

A Case Study in Teacher Education: The University of Canterbury, Nelson Campus,
Nelson, New Zealand

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Teaching is far from straightforward. People argue over its classification - is it science or art? Educators and experts often palaver with certitude, but no definitive answer exists. What is certain is that “the epistemology of teaching must encompass a pedagogy that goes far beyond the *mechanics* of teaching. It must combine generalizable principles of teaching, subject-specific instruction, sensitivity to pervasive human qualities and potentials, and full awareness of what it means to simultaneously ‘draw out’ and enculturate” (Goodlad, 1990, p. 50-1). Because teacher education always engages these complexities, the weighty responsibility of teacher education programs is

both to model and value this complex epistemology to prepare, “draw out,” and “enculturate” future teachers. But how is that done?

Ken Zeichner (2006) suggests we are naïve to hope that research on teaching and teacher education will be able to provide clear answers about what we should do in teacher education. He sees little evidence-based or research-based practice and believes that, although research can contribute to policy and practice in teacher education, its influence is mediated by moral, ethical, and political considerations. Research can help us think about teacher education in useful ways, but it cannot tell us what to do even under the best of circumstances.

John Goodlad (1990), in his seminal work *Teachers for our Nation's Schools*, notes that the conditions of exemplary teacher education programs are tied to moral positions about the nature of teaching, learning, schooling, and society and are not subject to empirical proof. Teaching and teacher education are inherently complex and are not reducible to simple prescriptions for practice. So, what makes a teacher education program good?

The goal of all teacher education programs should be to graduate teachers who become *adaptive experts* of curriculum instead of compliant implementers of scripts. Because teaching is dynamic (so much is happening) and complex (working with diverse children requires insight), educating “good enough teachers” is inadequate. Good teaching is more than getting students to perform well on standardized tests; one must learn people skills, problem solving, aesthetics, how to create a space for civic and social development, and understand subject area content well enough to explain it to up to thirty different children an hour.

Elements of Teacher Education Programs

Teacher education programs are structured on similar elements. Once a student is selected for enrolment, a teacher candidate faces a program that includes: (a) a framework and philosophy; (b) formal and informal curriculum; (c) field experiences; (d) the use of instructional strategies; (e) organizational features; (f) and program decision-making structures. The various choices institutions make about the specifics of delivery, content, and decisions within each of these categories significantly impacts the quality of an institution's teacher education program.

Framework and philosophy. A teacher education program's framework and philosophy generally includes clear statements about the program's view of teaching, learning, schooling, and teachers' roles. Programs differ in how clearly each is defined, how widely the community shares these beliefs, and the degree of commitment the program deems necessary to uphold these frameworks and model the philosophy it endorses.

Formal and informal curriculum. Teacher education program curricula are taught both formally and informally. This curriculum includes an institution's choice of subject matter, where curricular components are placed within the program, the program's rigor, and the philosophy of pedagogy modeled. Similar to any organization, culture is crucial; and, a program's culture can perhaps be studied best in the informal – the way people treat each other or the match between philosophy and action. These are the lessons teacher candidates will carry to their work as teachers – whether they are conscious of these or not. They simply become the uncontested and non-discussed way things are done.

Field experiences. Organized field experiences are an important part of a pre-service teacher's education program. The number of placements, their length, and where they are arranged within the program's curriculum vary between programs. Programs must also make important choices regarding the philosophical relationships of how placement experiences are linked to what is taught during formal courses in the teacher education program and the nature, quality, and philosophy of teacher mentoring and assessment.

Instructional strategies. Instructional strategies are crucial to teacher education programs. Programs vary depending upon what strategies are taught, whether these strategies are only advocated for candidates or modelled for candidates as part of their program. How and for what purpose these strategies are used, introduced, and supported is also important.

Organizational features. A teacher education program's organizational features include how teacher candidates are grouped, including the use of student cohorts. Additionally, this program element includes decisions regarding how teacher candidates are expected to relate to program staff and faculty (the encouragement of horizontal or vertical relationships), who the teacher educators are, and how they are prepared and supported in their instructional roles.

Decision-making structures. Each previous element involves decision-making. It matters *how* these decisions are made and what data is used to support these decisions. Choices must be made about how and what data are collected about the program and then how data are used to inform future program decisions.

