

An excellent adventure: Investigating the stories of Tertiary Teaching Excellence awardees

Doctor of Professional Practice

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Dedication

For Virginie
Tu nous manques

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my doctoral mentors, Dr Martin Andrew, Associate Professor Megan Gibbons, and Sue Thompson, for your support and guidance throughout this project. You restored my faith in what academic mentoring should look like, and created a positive environment in which I could flourish.

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Abstract

Challenges exist with the discourse in higher education around terms such as ‘best practice’, ‘excellence’, and ‘impact’, as part of a culture of measuring and ranking performance, and this raises questions around who decides what ‘excellent’ teaching looks like. Similarly, the criteria for teaching excellence awards in different countries and contexts seem to be particularly vague. With a view to better understanding the facets that make up teaching excellence, this doctoral research project uses narrative inquiry to investigate the stories of twelve national Tertiary Teaching Excellence awardees in New Zealand. My research questions explore awardees’ respective trajectories and professional practice, including views on their identity, their practice, and on what they consider to be excellence in tertiary teaching. The research also reports on common themes in the personal qualities that awardees describe, and on what these nationally recognised educators would like to see in place around Tertiary Teacher Development.

Through the stories of these twelve recognised educators, and an analysis of the themes which occur across the collection of narratives, I propose a model – ‘The Keys to Teaching Excellence’ – which captures the principal elements of excellence in practice, as one outcome of my analysis.

Educators, mentors, trainers, and curriculum designers can gain a deeper understanding of what teaching excellence looks like, and of how teachers perceive their own practice and their impact on others. This may enable different interventions to develop best practice from staff, and to raise standards. It is hoped too that, by reflecting on the stories of teachers who have been recognised for ‘excellence’, educators will relate to and recognise elements of their own practice, and will feel motivated and inspired to share these with their peers and the wider academic community.

The thesis also includes reflections on my framework of practice, underpinned by my constructivist ontology and the socially-situated importance of professional learning, with a thread of reflexivity woven throughout. I consider the impact this doctoral project and the research journey has had on my professional practice, and reflect on how it contributes to my potential future pathway.

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Glossary

Note: For ease of reference, any potentially unfamiliar term appearing on more than one page has been included here; otherwise, it is included as a footnote in the body of the text.

D4LS	The <i>Designing for Learner Success</i> (D4LS) initiative at Otago Polytechnic was an organisation-wide project (2016-2019) focusing on the redesign and redevelopment of all vocational and degree programmes to improve learner success
four for five	A leave option at Otago Polytechnic, enabling staff to be paid 80% of their normal salary for a set period, in order to accrue ‘four for five’ leave. For example, you can apply to work for two years on 80% salary, and then take 6 months leave (also on 80% salary), or work for four years and take 12 months leave, on the same basis
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent (1.0 FTE is a full-time position; if full-time were 40 hours per week, then 0.5 FTE would be 20 hours per week, and so on, for any proportion between 0 and 1)
GDTE	Graduate Diploma in Tertiary Education
ITO	Industry Training Organisation(s)
iwi	The Māori Dictionary ¹ defines ‘iwi’ as “extended kinship group, tribe, nation, people, nationality, race - often refers to a large group of people descended from a common ancestor and associated with a distinct territory”
kaitohutohu	The Māori Dictionary defines ‘kaitohutohu’ as “adviser, instructor”
kaumātua	The Māori Dictionary defines ‘kaumātua’ as “adult, elder, elderly man, elderly woman, old man - a person of status within the whānau”
kaupapa	Principles, values. The Māori Dictionary defines ‘Kaupapa Māori’ as “Māori approach, Māori topic, Māori customary practice, Māori institution, Māori agenda, Māori principles, Māori ideology - a philosophical doctrine, incorporating the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of Māori society”
mana	In Māori culture, the word ‘mana’ has many meanings. Here, it encompasses the idea of prestige, influence, status, and respect. The Māori Dictionary defines ‘mana’ as “prestige, authority, control, power,

¹ Moorfield, J. C. (2003-2021). *Māori Dictionary*. Te Aka Online Māori Dictionary.
<https://maoridictionary.co.nz/>

		influence, status, spiritual power, charisma... a supernatural force in a person, place or object”
marae		The Māori Dictionary defines ‘marae’ as a “courtyard - the open area in front of the <i>wharenuia</i> , where formal greetings and discussions take place. Often also used to include the complex of buildings around the <i>marae</i> ”
noa		In Māori culture, the word ‘noa’ has many meanings. Here, it captures the idea of something common, normal, or everyday. The Māori Dictionary defines ‘noa’ as “free from the extensions of tapu, ordinary, unrestricted, void”
Pākehā		A Māori word for New Zealanders who are primarily of European descent, or for any non-Māori New Zealander. The Māori Dictionary defines ‘Pākehā’ as a “New Zealander of European descent - probably originally applied to English-speaking Europeans living in Aotearoa/New Zealand”
PGCE		Postgraduate Certificate in Education
tangata whenua		The Māori Dictionary defines ‘tangata whenua’ as “local people, hosts, indigenous people - people born of the whenua, i.e. of the placenta and of the land where the people's ancestors have lived and where their placenta are buried”
tapu		The Māori word ‘tapu’ also has multiple meanings. Here, it is referring to something sacred or spiritual (in contrast to ‘noa’). The Māori Dictionary defines ‘tapu’ as “sacred, prohibited, restricted, set apart, forbidden”
whakawhanaungatanga		A Māori term, often used in New Zealand, encapsulating the importance of making meaningful connections and building relationships. The Māori Dictionary defines ‘whakawhanaungatanga’ as the “process of establishing relationships, relating well to others”
whānau		The Māori word ‘whānau’ is often used in New Zealand to talk about family, but can also represent the extended family, close friends, network and/or community. The Māori Dictionary defines ‘whānau’ as “extended family, family group, a familiar term of address to a number of people - the primary economic unit of traditional Māori society. In the modern context the term is sometimes used to include friends who may not have any kinship ties to other members”
whenua		Land, country, nation, ground. The Māori Dictionary defines ‘whenua’ as “land – often used in the plural”

Preface

I am an educator - a teacher, facilitator, and mentor - with 23 years' experience, in different contexts and countries, including university and foundation programmes, and prison education. After qualifying in the United Kingdom (UK) as a secondary school teacher of Modern Languages, I soon moved into Higher Education which took me from the UK to France for around seven years, before later emigrating to New Zealand in 2007. I now work in teacher development, as a member of the Learning and Teaching Development team at Otago Polytechnic.

While I was committed to this path, I was never sure if I would be a good teacher. Interestingly, my very first mentor during teacher training clearly saw something in me that I could not see myself, asking if I had considered working in Tertiary Education and commenting that he thought I would be "really good". I still do not know if it was something he observed, for instance, in my classroom practice, or in my interactions with learners. I often look back and wish I had asked him to elaborate on the qualities that he was seeing in me so early on. In hindsight, this may be what sparked my career-long interest in what it is that makes some teachers stand out from the crowd. How do teachers become expert at what they do? What does that look like in practice?

Investigating the stories of educators who have been formally recognised for their work, then, was an ideal choice of topic for my doctoral studies. Through this research, as well as exploring what it means to be an 'excellent' tertiary teacher, my goal is to contribute new knowledge around professional practice and the socially-situated importance of professional learning.

It has been a very positive, affirming experience for me, and I hope this comes through for you, the reader.

Dunedin, New Zealand
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Chapter 1: Introduction

In this chapter, my main aim is to set out the professional and institutional context in which this research took place, and to provide the background to the Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards in New Zealand. I also outline the drivers behind this project, my framework of practice, and the aims and significance of this research, before considering the professional practice learning outcomes of the doctoral programme. I then offer an overview of the structure and organisation of this thesis.

Background

Professional Context

As a member of Otago Polytechnic's Learning and Teaching Development team (L&TD), I support the institution's goals by working alongside academic staff to build their capabilities in multiple aspects of pedagogical practice. This includes programme and course design, assessment strategies, technology-enhanced learning, and blended delivery; all of this to ensure the best possible experience and outcomes for learners. Each of my colleagues in L&TD brings with them knowledge and skills from a range of disciplines. We share common interests in education, blended learning, instructional and learning design, and educational technologies, yet none of us has the same background or skill-set as any other team member; instead, we complement and learn from each other as we support academic teams across the Polytechnic. As Wenger (1998) argues, learning from practice by sharing experiences with other professionals demonstrates the value of each team member and benefits the whole group.

Professional Development Context

This L&TD role brings together skills, knowledge, and practice acquired throughout my more than twenty years' experience in education. Much of my career has been spent in multicultural settings in which the learners have been non-native speakers of English. This has contributed to my ability and desire to build relationships with people based on mutual respect and an interest in learning.

My L&TD role also draws on my constant pursuit of excellence, throughout my career, and of wanting to make a difference; doing the best I can to ensure positive and successful experiences for my learners, my colleagues, and my team. It is not insignificant to me, therefore, that Otago Polytechnic (OP) has so many national Tertiary Teaching Excellence awardees on its staff, and I have often wondered whether we are drawing on the strengths of these educators to inform learning and teaching practices across the organisation.

I realised that I was genuinely interested in teacher development approximately eight years into my career; this was the first time that I ever thought about whether I could become a teacher educator. My current L&TD role encompasses many aspects of teacher training,

through developing individuals' pedagogical knowledge and capabilities, and building their confidence, as I work alongside them on a one-to-one basis or in groups. While I may not be preparing staff for a formal qualification (as in the traditional view of teacher training), this does not mean that their learning is any less valuable. Indeed, their learning is on-the-job and can often be applied immediately in context, with follow-up conversations reflecting on perceived outcomes. Teachers' learning is more meaningful and sustained when it is collaborative (Johnston, 2009). As Eraut explains, "confidence [arises] from successfully meeting challenges in one's work, while the confidence to take on such challenges depend[s] on the extent to which learners [feel] supported in that endeavour by colleagues" (2007, p.417). In my learning and in my professional roles, I have always sought to set an example, and to be available for my peers and my team. Just as with learners in the classroom, as a mentor (formally or otherwise) I aim to provide opportunities for growth, and strive to enable others to feel confident in their abilities: "Education... needs to have an orientation toward the freedom and independence of those being educated" (Biesta, 2016, p.2). I appreciate Fazey's (1996, p.205) metaphor for this: "A general strategy is to help people learn not just how to ride the waves... in a passive, hang-onto-the lifebelt style, but to help them become skilful surfers". This, for me, is good educational leadership.

If striving for best practice, a "work climate that enables and encourages us to change" (Fazey, 2004, p.9) is essential. I agree with Schuller (2007), who stresses that the learning experience can affect confidence, belief in one's own identity, and self-worth. This is reflected in the New Zealand (NZ) Curriculum and "the inclusion of the so-called 'competencies': thinking; managing self; ... relating to others... Competencies [which] are linked directly to enhancing an individual's full participation in society" (O'Neill & O'Neill, 2008, p.9), as well as in the NZ Ministry of Education's vision for education in 2025, one that "fosters students' identity, language and culture" (Ministry of Education, April 2015). This is just as true in work-based learning and development of professional practice as it is in the classroom. Seeing my colleagues across OP gaining in confidence is particularly rewarding for me. If I have empowered someone to try something new in their classroom practice, for instance, and/or in their learning design, that is a positive step not only for both of us, but also for the learners in their programme(s).

Professional development needs to be informed by evidence-based practice and research for effective outcomes (Leinhardt et al., 1995; Shagoury, 2011). Furthermore, as Stenhouse (1975, p.143) asserts, "it is not enough that teachers' work should be studied: they need to study it themselves". Harwayne (2000, p.26) would agree:

What teachers say and do and how they engage with [learners] must have theoretical underpinnings. Their practice is not based on a publisher's set of directions, or a handbook filled with teaching tips, but on concepts they themselves have examined carefully.

With the scholarship of learning and teaching a discipline in its own right, my own pursuit of excellence throughout my career and my interest in teacher development now combine in this research project. “To understand the roles, needs and realities of participants in professional practice, we need to hear their voices, their knowings and their stories” (Higgs & Titchen, 2001a, p.9). Who better to learn about what excellence in tertiary teaching looks like in practice than from educators who have been formally recognised as ‘excellent’?

National and Institutional Context

In NZ, the national Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards “were established in 2001 to celebrate and promote sustained excellence in tertiary teaching” (Ako Aotearoa, n.d.-e). The Awards are managed by Ako Aotearoa, “a government-funded organisation committed to supporting the country’s tertiary sector teachers, trainers and educators [to] be the best they can be for the learners’ success” (Ako Aotearoa, n.d.-b). In some institutions, teachers can nominate themselves for an award; in others, it is through peer-nomination. In every case, nominations are submitted through the educational organisation to Ako Aotearoa.

At Otago Polytechnic, before being asked to prepare an application for the national awards, staff members have, in most cases, received an institutional ‘Excellence in Teaching’ award, presented in February each year (Otago Polytechnic, 2020). Because of OP’s commitment to fostering excellence and wanting excellent teachers to be recognised, the organisation allows for time to be provided for mentoring of people writing award portfolios. The institution also supports excellence in other ways, including through other Staff Awards (recognising ‘Excellence’ in many different areas, including Service Provision, Leadership, and Sustainable Practice), with a development grant being given to recipients. In addition, the Polytechnic supports new academic staff members through a graduate teaching qualification in their first three years at the institution, recognising the importance of people being teaching practitioners as well as experts in their respective fields: “It is not sufficient for academics to be experts in their disciplinary area; they also need to know how best to teach that discipline” (Department of Education, Government of Ireland, 2011, p.59). This is particularly significant when we consider that, in the tertiary context, many educators move directly from industry or practice into a teaching role, and often receive no teacher training (Haggerty et al., 2019; Maurice-Takerei & Anderson, 2013; Slowey et al., 2014). It could also be argued that the institutional culture both contributes to and enables excellence, and I return to this in [Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion](#).

