

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Dr Elizabeth Rata.

This students' edition of the *ACE Papers* shows the continuing development of the College's research culture. The articles (all by students in the Centre for Education), clearly show the combination of theory, research and practice which is the hallmark of the best professional teacher. It is intended that the papers be used as resources by staff and students at the Auckland College of Education. They address important issues in contemporary New Zealand education with scholarly criticism and earnest inquiry. Indeed, the writers approach these issues with a combination of theoretical sophistication and practical naiveté which characterises the best student writing and which provides originality and vigour.

It is deeply gratifying to see the idealism and commitment of beginning teachers after a decade of policies which have attempted to turn education (that most human of all activities) into a sterile business venture in a harsh and competitive market. These papers provide evidence that the new wave of teachers - scholarly, theoretically informed, vocationally directed - have returned to the ideals of the teaching vocation and to the understanding that teaching, is, at its very core, a moral occupation based upon the intrinsic value of the human being.

Mike Crawshaw's critique of the misanthropic neoliberal in New Zealand is a strong attack on the market forces ideology of the late 1980s and 1990s. He argues that the market model of education has dominated while the real goals of education have been left largely unexplored. This paper is not only essential reading for those who want to understand the ideology behind the marketisation of education and the resulting dangers to society when people are turned into products, but Mike Crawshaw's '**Neo-Liberalism in New Zealand Education: A Critique**' goes further by presenting a powerful alternative to neoliberal ideology and public choice theory.

Rhys Johnston's discussion of the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky demonstrates the importance of teachers coming to their own understanding of theories of learning; a complex area where even the experts are embattled. The constructivism debate will remain in the forefront of teacher education as students wrestle with theories about how learning occurs. '**Constructivism: Theorists and their theories**' will provide future students with a clear and interesting account of the differences that fuel the learning theory debate.

The chronic illness suffered by many children tends to be a neglected area of concern in education. Katrina Teh's discussion of '**The Impact of Chronic Illness on Education**' will heighten teachers' awareness of these conditions. Her suggestions of practical strategies readily available to teachers of children with chronic illness will encourage teachers to help these children more. The paper is also valuable for the well-researched theoretical discussion of the relationship between those with chronic illness and socio-economic conditions.

'**The Family and Education**' provides teachers with a very interesting picture of the contemporary family. In a sociological analysis of recent statistical data, Teresa Golder describes the variety of family types and the effect of complex relationships

and familial transition on children's learning. Her discussion of poverty is particularly important highlighting its culminative effect on children's educational achievement. In an analysis of recent social trends, the writer urges teachers to return to the idea of teaching as a vocation; one in which teachers are *in loco parentis*, responsible for the overall well-being of the child, not the academic dimension alone.

'The Sikh Community' by Narinder Grewal makes visible the small, but long established, New Zealand Sikh community. The writer provides a fascinating insight into the ways in which the Punjabi people have maintained their language and culture in this country for over a century, while also contributing to the wider New Zealand community. The paper contains important suggestions for classroom teachers of Sikh children in a thoughtful discussion of the role of teachers in promoting positive attitudes towards minority groups and their languages.

In his provocative and convincing analysis of the relationship between boys' underachievement levels and the prevalent hegemonic masculinity of New Zealand society, Dayle Major challenges the simplistic but widespread assumption that more male teachers are good for boys. Indeed, he goes further and suggests that some types of masculinities may, in fact, further disadvantage boys, arguing that it is less a question of a male teacher, than what sort of male teacher. **'Male Teachers and Boys' Achievement'** focuses on the historical underachievement in literacy and grounds language differences in constructions of masculinity. In linking boys' undervaluing of literacy and their subsequent underachievement with the prevailing hegemonic masculinity, the writer challenges the assumption that more male teachers will lead to boys' increased achievement.

The paper by Kylie Inns **'Gender Differences in Education'** addresses the gender achievement in different, but no less fascinating, ways. The writer questions the recent shift of concern about girls achievement to boys' underachievement in a critique of the Education Review Office Report 'The Achievement of Boys'. In discussing the fact that girls improved achievement hasn't resulted in improved opportunities, she asks that the analysis of gender in education continue to address both boys' underachievement and girls' limited opportunities. In her critique of the popular notion that there are gender-based learning styles, Kylie Inns attacks the idea that female teachers may not fully appreciate the specific needs of boys, and points to the considerable amount of research that shows the opposite to be the case. Her conclusion, that it is the quality of pre-service education that has the most effect on children's achievement, rather than the gender of the teacher, will be of particular interest to the Auckland College of Education community. This paper contains many references to research and is valuable for that alone.

Jodie Ranford provides a thorough discussion of the origin and meaning of the term 'Pakeha', and advances the interesting idea that 'pakeha' is not a contemporary ethnic category, but an inclusive term used to distinguish all later arrivals from the tangata whenua. It is intriguing to see a topic, which had such currency during the 1980s, being revived. Jodie Ranford's interest in the Maori-Pakeha relation and specifically, the role of Pakeha within the relationship, may well encourage ACE students to return to this extremely important issue.

Nikita McSporran's paper on the **'Nature vs Nurture In Educational Settings'** provides an historical overview of the theorists involved, the changing historical

positions, and the contemporary interactionist view. She offers a thoughtful critique of the concept of 'reaction range' and the various ways in which intelligence is perceived. In arguing that teachers need to believe in the power of a nurturing environment, the writer makes a strong case for teaching to be considered a moral activity. Unless teachers believe in the environment as a vital influencing factor 'we cannot value the contribution we make to every child'.

The final paper by Sandra Kurvink, '**A Personal Philosophy of Teaching**' takes up the issues addressed by Nikita McSporran, with a passionate plea for teachers to apply their theoretical knowledge to provide superior learning programmes for all children. Her emphasis on the dignity and uniqueness of all children demonstrates the idealistic teacher who has long characterised education in New Zealand and who is essential to the continuation of a strong education service.

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Dr Peter Aimer and Dr Elizabeth Rata for “Neo-Liberalism in New Zealand Education: A critique”.

Catherine Rawlinson for “Constructivism: Theorists and their Theories”.

Dianne Hughes for “The Impact of Chronic Illness on Education”.

Dr Elizabeth Rata and Catherine Rawlinson for “Family and Education”.

Dr Elizabeth Rata and Dianne Hughes for “The Language and Culture of the Sikh Community In New Zealand”.

Jay Reid and Dr Elizabeth Rata for “Male Teachers and Boys’ Achievements”.

Dr Elizabeth Rata for “Gender Differences in Education”

Ross Himona, Dr Elizabeth Rata and Vicki Carpenter for “Pakeha’, Its Origin and Meaning”.

Dr Elizabeth Rata for “Nature vs Nurture in Educational Settings”.

Catherine Rawlinson and Jenny Harnett for “A Personal Philosophy of Teaching - Special Needs to Special Abilities”.

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