Elements of Successful Programs

Research provides a foundation for understanding key elements of successful teacher education programs. Darling-Hammond (2006) found that successful programs share seven common characteristics: (1) common and clear visions of good teaching; (2) defined standards of professional practice; (3) strong core curricula that do not separate theory and practice; (4) extended practica in schools that share the program's values; (5) a focus on reflection and development; (6) methods that help teacher candidates overcome their misconceptions about teaching; and, (7) strong relationships between schools and university faculty.

Darling-Hammond (2006) also found six required pedagogical cornerstones for successful teacher education programs: (1) strong coherence and integration between courses and coursework; (2) assignments that build on theory and supplement each other; (3) faculty communication and sharing; (4) course interaction and integration; (5) adequate time in schools; and, (6) schools that share the program's values and model its practices.

In a paper titled "Building a Teacher Education 'To Do List,'" Beauchamp, Parsons, and Harding (2013) reviewed current practices in pre-service teacher education to suggest possible improvements that might help mediate pressures young teachers face. Their paper synthesized their own recent research about in-service teacher professional learning as a way to inform teacher education programs and to suggest possible changes and improvements to these programs. They generated a "To Do List" of six activities they believed would improve pre-service education programs to help build more efficacious teachers, help stem the exodus from teaching, and help teacher education programs begin to educate teachers for the wellness of long and healthy careers. Their "To Do List" included the following suggestions:

1. During coursework, instruct and engage teacher candidates in action research processes, ethics, and methods.
2. Engage young teachers in collaborative work to successful school pedagogy.
3. Build classroom cultures that support community, agency, and service.
(Community centered on working together. Agency simply meant the belief that one could make a difference. Service centered upon doing “good things” for others.)
4. Work transparently on real classroom issues.
5. Celebrate diversity, working to increase individual skills and interests.
6. Allow young teachers to actively consider the kinds of cultures they hope to build in their classrooms and schools and practical ways those cultures might be built.

The Stanford Research Institute (SRI) report (2005) noted that the key program elements of a teacher education program included collegial relationships where teachers: (a) analyzed student work samples together, (b) sought each other’s advice about instructional issues, (c) observed each other’s classrooms to offer feedback, (d) exchanged ideas, and (e) discussed student assessment to make decisions about instruction. However, the SRI noted that much of what is believed to be the goals of teacher education cannot be supported empirically and concluded that research on teacher education programs is difficult because quality ranges within any model. Finally, they conclude that the search for the most effective program model will fail because *program* is the wrong level of analysis. Instead, a more correct focus would be on

program characteristics, which are shaped to meet particular goals, particular populations, and particular contexts.

The Nelson Campus of the University of Canterbury

This section of the paper will discuss the history, background, and overview of the Nelson, New Zealand, campus of the University of Canterbury's Faculty of Education as an example of a program that models the characteristics of a strong teacher education program. The Nelson campus was established in 1998 by the (then) Christchurch College of Education (CCE) in response to requests by local primary and secondary principals and identified need within the community. The rationale included providing opportunities for:

- (1) local people who were unable to move to Christchurch to become teachers – generally mature individuals with families;
- (2) a larger pool of qualified beginning teachers for local schools;
- (3) professional development and career enhancement for local teachers and principals through opportunities for part-time lecturing teacher education courses, and becoming Associate Teachers to mentor student teachers in their classrooms;
- (4) support staff in schools (such as teacher aides) to become teachers and progress their careers using their already developed experiences and skills; and,
- (5) school leavers to participate in tertiary education without having to leave home.

Since the merger of CCE with the University of Canterbury in January 2007, the Nelson campus has continued to provide teacher education for primary teachers. At the end of 2010, a proposal to close the Nelson Campus, as well as the other regional campuses (Rotorua – primary, Tauranga – early childhood, and New Plymouth – early childhood) was suggested as a way to reduce EFTS (Equivalent Full Time Student is used to measure student numbers at New Zealand educational institutions), in response to changed government policy. The response of the Nelson educational community was overwhelmingly in favor of retaining the campus for the economic and social benefits to individuals and families in the Nelson region. Local principals, current and past students, teachers and staff made supportive submissions and the issue was widely reported in the media.

In response, the decision was made to retain the Nelson, Rotorua, and New Plymouth campuses, but the mode of delivery at the Nelson campus would change from a primarily *face-to-face* delivery to a *blended* method. Beginning with the new intake of teacher candidates in 2012, all courses would be delivered fully by distance, or by a mix of on-line and face-to-face. Instead of teacher candidates coming into campus several days a week for lectures, they would be required to attend only one or two days a week.