In the wider national context, it is important to note that a governmental review of vocational education began in NZ in 2018, with all sixteen state-owned Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics becoming subsidiaries of one national organisation from April 2020, to be fully operational by 1 January 2023 (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2020). While we can never really know what the future holds, this review has brought us into “an era of supercomplexity, where there is uncertainty, insecurity and an unknown and unknowable future” (Ling & Mackenzie, 2015, p.264). As Ling and Ling (2017) explain,

“reality is supercomplex and dynamic, and our traditional frames of reference are shifting and conflicted” (p.9). This is reflected in elements of my participants’ stories, as they grapple with trying to see what the future may bring.

Sustainable Practice

The United Nations (UN) defines sustainability as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations, n.d.-b, para. 2), with sustainable practice encompassing natural, social, and economic systems, and how these are all connected. The UN’s seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, adopted in 2015 by all UN Member States (United Nations, n.d.-d), promote “strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities” (United Nations, n.d.-c).

At OP, sustainable practice is one of our core values, shaping “everything we do, from our operations and teaching, to our engagement with businesses, communities and other institutions” (Otago Polytechnic, n.d.-b). As Birnie et al. (n.d., p.3) explain:

We understand that what we teach, how we behave as an organisation and how we extend our influence into the community has an impact socially, environmentally, and economically... We are determined to provide our students with learning opportunities that hold sustainable practice amongst their key values and to become sustainable practitioners in our own right.

This commitment to sustainability has been implemented as a strategic direction for OP since 2010.

In teacher development (both initial and in-service professional development), sustainability principles should apply at multiple levels, including within learning and teaching practices, programme design, and organisational strategies. Bourn et al. (2017), for instance, propose that teacher education should include “questions about the purpose and role of teachers in society, and... the extent to which they have a role beyond simply imparting knowledge and skills” (p.55). Bürgener and Barth (2018) highlight that education – especially teacher education – is key in moving towards a more sustainable future, while Hassler et al. (2018, p.73) emphasise the need for “scalable, sustainable, effective models for teacher programme development”. Multiple authors (including Baldwin et al., 2017; Nawaz, 2017; Sinakou et al., 2019) agree that sustainable design and implementation of academic professional development is a must.

With that in mind, this study contributes primarily to the principle of social sustainability, through influence (sharing opinions and experiences), competence (building personal and professional capabilities), and meaning-making (co-creating common meaning and a shared

culture). It also embraces the idea of lifelong learning and recognises achievement. In addition, the project contributes to two of the UN's seventeen Sustainable Development Goals: Goal 4 – Quality Education, and Goal 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, particularly in terms of Target 16.6 – Develop effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels (United Nations, n.d.-a). By sharing awardees' stories, and reflecting, for example, on how these different practitioners have adapted to change throughout their lives, I aim to empower others and myself. As the UN's Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) states, "empowering educators must be central to any professional development initiative" (2012, p.10). The opportunity to relate to the stories of celebrated colleagues, and to recognise elements of one's own practice or trajectory can be encouraging and energising, creating a ripple effect across teams and institutions. Sharing the findings of this project with my L&TD colleagues will empower the team as a whole to review teacher development offerings, in order to ensure that we are not only encouraging excellent practice in others, but also modelling it in our own behaviours and interactions.

Drivers for change

These different contexts underpin the drivers for this project, which are three-fold. The principal driver is my interest in what it is that makes a teacher excellent, together with a desire to investigate whether recognised educators see these traits and/or practices in themselves, and whether these factors are something which can be learned. This driver allows me to contribute to my institution and to the wider educational community, both nationally and internationally. The second driver is my goal to become more involved in tertiary teacher education and training programmes, to return to the classroom (with all of the energy and fulfilment that provides for me), and to mentor early-career tertiary teachers. This driver reinforces my own ongoing development as a professional. The final driver is my love of learning, and of deciding to pursue doctoral studies for a sense of achievement and a 'capstone' to my own academic record. Linked to this is my wish to contribute something pragmatic and actionable to the academic community, being a firm believer in Lewin's argument that "research that produces nothing but books will not suffice" (1946, p.35), and wanting to use research to improve my own practice and that of others. This driver guides my contribution to the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Framework of practice

My practice is informed by not only theories of learning in general, and of adult learning in particular, but also by my formal and professional learning in the fields of applied linguistics, TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), learning design, coaching and mentoring, and leadership. My current role also involves project management and administrative skills, and adaptiveness and self-efficacy. The multiple facets of my role draw on all these aspects of my practice; this is what enables me to respond to the needs of

my learners, and to recognise that the variety and scope of my role is both one of its greatest challenges and its greatest blessings.

My framework of practice is underpinned by my constructivist ontology, which asserts that “social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors... [and] that social phenomena are not only produced through social interaction but are in a constant state of revision” (Bryman, 2016, p.29). This fits with my interpretivist epistemology and belief that our actions are meaningful and that knowledge is constructed subjectively and is open to interpretation.

One aspect of my constructivist worldview is that research offers a particular version of social reality, “rather than one that can be regarded as definitive” (Bryman, 2016, p.29). As an interpretivist, I believe that multiple realities exist (Bruner, 2002; Polkinghorne, 1988), with people seeing things in different ways and sometimes reaching different conclusions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Bateson (1994) would agree: “Many human encounters are experienced in different ways by different participants... The descriptions are all true. Taken together, they offer enrichment” (pp.49-50). For Mulholland and Wallace (2003, p.8), if a text is “internally coherent and plausible, [it] draws readers into the worlds of the participants so that the readers recognise that the experiences described match their own”. By telling the stories of multiple Teaching Excellence awardees, their experiences, and the meaning they have constructed from these experiences, then, my hope is to empower tertiary educators to become outstanding in their practice.

Aim of this research

The aim of this project is to investigate the trajectory and professional practice of Tertiary Teaching Excellence awardees, to explore their background and evolution as educators, their current practice, and their thoughts around future development. The key research questions are:

1. How does the concept of excellence unfurl in the narratives of Tertiary Teaching Excellence awardees?
2. How do these practitioners embody, convey, and foster that excellence in their practice?
3. What implications for Professional Development do these narratives of excellence have?

Significance

This research has multiple benefits. It aims to:

- contribute to knowledge and academic literature around teaching excellence, teacher development, and professional practice

- inform subsequent projects inquiring into the stories of award-winning teachers
- help educators, mentors, trainers, and curriculum designers gain a deeper understanding of what teaching excellence looks like, and of how teachers perceive their own practice and their impact on others
- provide valuable support for academic staff wishing to apply for a teaching excellence award, and/or for promotion, by identifying key aspects of practice that they may not see themselves
- offer further insights into teaching excellence which could also benefit Learning and Teaching Development teams at tertiary institutions
- articulate for organisations different interventions which could be offered to develop best practice from staff, and to raise standards and, as a result, student achievement

As Coldron and Smith highlight, understanding “how persons acquire their identities as teachers has implications for the kind of support needed for professional development” (1999, p.711). It is hoped too, with narrative being “a source of empowerment” (Bochner, 2000, p.271), that by reading the stories of teachers who have been recognised for ‘excellence’, educators will relate to and recognise elements of their own practice, and will feel motivated and inspired to share these with their peers and the wider academic community.

The project is grounded in professional practice and its four core elements: doing, knowing, being, and becoming (Higgs & Titchen, 2001b). “As practitioners..., it is impossible for us to separate out who we are from what we do” (Ewing & Smith, 2001, p.16), with Higgs and Titchen (2001b, p.viii) seeing professional practice as “lived experience”. Lester and Costley (2010, p.567) highlight that “knowing and doing coexist in a spiral of activity where knowledge informs practice, which generates further knowledge that in turn leads to changes in practice, and so on”. In this way, the potential for growth through reflection is unlimited.

My own professional practice is woven throughout this thesis. Ewing and Smith (2001, p.21) remind us that “the knowledge used by professionals in their practice includes knowledge born of reflective experience”, and the importance of both reflectivity and reflexivity will be apparent in multiple places in this text.

My new professional framework of practice will evolve through this inquiry into excellence, and through increased understanding of the socially-situated importance of professional learning. Furthermore, my aim is to “have in-depth conversations about [educators’] experiences and to process them in ways which may lead to insight and bring about thoughtful change to practice” (McDrury & Alterio, 2002, p.128). As Higgs and Titchen (2001a, p.12) highlight, “if practitioners... create new knowledge about their current practices and the historico-social, cultural, and political contexts that shape them, they can

use these new theoretical understandings and insights to inform the actions they undertake to change practices". Investigating and reflecting on the stories of awardees will empower me to emerge from the doctoral experience able to inform and influence the development of outstanding tertiary educators.

Professional practice learning outcomes

By the end of this project, I will be able to critically reflect (Schön, 1983, 1987) on my own experience (both personal and professional), practice, and learning, and on the development, experiences, and practice of a group of OP colleagues who are recognised as excellent educators: "In understanding something so intensely personal as teaching, it is critical we know about the person the teacher is" (Goodson, 1992, p.234). With ongoing reading, I will be able to link my findings to theories and themes in the literature, and to contribute new knowledge to that same literature, through peer-reviewed publications and international conference presentations.

Through learning from experience (Boud et al., 2013; Eraut, 1994), I can develop my "practical wisdom" (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p.57), combining academic and professional knowledge, by applying cognitive, technical, and research skills and understanding throughout the course of the development, conduct, analysis, and reporting of a research project. This encapsulates activity theories (Vygotsky, 1978; Leont'ev, 1978; Engeström, 2001), as my interactions with learning practices create new knowledge in themselves. Costley and Lester (2012, p.259) remind us that "Schön's reflective spiral, in which knowledge and practice inform and modify each other, is very much in evidence in workbased learning". Drake and Heath (2011, p.3) assert that when practitioner research "is done well it has a transformative effect on both the practitioner researcher and their approach to their work". They go on to suggest that doctoral researchers learn more from two elements, "expanded learning at work and feedback on writing" (Drake & Heath, 2011, p.60), than from anything else. I look forward to this as its own learning experience.

By the end of this project, I will have reflected on how I can embed my findings in the design of teacher development and continuing professional development programmes, which are recognised across the higher education sector in NZ. I will have further developed my abilities to guide and mentor my fellow educators to design and conduct their own research projects within the Learning and Teaching discipline, be it to investigate their own practice and its impact, and/or to contribute to the wider academic community.

By the end of this project, I will feel more confident to take my place at the table alongside leading practitioners in the field of teacher development and in the tertiary learning and teaching context. I will feel proud of having decided to stretch myself through doctoral studies, and of how this contributes to my role and to my ability to make a difference for my peers, through building their confidence and their academic capabilities. I will continue

to adapt to changes in the tertiary environment, and apply my learning and practice as I shift to the next phase of my career.

In summary, the professional practice outcomes, as outlined above, will enable me to meet the three overarching graduate profile outcomes of this doctoral programme:

- Systematically and critically reflect on experience, theory, and practice as a means of creating new knowledge
- Employ contemporary, specialised personal cognitive, technical, and research skills within the Learning and Teaching discipline to independently and systematically frame projects and proposals
- Demonstrate autonomy, authoritative judgement, adaptability, and responsibility as a leading practitioner in their field

Structure and organisation of the thesis

The main body of this thesis is made up of chapters one might expect to see in a traditional thesis (Literature Review, Methodology, Research Findings and Discussion, and Conclusion), but also incorporates reflections on my professional practice and my learning during this research process. As Schön emphasises, this type of reflection is “a dialogue of thinking and doing through which I become more skilful” (1983, p.31). As I draw the thesis to a close, I reflect on how this project and my own development have impacted on my framework of practice, and my thoughts about my future trajectory.

This thesis sits alongside the accompanying learning artifact ‘An excellent adventure: Telling the stories of Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award winners’, which presents the stories of each of my research participants in full.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

To establish the research context, this critical review of the literature begins by addressing professional practice and practitioner research. I then move to looking for clarity around terms such as ‘best practice’ and ‘excellence’, and to focusing on some of the challenges of this type of discourse. Next, I discuss how teaching excellence is addressed in the literature, before considering teaching excellence awards in more detail.

Professional Practice

The umbrella discipline for this project is that of professional practice, with a focus on instigating positive change in the workplace and transforming my own practice (Costley & Abukari, 2015; Cranton, 1996). Daniels (2017) describes professional practice as “an ongoing process of praxis... the process of applying knowledge, reviewing the effect of that application, and refining that knowledge” (p.175). Similarly, Kemmis (2012, p.97) calls on practitioners to ‘act in praxis’ by:

acting well in response to the uncertain demands of particular situations that arise for the practitioners of different professional practices... and drawing on the wisdom one has learned from reflection on one’s experience in... different kinds of circumstances and with... different kinds of practical problems that arise in the conduct of the practice.

