEVELOPMENTS - ELIZABETH

PRIVATE 1989	1992	1993	Themes.....	Planning
		Curriculum scope and sequence	Activities
		Learning an Active	
			Process	Assessment.....
				Groups
				Career
				Parents

TABLE 5: KEY THEMES - NICK

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- . Contribute to activitiesStaff: Share ideas, communicate.Administrative committee
 - . Instigate in servicesTeaching:
 - . Themes, Integrated Curriculum
 - . Resources
 - . Range of Experiences
 - . Extend, Enrich. Effective classroom practice
 - . Co-operative Learning
 - . Enquiry, process approaches
 - . Cross-age tutoringStudents:
 - . Special Needs
 - . Self Esteem
 - . Abilities, Interests
 - . Background. Individual Needs
 - . Care ProgramParents:
 - . Involvement
 - . Support. Organise parent information
 - . Reporting
 - . Survey ParentsAssessment:
 - . Student Progress
 - . Reporting. Implement Profiles
 - . Assessment, Reporting CommitteeEqual OpportunityAccess for GirlsMulticultural Education. Develop ESL Program
 - . Personal DevelopmentProfessional development
 - . School Administration
 - . Draft Constitution

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