Currently teacher candidates are still able to complete the three-year Bachelor of Teaching and Learning (primary) without going to the University of Canterbury's main Christchurch campus. Each group is between 20 and 35 teacher candidates. Nelson teacher candidates choose to come onto the Nelson campus for the extra support and enhanced face-to-face delivery, rather than study by distance.

At the present, the campus is staffed by a full-time Primary Coordinator, two part-time lecturers, and an office administrator. As well, local teachers are employed to lecture part-time for some courses; some courses are delivered in blocks by lecturers from Christchurch; and some courses are delivered completely on-line.

Characteristics of the Nelson Campus

No program description can clearly capture the unique nature of the Nelson campus. The vision, philosophy, and key values drive the day-to-day organization, teaching approaches, and interactions, and underpin the ways of “being” and “doing.” The characteristics of the Nelson campus include some ways the program is enacted and the ways things are done, reflecting a prescribed program framework, coursework, and fieldwork. However, the vision and values of Nelson staff put flesh on the program’s bones and breathe life into the program.

Culture of the Nelson campus. The Nelson campus creates a particular culture of community, collaboration, and support. The first two orientation weeks of the teacher candidates’ three-year program begin an enculturation into the culture of the campus. One key goal of orientation is to introduce and establish an ethos of collegial support and an ethic of caring. Teacher candidates get to know each other and the staff, and a safe and positive learning environment is established. Staff create a campus culture that is inclusive, supportive, and welcoming.

Throughout their campus experience, teacher candidates participate in *mihi whakatau*. In this Māori ceremony, newcomers (*manuhiri* - visitors) are welcomed by the people already there (*tāngata whenua* – people of the land). The ceremonial protocols include *whaikōrero* (speeches) and *waiata* (songs). The *mihi whakatau*

concludes with the *hongi* - both groups sharing a breath by pressing noses, and sharing *kai* (food). The ceremony bonds all people into one group. During orientation, new teacher candidates are welcomed onto the campus by the group already there and staff. Over the course of their time on the campus, those same teacher candidates will welcome other visitors to the campus with *mihi whakatau*, taking responsibility for the *whaikōrero* and *waiata*. For many, this ceremony is their first introduction to biculturalism.

Biculturalism is the relationship between Māori – the indigenous peoples of New Zealand and Pakeha – those who have descended from the European settlers of the 18th 19th and 20th centuries. Although some teacher candidates have experienced *tikanga Māori* (Māori ways) in their own schooling or life after school, many – particularly older teacher candidates – have not. Inclusion of bicultural concepts and ways of doing things within the campus culture in authentic ways means that teacher candidates are increasingly comfortable with *tikanga Māori*.

Orientation also introduces the *kaupapa* (expectations and ways-of-acting) of classes and groups. At the Nelson campus, the *kaupapa* includes (1) actively listen, valuing everyone's ideas and the diversity of views; (2) respectfully critiquing the ideas, not the person; (3) honoring a commitment that what is said in the group, stays in the group; and (4) believing everyone contributes to the group; It might also include protocols for texting and student Facebook groups. For first-year teacher candidates, “building” the *kaupapa* is a responsibility of lecturers, with student input. Starting in the program's second year, teacher candidates take responsibility and contribute to renewing the *kaupapa*.

The *kaupapa* paradigm – and expectations constructed by the class – are additional to the University’s policies. The *kaupapa* paradigm is an example of the Nelson campus living its vision and values, creating a safe foundation that allows for risk-taking. Throughout their three years, teacher candidates challenge each other by sharing their own experiences, questioning, affirming, and confronting. Although this challenge is often difficult and can cause conflict, it leads to powerful learning about self and teacher identity and about how to relate to “different” others.

Establishing and maintaining a safe learning environment is paramount to learning at the Nelson campus, allowing and encouraging teacher candidates to learn from each other and to connect with people different from themselves. This safe learning environment is important as student groups become more diverse. The most recently graduated group included teacher candidates from 21 to 52 years; three Māori males and two Māori females; one Chinese student; and several teacher candidates from working class backgrounds.

Throughout their three-year program, teacher candidates also learn basic *te reo Māori* (Māori language) and *tikanga Māori* (Māori ways, values, beliefs, practices) in their courses. They also learn about the context of schooling in New Zealand, reasons for the under-achievement of Māori children, and strategies to raise achievement. Māori conceptual understandings, values, and world-views are explored.