As well its focus on action, “acting well” (emphasis added) suggests an ethical dimension to the notion of praxis, which fits with Freire’s definition of praxis as “reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed” (1970/2000, p.126). Indeed, Freire urges teachers to “practise what they [preach] but also to underpin such action with reflection and theory” (Aubrey & Riley, 2016, p.131). I believe that educators should always be willing to reflect on their effectiveness (both on and in action), and adjust their practices accordingly. Growth as a professional in any context depends upon experience and reflection (Dewey, 1933; Stenhouse, 1979). With this research, developing a better understanding of and sharing knowledge around the challenges of the ‘excellence’ discourse in general, and of what constitutes ‘teaching excellence’ in particular, can not only transform how teachers applying for excellence awards are supported and provide insights into why some applications are successful and others not, but also inform both teacher education and continuing professional development. This is where the potential for transformative impact lies.

Professional practice embraces collaboration across academic disciplines, occupations, and organisational silos (Reeders, 2000). In work-based projects, “practitioner-researchers are engaged in solving highly contextualised problems and do this to develop their practice at work, supported by high-level... learning and teaching” (Costley & Abukari, 2015, p.4).

Reflection is key in professional practice, so that the practitioner can “critically appraise what has been experienced via practice [which]...in turn enables them to improve ongoing practice, by using the information and knowledge they are gaining from experience” (Helyer, 2015, p.16). This reminds us once again of Schön’s reflective spiral with theory, reflection, and practice each informing the other elements. Critical reflection and collaboration can contribute to transformation and new ways of working (Cranton, 1996; Gray, 2007; Somerville, 2014), with a practitioner’s experiences, activities, achievements, feelings, and emotions all playing their part (Brockbank & McGill, 1998) in the reflective and reflexive process. Smith and Martin (2014) highlight that “most definitions of ‘what it means to be a professional’ include statements about reflection or lifelong learning” (p.295), and even go so far as to suggest that individuals cannot develop themselves *without* being reflective.

Practitioner research

Though not a new concept, practitioner research has grown into a transdisciplinary academic field of its own, and is acknowledged as being key to developing and improving both individual practice and organisational effectiveness (Costley et al., 2010; Costley & Lester, 2012; Daniels, 2017). “The practitioner researcher approaches research and embeds research within practice... practitioners engaged in research are more successful practitioners and researchers engaged in practice are more successful researchers” (Fox et al., 2007, pp.1-2). Practitioners may conduct research for several reasons, including inquiry into policies, practices, and/or processes (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2018), a desire to improve professional practice (Costley & Abukari, 2015; Johnson, 2016; Newman, 2016), to provide hope (Boddy et al., 2018; Khan, 2020; Olivier et al., 2009) and/or to effect change (Newman & Mowbray, 2012; Workman & Nottingham, 2015). In addition, as Drake and Heath (2011, p.87) summarise, practitioner researchers are perhaps seeking “increased influence or personal effectiveness in practice..., job satisfaction..., and personal and/or professional growth or development”. This fits with Costley and Abukari’s findings (2015, p.9) that many practitioner-researchers “[allude] to more intrinsic than extrinsic benefits” of work-based projects. At this stage in my career, it is this personal and professional growth in particular which resonates most with me.

Costley and Abukari (2015) cite Lévi-Strauss’ concept of ‘bricolage’ when they call for stronger links to be made between practitioner research and research methodologies, highlighting that “work-based research projects are not an applied version of an existing theory” (p.11). For Lévi-Strauss (1962), bricolage is an ability to use whatever is available at the time, and making something new with it; a sort of ‘do-it-yourself’ approach. Hammersley (2004, p.554) suggests that bricolage encompasses “those views of research that treat it as an art”, and that it has a “pragmatic orientation”. This echoes Nelson et al. (1992, p.2), who describe bricolage as being “pragmatic, strategic and self-reflexive”. Denzin and Lincoln argue that “the many methodological practices of qualitative research may be viewed as... bricolage, quiltmaking, or montage... [and] the researcher as a

bricoleur" (2018, p.11). Clearly, the interest and growth in practitioner research indicates that it merits something that has not been cobbled together simply as a 'making-do' solution. My research outputs, together with those of my peers and mentors in this doctoral programme, will contribute to this ongoing discussion.

Engaging in practitioner or work-based research projects enables us to build context-based knowledge from our experiences by observing, listening, and by imitating practices. Hammersley (2004), when talking about research competence, highlights the need for "the building up of skills... skills [which] are by their nature practical rather than technical" (p.551). Eraut (2004) discusses a continuum, stretching between formal and informal. He describes informal learning as "implicit, unintended, opportunistic and unstructured... [with] the absence of a teacher" (p.250). Boud and Middleton (2003, p.194) cite the work of Wenger (1998) when they highlight that informal learning at work "is embedded in the practices and relationships of the workplace and helps to create identity and meaning". The learning experience, then, is "determined wholly and without exception by the social environment" (Vygotsky, 1997, p.48). Engeström (2001) addresses "expansive learning at work", connecting individual participants and their socio-cultural context, and drawing attention to 'horizontal' learning through interactions with one's peers. Most adult learning occurs in the workplace through these informal interactions (Billett, 2014; Boud & Middleton, 2003; Noe & Ellingson, 2017), and through learning by doing (Dewey, 1938; Lewis & Williams, 1994; Tour, 2017). This fits with Vygotsky's theories around "the dynamic interdependence of social and individual processes" (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p.192) and his view that learning occurs through socially-shared activities.

Crossouard and Pryor (2008) cite the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) when they stress "the importance of learners having the opportunity for legitimate peripheral participation in a community of practice" (p.221). Similarly, Johannesson (2020), Smith and Smith (2015), and Helyer (2015) comment on the value of peer support and communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) in professional learning and active reflection. One example can be seen in Tour's research (2017), with participant teachers finding their learning experiences "meaningful and valuable... [and] an important and legitimate form of professional learning" (p.189). Although "the notion of... 'professional practice' as a specialised subset of social practice... is highly contested in the literature" (Kemmis, 2009, p.21), it would seem that we cannot deny the importance of social relationships and interactions as a key part of professional practice and practitioner research.

Learning can also be seen as a process of 'becoming' and of "identity construction" (Crossouard & Pryor, 2008, p.234). As Coldron and Smith (1999, p.712) highlight, "from the beginning of, but also during their careers, teachers are engaged in creating themselves as teachers". Indeed, the concept of lifelong learning suggests continual development of the self (Antonacopoulou et al., 2005):

Part of the experience of teaching is continually constructing a sustainable identity as a teacher... The whole set of practices and traditions, on the basis of which choices are made, is the landscape (or ecosystem) in which the individual is located. The professional identity of teachers is a particular instance of this process. (Coldron & Smith, 1999, p.714)

Billett (2011) also emphasises how the development of self-awareness, self-identity, and personal agency are all affected by the individual's relationship with work. This is echoed by Drake and Heath's assertion that "new knowledge arises from integrating professional learning with personal transformation" (2011, p.99). Examples can be seen in Maher et al.'s (2008) account of their experiences of "becoming writers" through participation in doctoral writing groups, and in Crossouard and Pryor's (2008) inquiry into doctoral candidates "becoming researchers". In addition, "the conceptualization of how persons acquire their identities as teachers has implications for the kind of support needed for professional development" (Coldron & Smith, 1999, p.711), so research into teacher identity may yield key findings for those who work in teacher development.

At doctoral level, most practitioner research sees the researcher inhabiting and negotiating the 'insider-outsider' spaces and dilemmas throughout their project (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Trowler, 2011). Merton (1972) defines 'insiders' as those who have *a priori* intimate knowledge of a community and its members, and 'outsiders' as "the non-members" (Merton, 1972, p.21). The emic or insiders' perspective is important in several qualitative approaches, and contrasts with the etic (or outsiders') perspective commonly seen in quantitative research (Given, 2008). Others, though, including Anderson and Jones (2000), Atkins and Wallace (2012), Breen (2007), Labaree (2002), and Milligan (2016) argue that the two are not mutually exclusive, but sit on a continuum, with us all moving "back and forth across different boundaries" (Griffith, 1998, p.368). Research conducted by insiders is often criticised for its subjectivity and lack of impartiality (Costley et al., 2010; Greene, 2014; Mercer, 2007). As Costley et al., however, highlight, "your insights as an insider are valuable because of your depth of knowledge..., expertise and experience" (2010, p.6), and subjectivity in research is an opportunity rather than a problem (DeLyser, 2001; Finlay 2002a; 2002b; Riessman, 2002). Perhaps the ideal position is as both an insider and an outsider (Hellawell, 2006; Humphrey, 2007). The key, though, is being able to navigate within and across these positions (Holmes, 2020), for example, by acknowledging and managing one's beliefs and biases (conscious or unconscious), and using reflective practice and reflexivity.

Reflective practice is "the use of reflective abilities in the scrutiny and development of practice" (Fook et al., 2006, p.12). In Western traditions of adult learning (for example, Dewey, 1933; Freire, 1970/2000, 1973; Schön, 1983, 1987), we learn through reflection. For Boyd and Fales, reflection is "the core difference between whether a person repeats the same experience several times... or learns from experience in such a way that he or she is

cognitively or affectively changed" (1983, p.100). It helps us to generate professional knowledge and to develop as practitioners (Atkins & Murphy, 1993; Coward, 2018; Howatson-Jones, 2016; Moon, 2019). "Professional practice involves fine judgements about contextual factors, continual monitoring, and some form of thinking in action" (Coldron & Smith, 1999, p.716). In Chinese traditions, similar thinking dates back 25 centuries to Confucius, and is "characterised by a metaphor of 'inner digging and drilling'" (Wang & King, 2006). This provides a clear image of looking deeply inside oneself during reflection. For Mezirow (1990, 1991, 1997), critical reflection is at the heart of adult education, and is one aspect of transformative learning:

A defining condition of being human is that we have to understand the meaning of our experience... In contemporary societies we must learn to make our own interpretations rather than act on the purposes, beliefs, judgments, and feelings of others. Facilitating such understanding is the cardinal goal of adult education.
Transformative learning develops autonomous thinking. (Mezirow, 1997, p.5)

Wilson et al. (2008) emphasise that transformative learning is engaging and, as the name suggests, has an impact on behaviour and perspective. This brings us back to the idea of 'becoming...' through practitioner research.

Schön's work on critical reflection has "touched numerous disciplines and professional practices" (Pakman, 2000, p.5). For him, organisational development and improvement is dependent on the professional knowledge of the practitioners within that same organisation (Aubrey & Riley, 2016). Through 'reflection-on-action' (Schön, 1983), practitioners reflect on their effectiveness, and on how their practice could be developed, improved, or changed the next time around, in a move towards better outcomes. This links with Dewey's (1958, p.37) belief that "experience is already overlaid and saturated with the products of the reflection of past generations and by-gone ages. It is filled with interpretations [and] classifications...". In addition, alongside reflecting 'on action', as practitioners gain experience, they are increasingly able to use what Schön (1983, 1987) calls 'reflection-in-action', adjusting practice intuitively in the moment itself, rather than waiting until after the fact to consider what could have been done differently. Billett and Newton (2010) advocate for 'learning practice' as a new model of reflection, in which reflection is a lifelong process contributing to professional learning. Although their discussion is centred on the health-care context, I feel it could certainly be applicable to educators, if not to all professions. "Self-reflection has always been a cornerstone of good teaching, and a crucial tool for teacher researchers" (Shagoury, 2011, p.298). Boud (2010, p.32) calls for 'productive reflection' to have "an organisational rather than an individual intent, and a collective rather than individual orientation". This is a good fit with the idea of learning through social interactions, and a reminder that practitioner researchers often focus on knowledge creation within their organisational context.

It is important for us to distinguish between reflection (or reflectivity) and reflexivity. As Roulston et al. (2008, p.232) emphasise, “an important step in the ongoing development of qualitative research expertise is the ability to be reflexive concerning one’s craft”. This is echoed by Banister et al. (2011, p.216) who stress the “pivotal role” that reflexivity plays in qualitative research. Finlay and Gough refer to ‘critical self-reflection’, “in an attempt to capture both poles of the reflection-reflexivity continuum”, with reflection being “thinking about’ something after the event” and reflexivity being “a more immediate, dynamic and continuing self-awareness” (2003, p.ix). For Ryan (2005) and Cranton (1996), the difference is introspection; a kind of ‘internal analysis’. Bolton defines reflexivity as “focused in-depth reflection upon one’s own perspective, values, and assumptions” (2014, p.xxiii). In practitioner research, “critical reflexivity [is] inherent in every aspect of the research and writing process” (Drake & Heath, 2011, p.8), with Humphrey (2007) highlighting the importance of recognising the insider-outsider hyphen as being key to the ability to shift back and forward between positions, and “crucial to the development of... reflexivity” (p.13). Journalists, acknowledging that they too “cannot be completely free from bias” (Rosas, 2018, p.2117) refer to this ability as “subjective-objectivity” (Donsbach & Klett, 1993). I appreciate O’Leary’s (2014, p.9) stance on the “reflexive researcher”:

Good research should be seen as a thinking person’s game. It is a creative and strategic process that involves constantly assessing, reassessing, and making decisions about the best possible means for obtaining trustworthy information, carrying out appropriate analysis, and drawing credible conclusions.

The time is right for me to take on this stance, and inquire into what it is that makes some educators stand out from the crowd; what is ‘excellence’ for them, and how have they developed into the teachers they are today?

