CHANGE: TRANSFORMATIONS IN EDUCATION

VOLUME 8 NUMBER 1 MAY 2005

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Change: Transformations in Education seeks to promote discussion of a wide range of issues, themes and problems arising from the varieties of change which now impact upon education at every level, in differing contexts and with enormously varied results. The orientation of the journal is cross-disciplinary and critical. The journal’s intended readership is that of educational policy-makers, analysts and activists working in contexts of social and organisational change and development. It also aims to interest professionals involved in the planning and implementation of educational programs across all education sectors nationally and internationally. The journal is published twice a year, in May and November. These two issues constitute one volume.

ALL CONTRIBUTIONS ARE SUBMITTED TO AT LEAST TWO REFEREES BEFORE BEING ACCEPTED FOR PUBLICATION.

Editorial correspondence, including manuscripts for submission and books for review, should be addressed to Change: Transformations in Education, Division of Research – A35, The University of Sydney NSW 2006, Australia. Details concerning the preparation and submission of articles can be found on the inside back cover of each issue.

Business correspondence, including orders and remittances relating to subscriptions, back numbers, offprints and advertisements should be addressed to Change: Transformations in Education, Faculty of Education and Service Work – A35, The University of Sydney NSW 2006, Australia

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CHANGE

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Editorial

This issue of change is a themed issue with the first four articles exploring aspects of early career teacher experiences. The articles grew out of a wider research project commenced in 1999/2000 and involving the Universities of Technology, Newcastle, Sydney and Macquarie University with NSW Department of Education and Training. This project developed a questionnaire that each university then sent to cohorts of their graduates. The results were independently analysed and, while NSWDET received summative data, each participating university only received the data back from its own graduates. The papers then build on a variety of themes that emerged from this project. In most cases additional research has been undertaken to expand on the initial data and enhance the understandings revealed in the analysis of the questionnaire data.

Each of the articles on early career teachers pursues different themes related to the experience of early career teachers and the meaning of this experience for the future of teaching and the teaching profession. Since the questionnaire was developed and the various research projects completed, dramatic changes have taken place in the institutional landscape for early career teachers in NSW and nationally. In NSW the passage of the Institute of Teachers Bill has created a standards and legislative framework that is informing and changing practice in induction and supporting new teachers in all NSW schools. The Institute of Teachers has developed professional competence standards which are to be applied to all new teachers by schools acting as Teacher Accreditation Authorities. Support for new teachers, advice on developing evidence of professional competence and the appointment of supervisors to judge the competence of new teachers are having significant impact on the way that schools work with beginning and early career teachers. The research reported in the first four articles provides a unique research perspective on the reality of commencing teaching; a reality the Institute of Teachers is hoping to ameliorate and improve.

The first article by R. Ewing and J. Manuel outlines and extends research on the retention of early career teachers. Using narrative research methodologies Ewing and Manuel use the voices of beginning teachers to explore the beginning teachers’ journey from their early expectations about teaching and profession to taking stock after experiencing the reality. After reviewing the literature on teacher retention, Ewing and Manuel’s research identifies a range of critical issues that must be considered further in the light of current statistics about early career teacher attrition. In particular, the research identifies beginning teachers’ recommendations for improving the transition between pre-service and fulltime employment to reduce teacher attrition.
Anecdotal evidence suggests that some 15-20% of all classes are taught by casual teachers yet there is a dearth of research about the experiences of casual and relief teachers. More specifically, there is very little research on how casual teachers commence teaching and the experiences that lead them to remain in the profession and to structure their work across the schools they teach in. McCormack and Thomas report on the reasons why beginning teachers choose to teach casually, their induction programs and the major problems they encounter. Using the evidence gathered, they make positive and useful suggestions to improve their transition into the workplace. Using questionnaire and surveys they are able to compare and contrast the support and experiences afforded to both permanent and casual teachers and explicate the implications of this comparison to develop policy around the support of casual teachers.

The paper by McCulla provides an overview of the summative results described above. Overall, 674 new graduate teachers responded to the beginning teacher survey from the four universities. This large data pool strengthens the significant findings about choosing teaching as a profession. Perceptions of initial teacher education, the process and quality of induction and new teachers' commitment to the profession are examined. The data provided in this article represents a cross sectional snapshot of recent early career teacher experience and their perceptions about their pre-service preparation. It dispels the myth that most are unhappy about their pre-service teacher education. In reality, 50% of new teachers rated their pre-service preparation as high or very high.

Learning the school culture is an immediate and complex priority all newly appointed teachers must face. Schuck, Brady and Griffin explore the initiation and rites of passage of learning school culture from the perspective of early career teachers. They identify four themes critical to initial teacher experience and school culture and climate: relationships; communication; support versus isolation; and, leadership.

The paper by Sinclair explores similar issues to the themed papers, using similar and related research methodologies. The role of social context and space has been emphasised in the theories of learning proposed by Rogoff based on the work of Vygotsky. The research reported in this paper uses teacher voice to advance the proposition that significant others in teachers' lives have a critical role in the development of teacher expertise.

The paper by Mikulsky explores the use of web based surveys in research and addresses some of the methodological advantages and disadvantages of using the web to generate data for analysis. The paper reviews the literature on the methodological affordances and constraints of using the web in data gathering.

Expectancy value research models have been applied to a wide variety of educational research problems since their development by Eccles and others. Otsuka and Smith apply the expectancy value approach in exploring achievement motivation in a range of cross cultural settings. The paper clearly outlines some of the benefits and
limitations of applying this methodology in researching achievement motivation and
confirms the cultural underpinnings of conceptualising achievement.

The paper on the International Baccalaureate by Bagnall is most opportune as the
Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) is conducting research with a view
to providing the Australian Federal Government with options for the development of a
national credential – the Australian Certificate of Education. Bagnall describes the global
acceptance of the IB credential and the way that certain schools in Australia and New
Zealand have responded to the opportunity that a global credential creates. The paper
concludes by exploring the implications of school’s adopting the IB.

MIKE HORSLEY AND ROBYN EWING