Each day of classes throughout their three years begins with a *whakataukī* (proverb) and *waiata* (song). After the first few weeks of staff modeling, student pairs take responsibility for selecting and leading these proverbs and songs. Participation in these at the start of the day encourages *kotahitanga* (being as one, unity, working

together) and sets up the focus on learning. The *whakataukī* is appropriate to the group and the context – whether it be a time of stress with major assignments due or support for a student with personal issues.

This formal and informal curriculum demonstrates how the Nelson campus encourages and structures opportunities for teacher candidates to engage with new concepts in the authentic context of their shared lived experiences. In their cohort and interactions between cohorts, teacher candidates and their instructors practice *whanaungatanga* (kinship, family, community, process of building relationships), *manaakitanga* (ethic of caring), and *kotahitanga* (being as one, unity, working together, inclusiveness). The intimate nature of the Nelson campus fosters relationships, and while interactions are sometimes difficult, these concepts assist conflict resolution and are integral to the culture of the campus.

The Office Administrator also plays a key role in the establishment of the campus culture. She greets, farewells, and chats with teacher candidates. All staff model positive professional and collegial relationships with each other and teacher candidates feel part of a community. Partners and children often come onto campus outside of class and are welcomed by staff and other teacher candidates. Teacher candidates often organize social get-togethers, generally with families, and sometimes invite staff. This is *whanaungatanga* in practice.

Additionally, the organization and physical set-up supports the campus culture. On-campus classes provide face-to-face interactions, which build community and relationships. Teacher candidates do much of their learning in groups. In the first few weeks, teacher candidates are expected to participate in small groups rather than offer

ideas to the whole class, a less threatening introduction. Teacher candidates are encouraged to change groups often; and, as teacher candidates gain confidence and trust each other, the main seating arrangement becomes a circle or a U. The physical space encourages professional discussion and debate, and discussion between all - rather than through the lecturer - increases throughout the three years of the program.

A structured and thoughtful induction lays the foundation for commitment to the campus culture. This commitment contributes to student retention and successful tertiary study. Participation in *mihi whakatau*, committing to the *kaupapa*, learning and practicing Māori cultural concepts, interacting with others in group, and the physical organization are integral elements to establishing the Nelson campus culture – a culture that joins individual learners into powerful learning communities. The Nelson campus creates and maintains a collaborative, positive learning community that supports and encourages its members to take risks, contribute to the campus, and the learning of all.

Support of teacher candidates. A second key characteristic of the Nelson campus is the support of teacher candidates by staff and other teacher candidates. The campus culture includes *manaakitanga* (ethic of caring) and a commitment to supporting teacher candidates, referred to in the previous section. This section describes how teacher candidates are supported.

Twenty to thirty-five teacher candidates form a small cohort. Teacher candidates remain in this cohort for all three years, allowing relationships to form and trust to be built. They support each other with academic challenges and personal issues. Teacher

candidates also support staff and appreciate the efforts of staff to enhance their campus experience.

In the first semester of the program, the Coordinator sets up extra study sessions for the on-line courses. Because many Nelson teacher candidates are older and have not studied for some years, these teacher candidates benefit from extra encouragement. Teacher candidates also set up their own sessions where they work together to discuss readings and work on tasks. Student study groups are particularly important in the first semester of the program when teacher candidates are learning foundational skills.

In the first few weeks of the program, *whānau* (extended family) groups are established. Five or six teacher candidates from different cohort groups on the campus are formed into *whānau* groups based on similar demographic characteristics. For example, there might be two or three groups of mothers with children. The *whānau* groups informally discuss campus life, study issues, or other topics of importance. The Coordinator sets aside time in the timetable two or three times a semester for these groups to meet.

Staff also support teacher candidates by recognizing them as social and emotional beings with challenges and issues they bring with them. Teacher candidates feel that staff members care about their well-being as well as their academic progress. The Coordinator's door is open and teacher candidates often drop in to chat, as well as make formal appointments for a meeting to discuss an issue.