Seeking definitions

In contemporary higher education, we often hear talk of ‘best practice’ or ‘teaching excellence’, with an assumption that all practitioners either know of or can demonstrate examples of these. These terms can refer, however, to a wide range of systems, procedures, and behaviours, which “may or may not have been rigorously evaluated” (Arendale, 2018). Furthermore, individual, institutional, and even governmental understanding of such terms can vary greatly (Dixon & Pilkington, 2017; Gravett & Kinchin, 2020; Joosten, 2015). Citing examples of terms such as ‘excellence’, ‘impact’, ‘reach’, ‘accountability’, ‘benchmarking’, and ‘transparency’, O’Regan and Gray (2018) lament “the mind-numbing incessancy with which stock phrases... are repeated and reproduced in the discourse” (p.537) and argue that these phrases render the text empty of any meaning, resulting in “opacity and obfuscation” (p.542). Coffield and Edward (2009) question how politicians can claim to be looking at examples of ‘good’, ‘effective’ and/or ‘best’ practice (and using these words interchangeably in official documents) when there is no clear definition available.

Hargreaves concurs:

The term ['good practice'] itself is ambiguous and flabby. Often 'good practice' and 'best practice' are treated as synonyms, although clearly 'best practice' suggests a practice that has been compared with others and has proved itself better than other 'good' practices. (2004, p.72)

Coffield and Edward also logically conclude that 'best practice' "implies that there is only one approach which, if used, will solve any difficulties" (2009, p.375), and describe government policy as "operat[ing] like a ratchet screwdriver with no reverse movement allowed; only constant forward progression is acceptable" (p.373). Their interviews with educators across 24 different institutions, inquiring into their understanding of 'good practice', revealed that views ranged from individual traits (including, for instance, commitment, empathy, flexibility...), to team characteristics and cultures, managerial factors, organisational culture, responsiveness, innovation, and even compliance (Coffield & Edward, 2009). These authors berate the work of policy makers and politicians who "constantly increase the pressure on practitioners to move from 'good' to 'best' practice and now on to 'excellence for all'" (2009, p.385), and ask whether the "demand for ubiquitous perfection" (p.380) will be next.

A definition of 'excellence' is similarly elusive: "Any definition of excellence in teaching and learning is led by government policy, which is subject to constant modification" (Dixon & Pilkington, 2017, p.439). Furthermore, the terms 'excellent' or 'excellence' are rather contentious, with some literature proposing that their use has lost any meaning (Polkinghorne et al., 2017; Readings, 1996; Saunders, 2015): "Excellence is nothing in and of itself" (Saunders & Ramírez, 2017, p.396). Indeed, is it Ministries of Education and politicians who decide what 'excellence' is, or perhaps executive leaders, governing councils, and managers in individual institutions? Would their top-down views of excellence match the thoughts and experiences of teaching practitioners or those of learners? Unlikely.

It would seem reasonable to assert that "'excellent' practice could be interpreted as a more liberal term than 'best' practice, since excellent practices could be flourishing... across the country" (Coffield & Edward, 2009, p.375). These authors go on to say, however, that, in policies and documents, the word 'excellent' is "clearly meant to be an improvement on 'best'" (Coffield & Edward, 2009, pp.375-376), and suggests a rather Tolkienesque 'one model to rule them all'. However, "good practice, created as it is in the unique setting of the classroom by the ideas and actions of teachers and pupils, can never be singular, fixed or absolute, a specification handed down or imposed from above" (Alexander, 1997, p.287). While Alexander's work focuses on Primary Education, I would contend that his argument could apply across all educational contexts, regardless of level.

It would be impossible to conceptualise excellence as one thing (Gunn & Fisk, 2013). As Stevenson et al. explain, “excellence is, of course, a multi-faceted concept, and it is not surprising that the term operates ambiguously, contradictorily and contentiously” (2017, p.63). The complexities of excellence in higher education can be seen in this description from the National University of Singapore:

An excellent teacher is not merely one who excels at communication, has a firm grasp of the subject, a passion for teaching, cares for students or is sensitive to their needs; nor is excellence guaranteed by the teaching methodologies he or she uses. At the heart of teaching excellence lies the teacher’s ability to inculcate and strengthen intellectual qualities such as independent learning, thinking, and inquiry; critical thinking, creative problem solving, intellectual curiosity, intellectual skepticism, making informed judgments and articulateness. (Centre for Development of Teaching & Learning, n.d.)

I could cite examples from multiple other institutions, all of which would be different; an emphasis on research here, a focus on innovation there. Views on excellence vary across regions, cultures, organisations, and disciplines. O’Connor and O’Hagan’s 2016 research, drawing on qualitative interviews with 23 academic staff, concluded that the concept of excellence has an “uneasy relationship with KPIs [Key Performance Indicators]” (p.1953). Saunders and Ramírez (2017) would agree: “Excellence... imposes a regime of measurement and operationalization that breaks complex issues into discrete observable units” (p.396); “Since excellence is a measure of a thing, and since everything in post-secondary education is committed to excellence, everything must be measured” (p.399). As Fairclough (2015) underlines, even research and scholarship is understood through quantifiable outputs and rankings. It would seem, then, that whatever good, best, or excellent practice may be, or whoever determines its use, it leads to educators being tested, quantified, rated, and measured.

Challenges of the discourse

While several authors question the philosophies or political thinking behind today’s emphasis on ‘excellence’, they agree nevertheless that it is at the core of “national and international higher education policy discourse” (Gunn & Fisk, 2013, p.5). This focus has resulted in what Wilsdon (2016) calls “the metric tide”, with “the rise of a regime of bureaucrats, inspectors, commissioners, regulators and experts which... is eroding professional autonomy” (Shore, 2008, pp.282-283). Lorenz (2012) ties this back to the introduction of league tables, under Thatcher’s government in the UK, in order to rank institutions according to (measured) quality. Organisations are no longer judged by their own successes, but instead by their relative position to other organisations (Brink, 2010; O’Leary & Wood, 2019; Tomlinson et al., 2020), leading to a “competitive culture of measurement” (Dixon & Pilkington, 2017, p.440). Canning (2019) asserts that using the discourse of ‘teaching excellence’ results in constrained practices and dehumanised

students, and, for Saunders (2015, p.400), “when we begin to question institutional commitments to excellence, what appears to be a laudable goal is revealed to represent a body of meanings and values encoding neoliberal interests”. Dixon and Pilkington (2017, p.438) highlight that managers are “constantly amend[ing] their definition of what being an excellent teacher involves and its measurement” due to the significant political emphasis on excellence and the pursuit of increased organisational prosperity.

If excellence is indeed part of performance management and quality measurement, this “trivialise[s] excellent teaching and... [is] a problematic aspect of a neoliberal agenda” (Layton & Brown, 2011, p.164). Ball goes so far as to criticise the “cult of excellence” (1998, p.123) underlying educational reform and promoted by institutional managers wanting to be more competitive on a global scale. This idea of a “cult” is echoed in a White Paper in which the British Government emphatically promise, “we will eliminate failure” (Department for Education and Skills, 2006, p.56). New Zealand’s Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019, although not worded quite as strongly, emphasises the high expectations under which tertiary providers must function, “in terms of outputs, efficiency and student achievement”, and draws attention to the “performance-linked funding and... educational performance indicators” that have been introduced (New Zealand Government, 2018). Linked to student achievement, Joosten (2015, p.1517) describes the higher education system in the Netherlands as understanding excellence “in terms of ‘ranking’”, with a focus on ensuring “the ‘best’ students” excel. It is not clear, though, what this means for students who are not considered ‘the best’. In Australia, the increased emphasis on quality in higher education is attributed primarily to more intense competition across the global market (Chalmers et al., 2014; Cooper, 2019). This fits with Saunders and Ramírez’s claim that the pursuit of ‘excellence’ in teaching is an attempt “to commodify postsecondary education” (2017, p.399). Unfortunately, I would agree with their argument that this results in “reduc[ing] the emancipatory potential” (Saunders & Ramírez, 2017, p.405) of that same education. Furthermore, as Shephard et al. (2011) and O'Regan and Gray (2018) assert, the current focus on recognising excellence may ironically lead, in fact, to excellence being stifled.

How does measuring excellence, then, impact on education? For Lorenz, one “paradoxical and disastrous effect of [neoliberal policies]... is that someone can be an excellent teacher and researcher and at the same time be assessed as poor by the [Quality Assurance] system” (2012, p.619), should they not emerge in a positive light from whatever metrics are being implemented at the time. This neoliberalism in higher education “naturalizes and legitimizes the reduction of teaching and learning to crude quantitative indicators... [and] extracts teaching and learning from the processes of education” (Saunders & Ramírez, 2017, p.401). In case you missed that, it “extracts teaching and learning from the processes of education”. Do educators ever join the profession not aiming to teach, and to inspire and enable others (and themselves) to learn? One would hope not.

Teaching excellence

Considerations around the notion of ‘teaching excellence’ are equally varied and complex (Bartram et al., 2019; Dixon & Pilkington, 2017; Elton, 1998; Little et al., 2007), with Gravett and Kinchin (2020, p.1033) asserting that “conceptions of teaching excellence are due a reimagining”. Skelton describes teaching excellence as a “contested, value-laden concept” (2005, p.4), and Madriaga and Morley (2016, p.166) question the “steady effort to make an intangible, ambiguous, multifaceted notion of teaching excellence incarnate”. For Gunn and Fisk, “the relationship between the individual and their institution is intrinsically linked in any discussion of teaching excellence” (2013, p.37). In Taiwan, for example, the Ministry of Education launched its ‘Teaching Excellence’ initiative in 2004, focusing on “rais[ing] university teaching quality and giv[ing] students a better education environment” (Ministry of Education, Republic of China (Taiwan), 2011). The UK’s Teaching Excellence Framework, introduced in 2017 (Barkas et al., 2019), is described by Massie as using “student satisfaction, retention rates and destination of leavers as a proxy for teaching excellence” (2018, p.332), and by Shattock (2018, p.21) as a framework which “does not actually assess teaching but only the imperfectly recorded reactions to it”. Cashmore et al. (2013) call for teaching excellence criteria to be built into a flexible framework, while Polkinghorne et al. (2017, p.214) urge institutions to ensure they are “evaluating teaching excellence in the same way so that realistic comparisons can be made”. In reality, however, looking at the literature, a single framework or system, no matter how flexible, is still some way off.

Politicians, educational institutions, and stakeholders would first need to agree (an enormous challenge in itself) on whether they are more interested in a top-down or bottom-up perspective on teaching excellence, or whether the ideal lies somewhere between the two, and then reach a consensus on how it should be measured. Evaluating a teacher’s practice through performance reviews, classroom observations, and/or through student surveys, for example, are all possible (and common practice), and may be complementary. These still, though, reveal only part of the picture. Teaching evaluations, however they are conducted, can be formative, providing meaningful feedback to the staff member for their own development, or summative, assigning a grade or score to the staff member, with implications for performance reviews and promotion (Mintrop et al., 2018; Steinberg & Kraft, 2017). They should also be multi-dimensional (Nalla, 2018). In student evaluations of teaching, for instance, students who are surveyed may not realise how their feedback is used or reported (El-Sayed et al., 2018; Sharpe, 2019), their evaluations can be vague and unclear (Carlucci et al., 2019), or they can contain known or unintended biases (Dennin et al., 2017). Feedback may also be based more on a teacher’s popularity than on their effectiveness (Clayson, 2009; English et al., 2015; Zabaleta, 2007). As Hornstein (2017) summarises, then, student evaluations of teaching, on their own, are an “inadequate” tool to measure staff performance.

Is impact which is the best determinant of teaching excellence? If so, how might that be defined? ‘Impact’ is another multi-layered and complex term increasingly used in education

(Ashwin, 2016; O'Regan & Gray, 2018). One factor which contributes to this complexity is that "to be able to evaluate impact, we need to know where we are starting from" (Cambridge Assessment International Education: Teaching and Learning Team, n.d., para. 4), so baseline data is needed. In Australia, the State Government of Victoria suggests that "excellence in teaching and learning" comes from curriculum and content knowledge, and "the skills to utilise high-impact pedagogical strategies to improve student learning" (2018, para. 3), yet provides no details on what those 'high-impact' strategies might be. Deem and Baird (2019), reporting on the UK's Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), outline how it draws on various measures, including student satisfaction levels, student retention rates, the numbers of alumni moving on to further study or entering employment (and how sustained that employment is), and/or earning "above median" salaries (p.228). However, O'Leary et al. (2019), whose study involved more than 6000 staff working in Higher Education across the UK, found that "overall, participants reported limited evidence that the TEF recognised, promoted and/or rewarded teaching excellence" (p.4), which suggests that those participants see 'teaching excellence' as something else. If organisational leaders were asked how they measure the impact of teaching, they would probably refer to key performance indicators, such as retention rates, completion levels, and destination surveys (not unlike the TEF referred to above). However, I would argue that, while those measures are certainly important, if learners were asked about the impact of teachers, these elements would not come into play. Ashwin (2016), while acknowledging that views on 'impact' change depending on how the relationship between teaching and learning is perceived, suggests that if "we... ask "what has impact?" and "who owns the impact?", then the answer is simple. It is teaching and learning that has impact and it is the teachers and the students who own that impact" (para. 4). For the learner, impact might be about confidence, motivation, behaviour, creating opportunities, and empowering individuals and groups through learning. Is it, then, these things which demonstrate teaching excellence, and, if so, how might they be measured?

