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***THE ARTS IN THE NEW ZEALAND CURRICULUM
FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE***

JANET ELAINE MANSFIELD

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, University of Auckland**

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DEDICATION

*To my beloved husband John Lewis and
daughters, Kate Cheryl and Amy Helen*

ABSTRACT

In this thesis I portray through a history of music and art education in New Zealand the forms knowledge production took in these subject and the discourses within which they were embedded. This enables a more comprehensive understanding of curriculum and unearths connections with what Lyotard (1984) described as 'grand narrative' used to legitimate knowledge claims and practices at certain historical moments. Through such histories we may chart the progress of European civilization within the local context and provide the historical *raison d'être* for the present state of affairs in music and arts areas of the New Zealand curriculum.

Curriculum and its 'reform' representing in part the distribution of public goods and services, has been embroiled in a market project. I seek to expose the politics of knowledge involved in the construction of the notion of The Arts within a neo-liberal policy environment. This environment has involved the deliberate construction of a 'culture of enterprise and competition' (Peters, 1995: 52) and, in the nurturing of conditions for trans-national capital's freedom of movement, a withdrawal from Keynesian economic and social policy, an assault on the welfare state.

The thesis delves beyond the public face of policy-making. It follows and scrutinizes critically the birth of The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum to the production of the first draft of the proposed policy presented by the Ministry of Education in 1999. I examine it as a site of the 'accumulation of meaning' (Derrida, 1981: 57) through a discussion of the history of meaning of 'art' and 'art' education. There is much of value in the Draft document. In particular, the arts have been invested with a new intellectual weight and the professionalism, passion and dedication of those involved in its writing shines through in each of the subject areas within the arts. However, through a process of analysis, I will show that there has been, in fact, a fashioning of a new container for the isolation of artistic knowledge. This is despite official sentiments mentioning possibilities within the document for flourishing separate Music, Art, Dance, and Drama education that implies increased curriculum space.

The Draft Arts (1999) document both disguises and rehashes the 'master narrative' of universal rationality and artistic canons and is unlikely to work towards revitalising or protecting local cultural identities though not through lack of intention. I use Lyotard's notion of

'performativity' to critique notions of 'skills' and their 'development' which are implicitly and explicitly stated within the 'levels' of development articulated in the Draft Arts (1999) document. It is argued that this conflation works to enforce cultural homogeneity. There are clear dangers that the Draft Arts' (1999) conception of 'Arts Literacies' might operate as mere functional literacy in the service of the dominant culture's discourse of power and knowledge – one which celebrates the art-as-commodity ideal. It is argued that the Education Ministry's theoretical and epistemological construction of The Arts as one area of learning is unsound, and in fact represents a tightening of modernism's hierarchical notion of culture.

New Zealand, now post-colonial or post-imperialist, both bi-cultural and multi-cultural, is situated on the south-western edge of the Pacific Rim. Culturally, it now includes Pacific Island, Asian, and new immigrants, as well as Maori and people of European descent. This therefore necessitates aesthetic practices which, far from promoting a set of universal principles for the appreciation of art – one canonical rule or 'standard' – recognise and reflect cultural difference. Merely admitting cultural difference is inadequate. By working away critically at the deeply held ethno-centric assumptions of modernism, its selective traditions concerned with 'practices, meanings, gender, "races", classes' (Pollock, 1999: 10), its universalising aesthetics of beauty, formal relations, individuality, authenticity or originality, and self-expression, of 'negativity and alienation, and abstraction' (Huysens, 1986: 209), it is possible to begin to understand the theoretical task of articulating difference with regard to aesthetics.

The development of the arts curriculum in New Zealand is placed within the modernism/postmodernism and modernity/postmodernity debates. These debates have generated a number of questions which are forcing us to re-examine the assumptions of modernism. The need for the culture of modernism to become self-critical of its own determining assumptions in order to come to understand its cultural practices, is becoming an urgent theoretical task, especially in disciplines and fields concerned with the transmission of acquired learning and the production of new knowledge. The culture of modernism is often taken as the historical succession of twentieth century avant-gardes (B. Smith, 1998) yet the culture of modernity, philosophically speaking, strictly begins with René Descartes several hundred years earlier, with a pre-history in the Florentine renaissance and the re-discovery of Graeco-Roman artistic and literary forms going back to the thirteenth century. Aesthetic modernism identifies with consumer capitalism and its major assumptions are rationalist, individualist and focus upon the autonomy of both the 'work of art' and the artist at the expense

of the artwork, its reception and audience within its localised cultural context. The ideological features of humanism/liberalism - its privileging of the individual subject, the moral, epistemological and aesthetic privileging of the author/artist - are examined as forces contributing to modernism's major values (or aesthetic). Such approaches, it is argued, were limited for dealing with difference.