In part, the Nelson Coordinator provides a level of pastoral care for teacher candidates. Teacher candidates might discuss course or personal issues that impact their studies. The Coordinator works to help teacher candidates solve immediate issues

and, in cases where that is not possible, teacher candidates are referred to other agencies. Sometimes teacher candidates simply need a chance to discuss issues in confidence. At times, teacher candidates bring issues that affect the group and, individually or in small groups, they might discuss this and strategize together to resolve issues. The campus Coordinator advocates for teacher candidates and assists them as they navigate formal university processes, for example, if they fail a course. As well as supporting individual teacher candidates, the Coordinator has advocated for face-to-face lecturing and for local teachers to lecture into courses to enhance student learning.

Partnership with schools. While ‘partnership’ between teacher education provider and schools is a lauded concept and goal (Le Cornu, 2012), partnership in practice takes many forms. Strengths of the Nelson campus include the way this partnership operates to forge strong relationships between principals, teachers, lecturers, and teacher candidates. Because principals and teachers work so closely with the Nelson campus, they feel connected and involved with the Nelson campus: like teacher candidates, they too feel a sense of ownership. Because the region is small, it is possible for lecturers to know all the principals and many of the teachers. As well, the Nelson Coordinator makes developing these relationships a priority.

Principals and teachers are involved in the campus in a number of ways. They participate as guest lecturers; they work in mock interviews for final year teacher candidates; and they engage in selection interviews for candidates who enter the program. Being part of selection interviews provides an opportunity for principals to become active stakeholders in the program, engage in professional discussion, and feel valued.

Employing local teachers with particular curriculum expertise as lecturers has also been particularly valuable. An example is the Physical Education (PE) course taught over the past three years. Teacher candidates attended lectures and practical sessions at a local primary school, provided by a teacher with expertise in PE. Practical sessions included structured opportunities for teacher candidates to teach groups of children and apply theory to practice. For this practice to happen, schools willingly provided financial support – as well as the use of resources, facilities, and equipment.

Another example of the Nelson campus' partnership in action is the mentoring scheme for first-year teacher candidates. Teacher candidates spend one day a week in local school classrooms for several weeks during their first semester. They establish relationships with teachers, make observations, interact with children and other staff, and become part of that classroom and school community. Mentoring is additional to the formal practicum experiences. Because of strong partnerships between the Nelson campus and area schools, principals were given significant input into how the mentoring scheme would run in Nelson. They wished it to continue.

Principals have had a strong voice in other areas as well. A number of Nelson campus meetings invited principal feedback on a proposal for a redeveloped degree and *blended* delivery method in Nelson. Nelson principals met with Program Managers from the University of Canterbury's main campus in Christchurch and advocated that Nelson teacher education teacher candidates should continue to receive a significant amount of face-to-face lecturing within the new blended model. They expressed considerable concern about the limitations of on-line learning in preparing teachers for primary classrooms. They also voiced their belief that teacher candidates must learn the skills of teaching through active interactions with others, and expressed concerns over a

program substituting online lessons for personal contact. As a result, face-to-face lectures and workshops for Nelson teacher candidates - in some courses - were continued through 2012.

A further indicator of the strong partnership was demonstrated by the principals' responses to requests for Associate Teachers. Principals value discussion about matching teacher candidates with Associates, even if a request is presented at the last minute or when a previously arranged practicum placement no longer works; and, principals encourage their teachers to become Associate Teachers. Local principals trust that Nelson teacher candidates will begin their practicums prepared and briefed about school requirements and that teacher candidates understand their professional and ethical responsibilities.

A concerted effort by the Nelson staff to build and maintain school-based relationships keeps the partnership strong. The Nelson Campus Coordinator communicates regularly with principals by email, and supervising lecturers catch up with principals when they visit their schools. Supervising lecturers also mentor and support new Associate Teachers and assist these Associate Teachers with teacher candidates on practicum, particularly when concerns arise. These reciprocal relationships grant the Coordinator and local lecturers an awareness of the principal/employers needs. As a result, they are able to address areas of need within courses to prepare Nelson graduates with the specific skill sets their employing principals are looking for.

The sense of shared ownership and support from principals, teachers, and schools enriches learning experiences for teacher candidates. The degree of autonomy

that the Nelson campus coordinator had to respond to needs, shape the Nelson program, and work alongside the principals, schools, and teachers has been a key element in building effective partnerships.

Standards and expectations. High standards and expectations for teacher candidates are vital for the quality of graduates and the reputation of the campus. A reputation for excellence contributes to the graduates being sought after for employment. Standards and expectations are set and maintained for conduct and dispositions as well as for professional knowledge and practices.