Away from institutional or political attempts to define and/or measure 'teaching excellence', Bain (2004) studied almost 100 of "the best" college teachers across the United States, over a fifteen-year period, looking for indicators of excellence by selecting educators who had "achieved remarkable success in helping their students learn in ways that made a sustained, substantial, and positive influence on how those students think, act, and feel" (p.5). He reports on multiple aspects of the knowledge and practice of these teachers, including how they prepare to teach, how they treat their students, and how they evaluate both their learners and themselves. For Skelton (2009), the reflexive development of a personal philosophy of teaching is key to teaching excellence, whereas for Smith and Lygo-Baker (2017), it is the ability to create optimal learning conditions that is fundamental to excellence. Although Johnson-Farmer and Frenn (2009, p.7) suggest that teachers and learners are both involved in "dynamic engagement" within the teaching excellence process, again it is unlikely that both parties view excellence in the same way (Bradley et al., 2015; Greatbatch & Holland, 2016; Miller-Young et al., 2020). McLean (2001), for example,

summarises differences between student and staff perceptions of ‘teaching excellence’ and, perhaps more importantly, asks whose opinions we should value, and against what criteria excellence is measured. In other words, once again, we ask the question who decides who (or what) is ‘excellent’?

All of us, as educators and learners, are ‘works-in-progress’, with evolving practices, so where does ‘excellence’ fit in? Palmer (2017, p.10) argues that “good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher”. This would appear to be supported by Skelton (2005, p.94), when citing two studies which found that both teachers and students see teaching excellence as a reflection of particular qualities of the teacher’s personality, and by Fitzmaurice (2010, p.53), who describes teaching as “a matter of human relations”. Kane et al. (2004) propose a model of excellence incorporating subject knowledge, skill, interpersonal relationships, personality, and research/teaching links, and integrating reflective practice throughout. For them, “skills are far from being the most important determinant of teaching excellence” (p.295). The literature, then, suggests that there is a lot more to excellence than simply techniques and skills.

While reflecting on this, I pictured very clearly in my mind light travelling through a prism, and being separated into its component colours. Part of my inquiry is working through the same thing with the concept of excellence, refracting it into its component parts. Figure 1 illustrates some of the concepts highlighted in the literature and which I aim to investigate further in this inquiry.

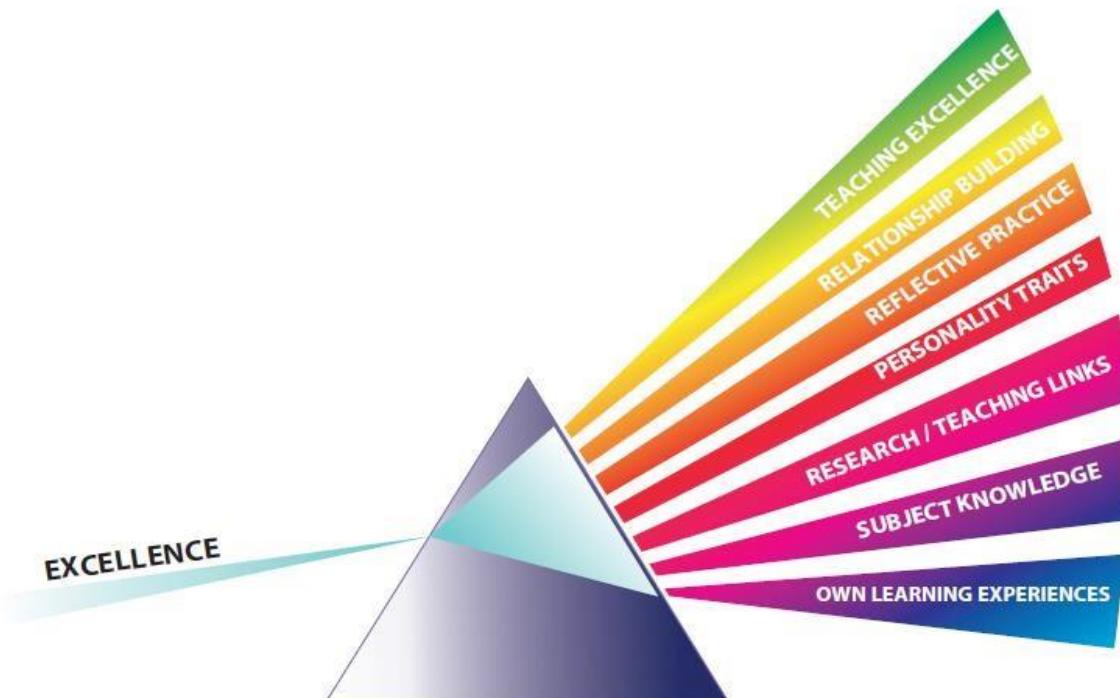


Figure 1 – Refracting Excellence

A key issue here is that, as Dixon and Pilkington (2017) justifiably highlight, unless ‘teaching excellence’ is clearly defined, how can we say for sure whether or not it is being demonstrated? Kane et al. (2004, p.285) draw attention to the fact that, even if the characteristics of ‘excellence’ *were* clear, it is not known *how* educators “develop these attributes”. McMillan (2007) optimistically asserts that such development can be achieved through “self-help guides, single-event workshops..., and longer staff development courses” (p.e210), although I would question whether excellence can be learned in this way alone, if indeed it can be learned.

Rewarding excellence

Despite the challenges of the discourse, there is certainly enthusiasm in higher education for recognising excellence. Many institutions, for instance, reward ‘teaching excellence’ (even if, in most cases, their criteria are poorly defined (McLean, 2001)), with similar awards existing at a national level in several countries, including NZ, Australia, the UK, Malaysia, South Africa, Canada, and the United States. Existing literature looks at various aspects of teaching awards and their impact, including those highlighted in Table 1.

There does not appear to be anyone who has looked at the evolution or development of award-winning teachers, and this is my main area of interest.

Chism (2006) asserts that teaching awards exist for three main reasons:

- i. To acknowledge institutional and/or national support for teaching in higher education (as separate from research)
- ii. To recognise teachers’ accomplishments, and
- iii. To encourage other staff to attain similar levels in their teaching

Mackenzie (2007) compares teaching excellence awards to “an apple for the teacher”, but wonders if the apple is “ripe and juicy or does it hide a worm?” (p.200). Similarly, Collins and Palmer (2005) ask whether rewarding teaching excellence is the metaphorical carrot or stick, arguing that, although awards can lead to promotion, they can “paradoxically take the recipients further away from teaching” (para. 10) into management or leadership roles, or even push awardees to leave the institution altogether, as a result of not gaining tenured positions, for instance, and/or due to the realisation that, in their institution, excellent teaching is not viewed as highly as research activity (Aron et al., 2000; Seppala & Smith, 2020). Brawer et al. (2006) found that awards were valued more by Heads of Department than by awardees themselves, and others have found awards to be viewed as divisive, demeaning, or even manipulative (Collins & Palmer, 2005; Dinhm & Scott, 2002; Madriaga & Morley, 2016).

Table 1 – Focus of existing literature on teaching excellence awards

Focus	Source
Conceptions of teaching excellence underlying different award schemes	Cattell-Holden, 2020; Chism, 2006; Dinham & Scott, 2002; Gibbs, 2007; Gunn & Fisk, 2013; Jackson, 2006; Lubicz-Nawrocka & Bunting, 2019; Miller-Young et al., 2020; Pusateri, 2020; Warren & Plumb, 1999
Advantages and limitations of different types of award scheme	Efimenko et al., 2018; Gunn & Fisk, 2013; Warren & Plumb, 1999
Measuring teaching excellence	Gunn & Fisk, 2013; Little et al., 2007; Mackenzie, 2007; Madriaga & Morley, 2016; McLean, 2001; Miller-Young et al., 2020
Tensions between teaching excellence and research activity (e.g. Are teaching excellence award winners also research active? Are winners happy to share their expertise? Is teaching as valued as research by institutions?)	Aron et al., 2000; Aucott et al., 1999; Canning, 2019; Cashmore et al., 2013; Charles, 2018; Gunn & Fisk, 2013; Halse et al., 2007; Mitten & Ross, 2018
Critical review of ‘teaching excellence’ in HE	Gravett & Kinchin, 2020; O’Leary & Wood, 2019; Skelton, 2004, 2005, 2009
Connections between excellence awards and processes of teaching evaluation	Carusetta, 2001; Efimenko et al., 2018; Gunn & Fisk, 2013
Impact on winners of national teaching awards	Aucott et al., 1999; Brawer et al., 2006; Dinham & Scott, 2002; Efimenko et al., 2018; Frame et al., 2006; Obeidat & Al-Hassan, 2009; Seppala & Smith, 2020; Warnes, 2019; Zhu & Turcic, 2018
Award winners’ conceptualisations of academic work and/or teaching effectiveness	Brew & Ginns, 2008; Carless, 2015; Dunkin & Precians, 1992; Huber, 2018; Kreber, 2000; Matheson, 2020; Milliron & Miles, 1998; Morris & Usher, 2011; Popp et al., 2011; Shephard et al., 2011; Warnes, 2019; Zou et al., 2020
Preparing an application for a teaching award	Schönwetter et al., 2018; Shephard et al., 2011
Institutions’ views on teaching awards, their benefits and drawbacks	Aucott et al., 1999; Mackenzie, 2007; Madriaga & Morley, 2016; McNaught & Anwyl, 1993; Seppala & Smith, 2020
Self-efficacy in award winners	Morris & Usher, 2011

How can something with such seemingly positive intentions not only have negative consequences but in fact lead “in some instances, [to] the negative outcomes of teaching excellence awards... outweigh[ing] the positive” (Mackenzie, 2007, p.190)? Stevenson et al. (2017), for example, consider the “frailty” of academic staff in the tertiary sector, given the focus on measurement of individual performance against “a concept that is so problematic to define” (p.64). Lipton (2020), reflecting on “gendered excellence”, suggests that “women’s participation continues to be measured and evaluated in relation to male norms” (p.65), and Bahia et al. report that focusing on quality and excellence can result in “a climate of mistrust” (2017, p.477). Some of the literature describes awards as tokenistic (Chalmers, 2011), “politically manipulative” (Mackenzie, 2007, p.190), or lacking credibility and legitimacy (Madriaga & Morley, 2016), with Seppala and Smith (2020, p.1398) outlining “cynicism about the purpose and effectiveness of teaching awards in recognising high-quality teaching” and suggesting that awards may also have “dysfunctional consequences” by singling out individuals and having an adverse impact on non-recipients. Mackenzie (2007) highlights how “one award recipient... accepted nomination for an award only after receiving assurance... that there would be no publicity and the new school he was moving to would not be informed” (p.201), with other awardees describing “increased pressure, discomfort, jealousy and resentment” (p.200). Feys et al. (2013), while conducting research in a large health care organisation, also found that recognising individual employees can lead to harmful attitudes and behaviours amongst other staff, though they do acknowledge that this can depend on the quality of the relationships within the team. Reporting on a Scottish initiative to introduce student-led teaching awards, Davies et al. (2012) highlight that there was some “dissent and scepticism” amongst staff, and “friction with senior management” (p.12); some staff went so far as to withdraw “from the scheme after being shortlisted or nominated... Reasons given focused either upon concerns about the awards amounting to a ‘popularity contest’, or stemmed from objections to students being responsible for the identification and reward of best practice” (p.12). This is mirrored in the responses of Madriaga and Morley’s (2016) research participants, describing an institutional teaching award scheme as “extremely divisive” (p.172) and even “deeply embarrassing” (p.171). Indeed, it could be argued that, for student-led awards, there is a risk of “‘crowd pleasing’ as opposed to challenging students” in their learning (Gourlay & Stevenson, 2017, p.392), which again demeans the value of quality teaching.

Shephard et al. (2011) describe themselves as “hesitant about the prescriptive nature of some of the criteria used to define excellence” in national teaching award contexts (p.48), and express concern that such award processes “may potentially limit higher education’s exploration of teaching excellence rather than expand it” (p.55). Having said this, they still found, as one might expect, that awardees saw the concept of ‘teaching excellence’ in many ways, including innovation, student retention, variety of learning activities, or authenticity and honesty (Shephard et al., 2011). This echoes the earlier argument that teaching excellence is not one easily definable skill or quality. Interestingly, some awardees did not consider themselves as “excellent” until they read the criteria for the award, and

“rel[ied] on the award process to define or at least illustrate teaching excellence as it might apply to them” (Shephard et al., 2011, pp.50-51). It could also be a result of educators at different institutions and in different contexts being used to different performance appraisal and teaching evaluation criteria, depending on the strategic goals and/or priorities of their respective organisations.

There are cultural factors at play here too. In some organisational cultures, it may be that applicants nominate themselves for an award, while in others this would be frowned upon and nominations would come from colleagues, leaders, and/or students. One could surmise from this that there are many educators who are examples of teaching excellence but may not have been recognised as such (by themselves or by their peers), or may not have the opportunity to apply for awards which recognise their excellence. Moreover, if an applicant does not achieve an award on their first attempt, for instance, but then succeeds at a later date, is it their teaching excellence that has improved, or is it their ability to represent their excellence through a portfolio of evidence in line with the award criteria? Gunn and Fisk (2013, p.25) claim that, wherever it may be in the world, teaching excellence award criteria are essentially built around four central themes: Planning and delivery, assessment, evaluating and reflecting, and contributing to the profession. Other literature, however, would suggest that it is not that simple.