The security and reproductive nature of modernistic approaches to curriculum in the arts areas are destabilized by thinking within the postmodern turn, and the effects of the changes questioning the basic epistemological and metaphysical assumptions in disciplinary fields including art/literature, architecture, philosophy and political theory, are registered here, within the field of the education in and through the arts. In a seminal description or report on knowledge, Jean-François Lyotard defines postmodernism as 'incredulity towards metanarratives' (1984: xxiv). Postmodernism, he argues, is 'undoubtedly part of the modern', 'not modernism at its end but in its nascent state and that state is constant (1984: 79). After Lyotard, postmodernism might be seen, therefore, not just as a mode or manner or attitude towards the past, but also as a materializing discourse comprising a dynamic reassessment and re-examination of modernism and modernity's culture. The thinking subject (the cogito) seen as the fount of all knowledge, its autonomy, and transparency, its consideration as the centre of artistic and aesthetic virtuosity and moral action, is subjected to intellectual scrutiny and suspicion.

The need for an aesthetics of difference is contextualised through an examination of western hierarchies of art and the aesthetics of marginalized groups. I use the theories of poststructuralist, Jacques Derrida and Jean-François Lyotard, to examine the concept of difference. These theoretical inspirations are used as methodological tools for offsetting the privileging of the liberal individual and individualism. Rather than the mere consideration of difference in curricula, I seek to insert and establish the principle of an aesthetics of difference into relations of pedagogy and curricula. The implications for professional practice resulting from a recognition of a politics of representation are examined and a politics of difference. I argue that art education in all its manifestations can no longer avoid the deeper implications of involvement with representation, including forms of gender, ethnicity and class representation as well as colonial representation.

The Western canon's notion of 'artists' and their 'art', often based upon white bourgeois male representations and used in many primary school classrooms, are part and parcel of 'social and political investments in canonicity', a powerful 'element in the hegemony of dominant social groups and interests' (Pollock, 1999: 9). Difference is not appreciated in this context. School art, music, and drama classrooms can become sites for the postmodern questioning of representation of 'the other'. In this context, an aesthetics of difference insists upon too, the questioning of images supporting hegemonic discourses, images which have filled the spaces in the 'chinks and cracks of the power/knowledge-apparati' (Teresa de Lauretis, 1987 cited in Pollock, 1999: 7-8). What would an 'eccentric rereading', a rediscovery of what the canon's vicariously cloak disguises and reveals, mean for music, and for the individual arts areas of the curriculum? I hope to reveal the entanglements of the cultural dynamics of power through an examination of the traditions of Truth and Beauty in imagery which are to be disrupted by inserting into the canon the principle of the aesthetics of difference.

Art education as a politics of representation embraces art's constitutive role in ideology. This is to be exposed as we seek to unravel and acknowledge which kinds of knowledges are legitimised and privileged by which kinds of representations. Which kinds of narratives, historical or otherwise, have resulted in which kinds of depictions through image? A recognition of the increasing specification of the subject demands also the careful investigation of colonial representation, the construction of dubious narratives about our history created through visual imaging and its provision of complex historical references. How have art, music, dance, drama been used in the service of particular political and economic narratives?

Through revisioning the curriculum from a postmodern perspective, suggestions are made for an alternative pedagogy, which offsets the ideological features of humanism/liberalism, one in which an aesthetics of difference might pervade cultural practices – 'systems of signification', 'practices of representation' (Rizvi, 1994). I draw upon Lyotard's notion of 'small narratives' (1984), and present an investigation of what the democratic manifestation of 'the differend', and multiple meaning systems, might indicate in terms of 'differencing' music education as a site in which heterogeneous value systems and expression may find form.

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