The concept and multiple meanings of professionalism are discussed throughout the program's three years. Early in the first semester of the program, teacher candidates explore professionalism and ethical decision-making and behavior, and their responsibilities to children, whānau (families), community, school and teachers, self, and each other. The importance of these standards continues to be a topic of paramount importance. Nelson teacher candidates are regularly reminded of the expectations and obligations attached to the role of teacher. Teacher education candidates are aware of the campus, principals, and Associate teachers' expectations of exemplary, professional behavior.

Nelson campus staff members are expected to meet – and model - the same rigorous standards of professionalism. Nelson campus lecturers review the first tasks teacher candidates complete and endeavor to provide these candidates with timely, worthwhile, and relevant feedback. Teacher candidates value the extent of this quality feedback and comments from lecturers.

Teacher candidates consistently say they appreciate quality feedback about their practicum experience through the thorough review of their practicum documentation. Nelson lecturers have maintained this practice. Principals and teachers know that teacher candidates graduating from the Nelson campus will have demonstrated the skills to plan, teach, assess, and to thoroughly assess learners' needs and evaluate children's learning. It is important that only teacher candidates who meet the course's Learning Outcomes pass and those who don't fail. However, some teacher candidates struggle for legitimate reasons. It can be a difficult decision to fail teacher candidates that staff members have formed strong working relationships with. Moderation and clear policies on assessment practices are important, and a strict adherence to the high standards and expectations must be maintained.

Courses and modes of delivery. All courses are blended or completely on-line. With the move towards more and more on-line delivery in the last few years, teacher candidates consistently note that a strength of the Nelson Campus is the face-to-face component of the blended courses. Because each cohort consists of only 20-35 teacher candidates, face-to-face lecturing, group work, and discussion is more common than exposition-style teaching in lecture theatres to large groups. Teaching strategies are modeled and pedagogies deconstructed. Reflection, critical reflection and cooperative learning are taught, modeled, encouraged, and practiced. Links across courses and from practice to theory are made.

Social constructivist approaches underpin face-to-face sessions, recognizing and valuing the experiences that teacher candidates bring. Teacher candidates become aware of different views and the experiences of others through group or whole class

interaction. Learning with and from others in the class, in discussion, and on tasks is a powerful aspect of the Nelson program.

Over the years, local principals have consistently valued Nelson graduates' understanding, confidence, and classroom practice of *Te Reo* and *tikanga Māori*. A local part-time lecturer, who is also a Resource Teacher of Māori with strong connections to iwi (tribal groups) in the area, teaches these courses. Clearly, this teacher's face-to-face teaching method has had powerful and positive influence on graduating teacher candidates' mastery of the subjects she has been teaching.

Teacher candidates themselves confirm this impact. Some teacher candidates (Māori and Pākehā) comment how a single two-day workshop delivered face-to-face by an expert lecturer "changed their lives." This powerful learning experience explored the context at the time of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840; the expectations and hopes of Māori and Pākehā settlers; the ongoing grievances of Māori in response to breaches of the treaty; and the processes of resolution and restitution. Although the content of the workshop was significant, graduating teacher candidates unequivocally described the impact the lecturer had as equally significant.

Lecturers' passion, charisma, and skills have provided Nelson teacher candidates' unique learning opportunities. They can also offer Nelson teacher candidates a more individualized approach. Lecturers have flexibility to both respond to teacher candidates' learning needs as well as teach prescribed content. This ability and flexibility to "teach to needs" is at the heart of good practice. This modeling creates a situation where teacher education candidates also learn to identify children's needs and teach to these in their own future classrooms. The Nelson campus' program believes it is of utmost

importance that these future teachers experience the practice of responding to learner needs – including see how this practice is modeled and to understand its importance.

Until now, Nelson lecturers have had autonomy to shape courses - within the parameters of the approved course prescriptions - to meet student needs. An example of this was the optional Inquiry course that all the graduating Year 3 Nelson teacher candidates elected to take in 2012. This course demonstrated the professional growth of teacher candidates from their first year, in which they needed scaffolding by lecturers, to the final year where the teacher candidates were largely responsible for their own learning supported by lecturers in a facilitating role. As part of the process, teacher candidates had to contribute to others' learning in small groups. They chose their topic, the inquiry process they would follow, which 'experts' to consult, and how to present their findings. Feedback from teacher candidates was overwhelmingly positive about the quality of the learning and their sense of efficacy. The quality of the inquiries and the professional discussion throughout were high.