Award criteria

The criteria for teaching excellence awards in different countries seem to be particularly vague. For the Canadian *National Teaching Fellowship Awards*, for instance, nominees must “demonstrate excellence in three equally weighted categories” (Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 2020): educational leadership, teaching excellence, and educational innovation, with the selection committee looking for applications which “demonstrate impact on students and institutions: those that tell a story, that “jump off the page.”” (Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 2020). In Australia, awards recognise “the enrichment of student experiences and the improvement of learning outcomes through innovation and the delivery of quality teaching over a sustained period” (Universities Australia, 2021), with awards available under seven subject domains, including Humanities and the Arts, Physical Sciences and related studies, and Social and Behavioural Sciences (Universities Australia, 2021). The South African *National Excellence in Learning and Teaching Awards* ask applicants to submit a “critical reflection on practice”, with content in four areas: reflection on students, context, knowledge, and growth (Higher Education Learning & Teaching Association of South Africa, 2020), in a written portfolio of “10 to 20 pages” (Higher Education Learning & Teaching Association of South Africa, n.d., p.3). The UK’s *National Teaching Fellowship Scheme* requires nominees to provide evidence against three equally weighted criteria: “Individual excellence..., raising the profile of excellence..., [and] developing excellence” (Advance HE, 2020), with reviewers “looking for evidence of reach, value and impact” (Advance HE, 2018, p.7). A small selection of

illustrative examples is given to help guide applicants, and a reviewer's rubric shows how applications are scored, but, as with all of these criteria, one is still left wondering exactly what teaching excellence looks like. It could even be argued that this lack of clarity around award criteria is perpetuating the problematic discourse, when awarding bodies could instead be collaborating to draw on the raft of successful applications in order to propose agreed elements of teaching excellence based on evidence.

Turning to NZ, the *Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards*, established in 2001 (Ako Aotearoa, n.d.-e), are administered by Ako Aotearoa, the National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence, with their primary goal being "to foster, promote and support the development of excellent tertiary teachers throughout New Zealand" (Ako Aotearoa, n.d.-c). In their revised guidelines for applicants (2021), an overview of the criteria for the awards states that:

The Committee will be looking for evidence that nominees (individuals or teams) have maintained, over a significant timeframe, teaching practices that exemplify excellence (above what is considered good practice), foster confidence, and promote effective learning appropriate to the particular context and level (Ako Aotearoa, n.d.-d, p.11).

It is worth re-iterating that, even in this case, the meaning of 'excellence' is simply described as being "above what is considered good practice" (Ako Aotearoa, n.d.-d, p.11). To better understand teaching excellence, then, both in general and in the tertiary context in NZ more particularly, we need to investigate the trajectories and stories of awardees.

Summary comment

All in all, I have been able to establish the research context and the value of inquiring into the stories of tertiary educators who have been recognised as 'excellent'. I have actively searched for and engaged with relevant academic literature, including that which focuses on professional practice and practitioner research, concepts of 'excellence' and 'teaching excellence', and reflective (and reflexive) practice; all of this both within the dynamic tertiary context in NZ, and on the wider international stage. I recognise that this is important in terms of informing my research outputs, but also in terms of my own continuing development as a leader in teacher education.

Chapter 3: Methodology

With the context set out, and having demonstrated the links between my current role, professional interests, and the project, I now turn to situating my chosen methodology within my own worldview and within the discipline of professional practice. I then investigate the literature around storytelling, narrative inquiry as a research methodology, and narratives on teacher education.

Theoretical Framework

With a constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology, I believe that knowledge is constructed subjectively and is open to interpretation, with individual learning affected by social interactions and by the contexts in which we live and work (Vygotsky, 1997), and new learning building upon what we already know (Bruner, 1960). This links to naturalism (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which Gubrium and Holstein define as "...a way of knowing that locates meaningful reality in the immediate settings of people's daily affairs" (1997, p.7).

Naturalists... accept that there is a reality but argue that it cannot be measured directly, only perceived by people, each of whom views it through the lens of his or her prior experience, knowledge, and expectations... What we know, then, is not objective; it is always filtered through people, always subjective. (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p.15)

This informs my thoughts around this research project, and my choice of "qualitative methods over quantitative...", because they are more adaptable to dealing with multiple... realities" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.40), with the emphasis being on individual lives and experiences (Ely, 1991; Hewitt-Taylor, 2001).

Qualitative research focuses on description or interpretation rather than measurement or quantification. I am not attempting to measure something or prove one fixed 'truth'. This is about "discovering what is to be found, rather than presupposing categorical designations into which the findings must fit" (Polkinghorne, 1990, p.4). I cannot claim that, through this research, I will generate a definitive theory on how people become excellent teachers, for instance; instead, I aim to "produce rounded understandings on the basis of rich, contextual and detailed data" (Mason, 2018, p.4). By providing a so-called 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of the qualitative data, findings should be richer and carry more meaning for readers (Creswell, 2014), for my team and institution, for the wider academic community, and for all who are interested in teaching and teacher development. This also fits with the concept of 'crystallization' (Richardson, 2000) which "provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic" (p.934). Sandelowski (2000) champions qualitative description as "a valuable and distinctive component of qualitative research" (p.339), and, citing Maxwell (1992), explains that:

Qualitative descriptive studies offer a comprehensive summary of an event in the everyday terms of those events. Researchers conducting such studies seek descriptive validity, or an accurate accounting of events that most people... observing the same event would agree is accurate, and interpretive validity, or an accurate accounting of the meanings participants attributed to those events that those participants would agree is accurate. (p.336)

How, though, can we best capture the complexity of the experiences, knowledge, and practice of multiple individuals, and draw meaning from it? I would say that we achieve this by using participants' own words, and by giving them the opportunity to tell the stories of their lives and careers. The foundations of teaching and teacher development lie in personal experience (Lyle, 2009), with Cole and Knowles emphasising "the autobiographical nature of teaching" (2000, p.9). We use narratives to share our experiences, identities, points of view, explanations, and justifications (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; O'Toole, 2018).

As the research I am undertaking involves the experiences and perceptions of others, the most appropriate way to collect data is through interviewing. Interviews are "narrative occasions" (Riessman, 2008, p.23), and will allow me to re-tell stories of colleagues' lives and careers, and to capture their respective "critical moments" (Pennycook, 2004, p.330), including in their own interactions with their colleagues, mentors, and students. Cohen et al. (2011, p.455) cite Bauman (1986) when they assert that "stories, being rich in the subjective involvement of the storyteller, offer an opportunity for the researcher to gather authentic, rich and 'respectable' data". Furthermore, "the sharing of common stories creates an interpretive community... [that promotes] cultural cohesion" (Bruner, 2002, p.25). Coles (1989, p.28) asks how we might "encompass in our minds the complexity of some lived moments in life?... You don't do that with theories. You don't do that with a system of ideas. You do it with a story".

All teachers have their own stock of stories, examples, and moments, remembered with a shudder or a smile, that contribute to their sense of professional identity and guide their actions... The meaning is often deeply personal, ...is immediately felt or understood, and is often invested with considerable emotion. (Coldron & Smith, 1999, p.719)

Narrative inquiries are built around "a particular wonder, a research puzzle... [that] carries more of a sense of search, a 're-search', a searching again... [and a] sense of continual reformulation of an inquiry" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.124). This fits with my own constructivist worldview, and with the social constructivist view of narratives as multiple, emerging, and contextual (Creswell, 2007; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Juntrasook, 2015; Sparkes & Smith, 2008).

Narrative inquiry provides researchers with the opportunity to understand “how the personal and social are entwined over time in [people’s] lives... [and how] individual experiences are shaped by the larger social, cultural and institutional narratives within which they live and have lived” (Clandinin, 2006, p.51). This is a good fit with my own constructivist ontology, and my belief that individuals are impacted by their interactions with others, and by the contexts in which they live and work.

In addition, as a practitioner-researcher, I support Engeström’s argument that learning at work is situation specific, and that “people and organizations are all the time learning something that is not stable, not even defined or understood ahead of time” (2001, p.137); you cannot consider the individual’s learning without considering the socio-cultural context. This ties in with both situated learning (Lave, 1988; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), which emphasises “the social, collective and contextual nature of learning” (Smith & Martin, 2014, p.286), and with learning in the workplace (Eraut, 1994, 2000, 2004, 2007).

I believe that if people are telling me their story, and I am retelling it, then it is important for it to be a situated process of co-constructing knowledge with my storytellers, so that their own voices are preserved within my own retelling (Ellingson, 2009). This also fits within my constructivist theoretical framework, because the knowledge I am creating with them is situated and is ‘real world’ knowledge. Furthermore, I am providing participants with the opportunity to re-visit aspects of their individual stories, and to reflect on how these are interpreted and re-interpreted.

In professional practice, one of the ways in which people make sense of what happens in the workplace is through reflection (Schön, 1983; Smith & Martin, 2014). As a researcher, I too am needing to be reflective at many points (and levels) within this project, including, for example, while collecting data, analysing data, and while writing up my findings (Ellingson, 2009). Done well, this should “[allow] the reader insights into influences which have shaped the researcher/writer, and how these have influenced the inquiry” (Kearney & Andrew, 2019, p.351). With the researcher being a legitimate “source of knowledge” (Iacono et al., 2009, p.45) and a “key instrument” (Creswell, 2007, p.38), multiple authors (including Banister et al., 2011; Harris, 2001; Lunsford et al., 1996) agree that the researcher has an important place in social science research.

A visual representation of my theoretical framework can be seen in Figure 2.

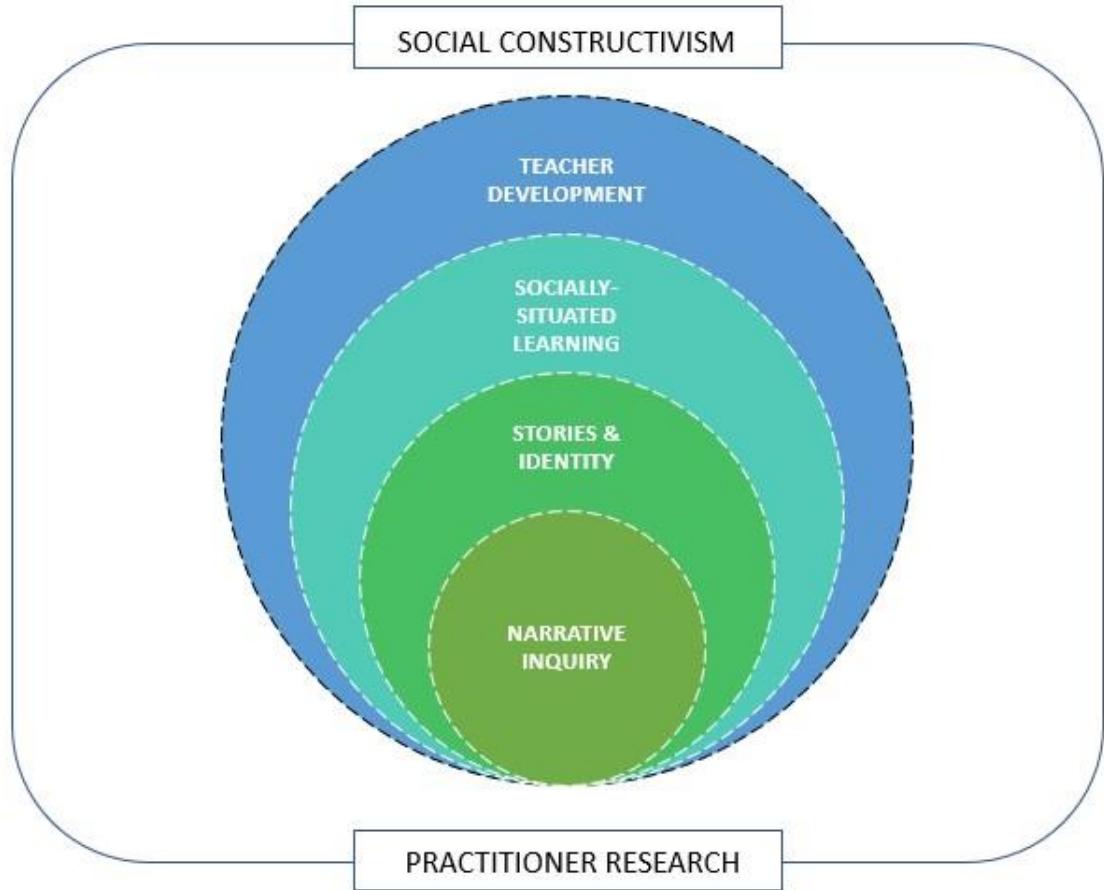


Figure 2 – Theoretical Framework

Narrative inquiry

Scholars in the field of narrative inquiry broadly agree that we live and make sense of our lives through stories (Bruner, 1986, 2002; Chase, 2003; Clandinin, 2007; Garvis, 2015; Noddings & Witherell, 1991; Polkinghorne, 1988, 1995; Squire, 2008):

Human beings have lived out and told stories about that living for as long as we could talk. And then we have talked about the stories we tell for almost as long. These lived and told stories and the talk about the stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another's assistance in building lives and communities. (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p.35)

Our stories are essential to our identity and personality (Fish, 2020; Langellier, 2001; McAdams et al., 2006; Polkinghorne, 1988), and give life “an overall sense of coherence and purpose” (McAdams et al., 2006, p.1372). As Clandinin and Rosiek explain, “narrative inquirers study an individual’s experience in the world and, through the study, seek ways of enriching and transforming that experience for themselves and others” (2007, p.42). In addition, people in different contexts and locations can relate to narrative (De Fina &

Georgakopoulou, 2012; Gamson, 2002). Narratives, then, allow us to gain insight into people's lived experiences (Bamberg, 2012; Bochner, 2000; Garvis, 2015; Lewis, 2018), and to communicate these to a larger audience (Bochner, 2012; Polkinghorne, 1997; Riessman, 2008). "For narratives to flourish, there must be a community to hear; ...for communities to hear, there must be stories which weave together their history, their identity... The one – community – feeds upon the other – story" (Plummer, 1995, p.87). This is one outcome I hope for in gathering stories of tertiary teachers who have been recognised as excellent.