Creating and maintaining a collaborative, positive learning community, based on an experience of face-to-face interaction, allows teacher candidates to be supported, encouraged, and to learn effectively. The Nelson campus' program recognizes that teacher candidates bring strengths, agendas, and needs to their learning. Building this community of practice among teacher candidates is a strength of the Nelson program. Opportunities to learn about oneself, others, pedagogies, and knowledge is stronger than if teacher candidates were studying in isolation. Relationships are at the core of primary teaching and are at the core of the way the Nelson campus works.

The Nelson campus contributes to teacher candidates' success, but it has limitations. Because the teacher education program is small, staff members can feel professionally isolated because they lack regular and on-going face-to-face interactions with other professionals, exposure to new ideas, and current developments. The lack of professional discussion about teacher candidates, educational concerns, organizational management, and relationship issues can be stressful and impede problem-solving. A tension exists between having autonomy and being supported.

All lecturers are busy and prioritizing means compromising. Sadly, important professional reading and research seem to fall victim to the need for day-to-day management; and, keeping up-to-date with new developments in the profession is difficult. This isolation can be further complicated by disconnects between teacher education programs at the Nelson Campus and the main University of Canterbury campus in Christchurch. Different programs come with a different vision and operational values.

In Summary

What are the characteristics of a good teacher education program, and in what ways is the University of Canterbury's Teacher Education program an example of a program with positive characteristics? First, previous literature on quality teacher education programs suggests that good teacher education programs engage specific strategies that help candidates confront their own beliefs and assumptions about learning. Certainly, confronting beliefs and assumptions about children's needs and teaching is a central aspect of the Nelson campus' program. Second, good teacher education programs help teacher candidates learn about the experiences of people

different from themselves. The Nelson campus' focus on Māori culture and activities is central to the program's ethos. Third, good teacher education programs build upon strong relationships, common knowledge, and shared beliefs that link schools and university-based faculty. These relationships – both internally within the program (between teacher candidates themselves and between teacher candidates and faculty) and externally (between the Nelson campus and schools within the community) – are prized and modeled within the program.

Literature also suggests that case study methods, teacher and student research, performance assessments, and portfolio evaluation are all helpful because they apply learning to real problems of practice (Darling-Hammond, 2006). The Nelson campus' program is strong in these areas: standards are high. Finally, the literature tells us that teacher education programs also work best when they are grounded in child and adolescent development, inquiry, social contexts, and subject matter pedagogy that are taught in the context of practice. The depth of modeling of these good pedagogies is central to the Nelson campus' program and teacher candidates benefit from these pedagogical practices.

Darling-Hammond (2006) also suggests that beginning teachers need: (1) a chance to consider why the new practices are better than conventional ones; (2) opportunities to see examples of the new practices; (3) experience in learning the new practices firsthand; and, (4) on-site assistance and support in learning to put the new practices in place. They need knowledge and skills for assessing pupil learning and a wide repertoire of practice along with the knowledge to know when to use different strategies for different purpose. Good teacher education programs must recognize and address problems that teacher candidates encounter and meet the learning needs of all

of their teacher candidates. Again, our study of the Nelson campus' teacher education program suggests that these activities are central to the practical ethos of the work.

Darling-Hammond (2006) also notes that teacher candidates must learn from practice as well as learn for practice. Programs must not only provide knowledge but help teachers access this knowledge so they might reflect on their practice. Teachers should be trained as researchers and collaborators who can learn from their own and others practice. The inquiry project during teacher candidates' final year of their program reflects this need. Teacher educators should be concerned with what they teach and how they teach it. The goal should be to educate teacher candidates to be adaptive experts who continue to learn. Again, insofar as possible, the Nelson campus' program reflects these necessary actions.

What makes a teacher education programs effective? Darling-Hammond (2006) wraps it up by suggesting that good teacher education programs must be powerful enough to help teacher candidates understand that teaching differs from what they remember from their days being a student in school. It must help teacher candidates both think and act like a teacher. It must prepare teacher candidates for complex classrooms, to adapt to their professional requirements, and to handle the many needs they will meet as they engage their vocation as teachers. In our estimation, the Nelson campus' teacher education program meets these needs. We salute its outstanding work educating teacher candidates for a complex vocation.

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