Narrative inquiry enables systematic gathering, analysis, and representation of people's stories, and, although cross-disciplinary (Clandinin, 2006; Kearney & Andrew, 2019; Wells, 2011), is increasingly used in educational research (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Huber et al., 2013; Webster & Mertova, 2007), with stories providing "an unparalleled method of reaching practitioners' mindsets" (Thody, 1997, p.331). Expert teachers have "a rich store of situated or storied knowledge of curriculum content, classroom social processes, academic tasks, and students' understandings and intentions" (Carter, 1993, p.7), and it is this store that I hope to draw on in exploring the stories of award-winning teachers. In addition, Clandinin (2009) emphasises "the power and importance of engaging teachers and teacher educators in inquiring into their past and present stories" (p.xii), believing that they can provide insights into teaching and teacher development, and "models of possibility" (p.xiii). In other words, we can learn about the past and present experiences of our participant teachers and educators, and look to the future to consider how their learning might be applied more broadly.

Narrative inquiry also acknowledges that human experiences are constantly in a state of flux (Lemley & Mitchell, 2012; Lewis, 2018). Our stories are dynamic and under constant revision (Freeman, 1998; Riessman, 2002); there is no clear beginning and ending. Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p.16) draw on Geertz's (1995) parade image to emphasise that it is "impossible to look at one event or one time without seeing the event or time nested within the wholeness of his metaphorical parade". Geertz himself highlights how this can give the observer or listener "an uncomfortable sense of having come too late and arrived too early" (1995, p.4). In other words, through our own day-to-day behaviour and interactions, we enter others' stories "in the midst" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.20) of those stories being lived and told. Furthermore, we look back on past 'chapters' from our present position (Clandinin & Huber, 2010; Geertz, 1995; Riessman, 2002); our telling of a story today is likely to differ from our telling of that story, for instance, a year ago (or a year from now). This brings to mind Kierkegaard's philosophy (1843/2008, p.179) that "life must be understood backward. But... it must be lived forward". In my research project, this will realise itself as different participants telling their stories from different periods and moments in their lives, with different 'players' and interactions.

Thinking about the bi-cultural New Zealand context and kaupapa Māori, stories and storytellers are a core part of Māori culture and of learning. Reflecting on the potential for

narratives to contribute to knowledge, Bruner (1996, p.15) emphasises that “it is through our own narratives that we principally construct a version of ourselves in the world and it is through its narrative that a culture provides modes of identity and agency to its members”. Lee (2009, p.1) highlights that “Pūrākau, a traditional form of Māori narrative, contains philosophical thought, epistemological constructs, cultural codes, and worldviews that are fundamental to... identity as Māori”. In addition, for Māori, “identity is... inextricably bound to whānau and whenua relationships, to the marae and the value system and language which holds these things together” (Tuhiwai Smith, 2015, p.48), and narratives are an important way of ensuring knowledge is handed down through generations (Cliffe-Tautari, 2020; Lee, 2005). Māori filmmaker Merita Mita agrees: “We must not overlook the fact that each of us is born with story, and each of us has responsibility to pass those stories on” (2000, p.8). In the research context, Ware et al. (2018) explain that “narrative-based inquiry has attracted the attention of indigenous scholars seeking research methodologies that complement indigenous research principles and methods of knowledge transmission” (p.46), with “Māori researchers... utilising approaches based on key principles of Māori research, oral traditions and narrative inquiry to express experiences as Māori” (p.45). Moreover, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and Lee (2005, 2009) suggest that stories and ways of knowing should inform indigenous pedagogy. In summary, then, although I can in no way claim to have an in-depth knowledge of kaupapa Māori, my reading around this and my conversations with colleagues in Otago Polytechnic’s Office of the Kaitohutohu suggest that this methodology aligns with indigenous ways of being in the world and of seeing the world.

Three-dimensional narratives

The importance of three-dimensional narratives, incorporating temporality or continuity (past, present, and future), interaction (personal and social), and place (situation) is emphasised by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). This draws on Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience, built around continuity and interaction, and Dewey’s core belief that learning and experience are inherently inter-connected (Beard, 2018; Hutchinson, 2015). “The concept of experience also has an ideological function: faith in an individual’s capacity to grow and learn” (Miittinen, 2000, p.54), which also fits with my own learning journey.

Dewey’s first criterion of experience, the principle of continuity, contends that we are all on a continuum: “Time does not stop and start... but flows with the rhythms of lived experience” (Andrew & Le Rossignol, 2017, p.239). We can look at our stories and see how past experiences affect current ones; similarly, we can look to the future and consider the directions in which our experiences may take us. Furthermore, as we live our lives, “experiences grow out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences. Wherever one positions oneself in that continuum... each point has a past experiential base and leads to an experiential future” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.2). Bateson (1994, p.11) echoes this idea when she describes “the process of spiralling through memory to weave

connection out of incident” as being key to learning. Clandinin and Huber (2010) remind researchers that paying attention to ‘temporality’, then, requires them to consider the past, present, and future both of their own lives and those of their participants.

Dewey’s second criterion of experience, interaction, refers to the interaction between a person’s internal conditions (such as hopes, feelings, attitudes, or needs), and external conditions or environment (Beard, 2018; Hutchinson, 2015): “People are individuals and need to be understood as such, but they cannot be understood only as individuals. They are always in relation, always in a social context” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.2). This includes the interaction during the research process. Clandinin (2006) highlights that narrative inquirers need to make sense of their own experiences, participants’ experiences, and the joint experience of the inquiry itself. My involvement in the retelling of stories shows the relationship that I have with those whose stories I am telling; the commonality adds richness to my telling. I return to this idea when discussing the role of the narrative inquirer.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) specify a third element, place (or situation), as essential to narrative inquiry. For them, place is “the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequences of places where the inquiry and events take place” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p.480). As Clandinin later argues, “people, place, and stories are inextricably linked” (2013, p.41). While, for Dewey, this element of place falls under ‘interaction’ in his two-dimensional space, Clandinin and Connelly prefer to draw it out in their three-dimensional narrative inquiry space:

[A metaphorical space], with temporality along one dimension, the personal and the social along a second dimension, and place along a third. Using this set of terms, any particular inquiry is defined by this three-dimensional space: studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters; they focus on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and they occur in specific places or sequences of places. (2000, p.50)

By collecting multiple stories from the same setting, we can reveal “recurrent patterns concerning collective phenomena or share collective experience in a particular milieu” (Bertaux, 1995, p.2). Having said that, I completely agree with Bochner (2000), when he highlights that “in the social sciences, ...in our hearts, if not in our minds, we know that the phenomena we study are messy, complicated, uncertain, and soft” (p.267), and that, with narratives, our purpose is “to extract meaning from experience rather than to depict experience exactly as it was lived” (p.270). Polkinghorne (2005, p.138) would concur: “Human experience is a difficult area to study. It is multi-layered and complex; it is an ongoing flow... that cannot be halted for the benefit of researchers”. This takes us back to Geertz’s (1995) parade image, and the idea that the researcher sees part of the story, but not what has come before, nor what will follow.

Each of these elements – continuity, interaction, and place – fits with my own beliefs and theoretical framework.

Sharing stories

Writing about teacher education for the twenty-first century, Darling-Hammond highlights the importance of educators taking “responsibility for contributing what they learn not only to their own practice but also that of their colleagues... Preparing teachers as classroom researchers and expert collaborators who can learn from one another is essential” (2006, pp.304-305). Daniels (2017) would agree: Educators “need to develop their practice continually. They need skills for reflecting, reasoning, applying new ideas, and learning from their practice *and from those with whom they work*” (p.179, emphasis added). Similarly, Canning and Callan (2010) urge educators to promote sharing knowledge, rather than hoarding it. These ideas are supported by arguments that storytelling is important for adult learners (Caminotti & Gray, 2012; Mann et al., 2017). “Every retelling of a story can bring a new perspective and allows knowledge to be shared in an authentic way” (Muncey, 2010, p.130). For Ellis and Bochner,

[stories] long to be used rather than analysed; to be told and retold rather than theorized and settled; to offer lessons for further conversation rather than undebatable conclusions; and to substitute the companionship of intimate detail for the loneliness of abstracted facts. (2003, p.218).

It is my hope that, as participants tell their stories, they will gain new perspectives on their experiences, on their practice, and on their achievements, with Benson et al. (2018) identifying narrative inquiry as a means of reflection. McDrury and Alterio (2002) draw on the example of “nurse educators, such as Benner (1984), [who] contend that stories are a source of power and that sharing them often has a transformative effect on tellers and listeners” (p36). They go on to assert that “working with stories... provides tellers and listeners with opportunities to have in-depth conversations about their experiences and to process them in ways which may lead to insight and bring about thoughtful change to practice” (McDrury & Alterio, 2002, p.128). It is precisely this insight and change to practice that I am seeking, to enable me to lead the future development of outstanding educators.

The role of the narrative inquirer

In narrative inquiry, the researcher and the participant collaborate to elicit and re-tell stories of experience, and the learning acquired as a result. Naturally, as Lemley and Mitchell state, “the participant’s voice is central to the telling” of their story (2012, p.222), but the process is nevertheless a co-operative one (Juntrasook, 2015; Reason & Hawkins, 1988). Researchers “need to ask about participants’ experiences, thoughts, and feelings..., and the relationships we construct with interviewees affect the quality of their responses” (Chase, 2003, p.275). Clandinin and Connelly see narrative inquiry as a transactional

experience, with a trio of players: the narrator, the listener (or reader), and the environment: It is “the actual transition between all three that is communicated through a narrative that provides rich and meaningful information” (2000, p.232). Ongoing negotiation with participants, for example, through providing the opportunity for participants to check transcripts and texts based on their conversations, is key (Clandinin & Huber, 2010); it enables the researcher to ensure that the participant’s voice remains central, and is not overshadowed by the researcher’s perspective. Holley and Colyar (2009, p.680) remind us that “the responsibility of the researcher does not end with ensuring the trustworthiness or ethical soundness of one’s work. This responsibility extends to deliberate choices related to writing that position the text as an informed reflection of the participants’ reality”. The researcher, then, is a narrator of participants’ stories. I appreciate Atkinson’s (1998, p.9) perspective on this: “The interviewee is a storyteller, the narrator of the story being told, whereas the interviewer is a guide, or director, in this process. The two together are collaborators, composing and constructing a story the teller can be pleased with”. It is essential to me that my participants are pleased and happy with my account of their respective stories.

Having said this, researchers do need to acknowledge their own subjectivity: “As narrative inquirers engage in inquiry, they realize that they, too, are positioned on this landscape and both shape and are shaped by the landscape” (Clandinin, 2006, p.47). Our experiences and observations are influenced by our life experience, our beliefs, and our cultural expectations, “like a pair of glasses on our nose through which we see whatever we look at” (Wittgenstein, 2010, p.cxxiii). The reflexive interviewer needs to understand their own biases and assumptions (Finlay, 2002b; Roulston, 2010), and interrogate how their voice impacts on the re-telling of stories. Drake and Heath (2011, p.46) liken this to a photograph, with the “choices made by the photographer” affecting whether it is recognisable to participants or not. The key here, as previously stated, will be my ability to move back and forward along the insider-outsider continuum through my use of reflective practice and reflexivity.

As already mentioned, in narrative inquiry, ongoing negotiation between researcher and participants is key. Furthermore, as Riessman (2002, p.696) highlights, the narrative approach “does not assume objectivity; rather, it privileges positionality and subjectivity”. By describing and reflecting upon my own experiences, I recognise that I am a “practitioner as researcher” (Bensimon et al., 2004, p.105), a “positioned subject” (Rosaldo, 1989, p.19).

[A researcher’s] positionality not only shapes their work, but influences their interpretation, understanding, and, ultimately, their belief in the truthfulness and validity of other’s research that they read or are exposed to... Open and honest disclosure and exposition of positionality should show where and how the researcher believes that they have, or may have, influenced their research. The reader should then be able to make a better-informed judgment as to the

researcher's influence on the research process and how 'truthful' they feel the research data is. (Holmes, 2020, p.3)

This enables the reader to situate me socially, thereby gaining insight into both my position as an insider in education generally, and in tertiary education in NZ specifically, to appreciate my interest in telling the stories of other educators, to follow my research argument, and, ultimately, to form their own opinion. While I would hope that this brings plausibility (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) or believability (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995) to my research and findings, the reader also brings their life experiences, beliefs, and values into the mix (Ellingson, 2009), and no writer can determine what a reader will or will not take from their text (Barthes, 1977). In this sense, one hopes that the reader too becomes a reflexive participant.

I now turn to outlining the ethical considerations of this project. This includes the Māori consultation undertaken to ensure I was respecting

- OP's Māori Strategic Framework, first established in 2006 (Otago Polytechnic, n.d.-a), as one of the frameworks (alongside Learner Capability, and Sustainable Practice) which guide our day-to-day work, and
- the key principles of partnership, participation, and protection, as expressed in the Treaty of Waitangi.

I then move to describing the methods used during the collection, analysis, and presentation of data in this project.

Ethical considerations

Ethical guidelines in research vary depending on the subject matter, but generally revolve around four key areas: ensuring no harm comes to participants, ensuring participants have full understanding and have given informed consent, conducting research with integrity, and respecting the laws of the land (Denscombe, 2014). In narrative inquiry, ethics are about "negotiation, respect, mutuality and openness to multiple voices" (Clandinin, 2006, p.52). The main ethical considerations in this project revolve around obtaining participants' informed consent and protecting participants from any harm (Check & Schutt, 2011; Lodico et al., 2010). Consent "is not a one-off event but must be continuously renegotiated. The right to withdraw, or not to participate in some part of the research, must be respected" (Punch, 2009, p.51). Participation in this research has been voluntary, and participants have had the option to withdraw from the project at any stage.

The names and contact details of all national awardees are publicly available via the *Ako Aotearoa Academy of Tertiary Teaching Excellence* website (Ako Aotearoa, n.d.-a). At the time of writing, eighteen awardees currently work at Otago Polytechnic; all were invited to participate in this project. The majority of potential participants are based in Dunedin, with one awardee located in Central Otago. My hope was that there would be ten to twelve

participants in the project; this is an appropriate number for an exploratory narrative inquiry, and, from a pragmatic perspective, was a realistic goal.

No potential participants are direct reports to the researcher (or vice versa), so there is no formal power imbalance evident. One awardee is on the researcher's mentoring team for the project. In discussion with all three mentors, it was felt that this would not create any issues around conflict of interest, and that it was appropriate for the staff member in question to be invited to participate in the telling of their story. Furthermore, one other awardee is likely to be sitting on many doctoral panels at Otago Polytechnic. Again, the researcher's mentoring team was confident that it was appropriate for this person to be included in the invitation to participate.

In this research project, on the one hand I have the advantage of being an 'insider'; part of the same culture and profession (Hellawell, 2006), understanding the context of higher education in general and that of Otago Polytechnic in particular. As Drake and Heath highlight, "insider research depends upon the researcher having some experience or insight into the worlds in which the research is being undertaken" (2011, p.1). This allows me to relate to the stories of participants, and to link their experiences with my own. On the other hand, some participants may view me as an 'outsider', not born and raised in NZ, and/or external to their department or field. It could be argued that I am a complex combination of both (Humphrey, 2007; Labaree, 2002).

The practitioner researcher maintains a fluid and flexible stance with respect to each domain, behaving sometimes as a professional, sometimes as a researcher and at all times as an author who is making meaning out of the interactions and presenting them to an external audience. (Drake & Heath, 2011, p.2)

While it is important to acknowledge my position as researcher, and how I may be perceived, I have felt confident throughout that this would not pose any significant challenges during the project.

It was made clear from the outset (in the information sheet and consent form) that participants would have a choice as to whether they would be named in research outputs, or whether pseudonyms would be used. My aim has been to ensure complete consistency in any outputs (in other words, if any awardees did not wish to be named, then pseudonyms would be used for all participants). Having said this, as already mentioned, the names of all Tertiary Teaching Excellence awardees are publicly available, and this list could be filtered by region and/or by institution. The communities both of awardees and of Otago Polytechnic staff are relatively small, and participants may be easily identifiable (within the OP community) from their respective narratives.

There is no perceived risk of harm, given that the project is recognising participants' excellence in practice. Furthermore, participants have had the opportunity to check their own narratives in full before they are shared publicly. During the thematic analysis stage of the project, the confidentiality and anonymity of participants has been respected and protected, to the best of my ability.

Research has been undertaken in a culturally-sensitive and appropriate manner, respecting differences and ensuring privacy, in full discussion and partnership with participants. Prior to each interview, I made sure that participants had sufficient time to consult with their tangata whenua should they wish to do so. It was not possible to predict what would be shared during the one-to-one interviews, given the narrative nature of the conversations, and the different lives and experiences of each participant. While every effort was made to ensure participants were comfortable and at ease during the one-to-one interviews, I am aware of the impact that the narrative methodology can have on participants (for instance, potential vulnerability of the participant when telling aspects of their story, which could produce an emotional response). I invited participants, if they so wished, to take a break, ask for the audio-recording to be switched off, or stop the interview. I was also able to identify potential sources of support away from the research project.

The project needed to respect the identities of people no longer with us. I knew that it was very possible that participants might talk about kaumātua and/or mentors who have passed away. Being respectful of these people was an important part of my approach, and I negotiated with individual participants around how they would like this to happen.

Since beginning data collection, out of respect for my participants, I have sent regular emails ([Appendix A](#)) with updates on progress and to advise them of my next steps. As Tuhiwai Smith (2015, p.51) reminds us, "dialogue and feedback continually inform research as an activity and [are] part of the new ethics and social realities for researchers", and I feel this also helps to build and maintain trust between researcher(s) and participant(s).

The results of this research will be appropriately disseminated (including to participants), and the rights of participants with regard to personal data will be respected.

Approval from the Otago Polytechnic Research Ethics Committee was granted on 29th March 2019 ([Appendix B](#)).

Māori consultation

As a first step in the consultation process, I invited the 'Curriculum and Culture' leader within OP's Office of the Kaitohutohu, to a discussion over coffee (15 January 2019). We talked through my project, and my thoughts on different stages of the project (including approaching participants, conducting semi-structured interviews, and sharing stories with participants for checking). Our conversation was very positive and encouraging, and my

colleague expressed no significant concerns about the project or the proposed methodology. I then sent an e-mail to the Kaitohutohu Office, outlining my planned research and setting out my responses to four key questions ([Appendix C](#)). Feedback ([Appendix D](#)) was received in early March 2019. It included some helpful suggestions around, for instance, the significance of culturally responsive learning environments and how these may have contributed towards teaching excellence, as well as the importance of cultural consideration when arranging potential interviews, and asking permission to take any photographs.

I also considered the *Ngāi Tahu 2025* vision document, developed by Ngāi Tahu, the principal Māori tribe of New Zealand's South Island, which calls for "an environment of life-long learning" to "provide choices and give whānau the opportunity to create their own destiny" (Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, 1997, p.32). This resonates with my own beliefs around life-long learning, and around the emancipatory nature of education.

Method

My intention here is to set out the practical steps I took to gather and analyse my research data. It is important to remember that "data collection and analysis are interwoven in qualitative research" (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001, p.40), so these are not perfectly discrete, isolated phases: "Analysis occurs everywhere and all the time" (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014, p.717). I was, for example, already noticing themes and elements of interest during participant interviews, and making a note of these in my own reflections. In reality, this was about capturing the stories of my participants, allowing them flexibility in their telling, and working with them at three key stages to ensure participants were happy that their story was reflecting their experiences, practice, and reflections on teaching excellence.

Data collection

Preparation and planning

All eighteen awardees currently working at Otago Polytechnic were sent an e-mail ([Appendix E](#)), together with the Information Sheet for potential participants ([Appendix F](#)), explaining the project and inviting them to participate. At this stage, I created a spreadsheet for myself setting out invitees' names, contact details, and the date that my initial e-mail was sent. This enabled me to note responses and document any action required on my part. Throughout the project, from that point on, the spreadsheet proved invaluable in keeping track of who had responded to what, when and where our discussions were scheduled, who had returned their transcript after checking, and so on.

Four people declined the invitation to participate, on the basis of their workload and availability. One additional invitee had just moved to the other end of the country and participating in person was going to be difficult. Although we discussed the option of videoconferencing, we both felt that this may not be the same experience as we would hope for in a face-to-face conversation, and the staff member ultimately declined the

invitation. Interestingly, perhaps, those who declined were all people with whom I did not really have an existing professional relationship. All other thirteen invitees were people that I had worked with in varying capacities (some more so than others), and were happy to be involved, with no queries arising at this stage. I was very pleased both with this response rate (72% positive) and with the fact that I had heard back from everyone within one week of sending the initial e-mail. I felt reassured that my project could go ahead! Although “trust is a highly complex, multidimensional, and abstract phenomenon” (Costa & Anderson, 2011, p.122), the fact that these colleagues responded positively to my invitation suggests that they perceive me as trustworthy, and are willing to open up and share their respective stories. This kind of trust is a key element of community of practice theory, and when developing team and/or organisational cultures (Costa & Anderson, 2011).

Next, I created a document setting out potential interview slots, on different days of the week and at different times of day, based on my availability over the coming month. Saving this document to the cloud and sharing the internet link meant that participants could add their name against a preferred appointment, and others would be able to see what was still available. There was no breach of protecting participants’ identity here, as all awardees know each other through both the OP community and the Ako Academy network.

Once invitees had expressed initial interest in participating, I sent a follow-up e-mail, including the link to the appointment schedule, and attaching the Participant Consent Form ([Appendix G](#)). Some invitees sent through a calendar appointment (via Outlook) once they had put their name against a particular date and time; I did the same for other invitees, so that both myself and each participant had our discussion slot included in their work calendar, and I could add or amend location information, if need be. Invitees were given an option to indicate their preferred meeting location, but almost all were happy for me to choose. I then booked meeting rooms which I felt were both comfortable and discreet, and were located on a different part of campus to the participant’s usual workspace, as I did not want anyone feeling conspicuous or overly self-conscious at any point during this process. This worked for all but one appointment, which ended up taking place in the participant’s office, at their request. Again, I tracked responses and action points in my planning spreadsheet. I also blocked out 30 minutes in my calendar immediately before each meeting (to allow for last-minute preparations) and immediately after (to allow me to record my own reflections on the discussion).

One or two days before each appointment, I sent the participant a reminder e-mail, confirming the day, time, and location of our meeting. This also enabled me to ask them to bring their signed consent form (if they had not already returned it), and to ask about their drink preference (coffee, tea...) for the day. In addition, it enabled participants to reschedule, if something had come up, so flexibility and understanding here was important. In their article on ‘Developing reflective interviewers and reflexive researchers’, Roulston et al. (2008, p.235) outline how doctoral students learned something “about the tension

between thorough preparation and the flexibility and perseverance needed when plans do not unfold as anticipated”, with one student reflecting, “ultimately, I learned not to ‘take myself too seriously’ because Murphy’s Law (anything that can go wrong will go wrong) is alive and well”.

On the day itself, I checked the room was clean and tidy, and that water was available for us both. I also checked that both recording devices (a digital voice recorder and a mobile phone) were fully charged and working as expected. My experience as an examiner in oral language examinations in previous roles had taught me to be thorough with this planning, and I chose to use two devices in case there was a problem with one of them during any given conversation. As a common courtesy, I also ensured that I was in the meeting room before the participant arrived.

Participant Interviews

One semi-structured interview was conducted with each of the thirteen participants (seven female and six male, ranging in age between 44 and 64 years old), on a one-to-one basis. Conversations lasted between 44 minutes and 1 hour 22 minutes, with an average length of 1 hour and 4 minutes. A total of 13 hours and 58 minutes of discussion took place. Some pre-planned questions, focusing on key areas including the educator, their life experience and career, the community, and reflections on teaching excellence, were set out in an interview guide / prompt sheet ([Appendix H](#)) to provide a skeleton structure and consistency to the interview process. It was important for participants’ stories to emerge, so guiding questions were reframed as the conversation developed. Questions were not shared with participants ahead of time, so as not to affect the naturally developing conversations and stories.

Participants were invited to bring to their interview one or two photographs or objects, which hold special meaning for them as an educator. Richardson and MacLeod (2010, p.67) highlight how these can “provide a sense of context about where we have come from and can perhaps signal where we are going”, and that they can communicate “much more effectively than the written word”. In the spirit of phenomenography, giving participants an opportunity to provide their own insights into the story/ies behind each artefact, and to reflect on their meaning, complements the narrative nature of the conversation. If participants were willing, photographs of the meaningful objects are included in research outputs alongside the textual presentation of each participant’s story.

I noted in my research diary that I felt quite nervous before the first two interviews in particular. Although I have done a lot of recruitment interviewing at different times during my career, I had never done participant interviews for research purposes. Just as with job applicants, I wanted my participants to feel comfortable and at ease during our discussion, but I also wanted to capture their experiences to the best of my ability. Would I be agile

enough to adapt my questions to the conversation in hand? How much would my participants be willing to share?

To capture my own thoughts, I recorded them on one of my devices once the discussion was over and the participant had left the room. After my first interview, for example, I spoke about not asking every question on my interview guide/prompt sheet, as I felt that the topic had already been covered. In a sense, I was regarding the first conversation as a ‘pilot’, in terms of my own skills as interviewer, and my ability to adapt questions naturally as part of the discussion. I commented that, “I didn’t feel entirely relaxed, but my participant seemed comfortable and happy to talk. He gave lovely, developed answers to most things, so that was really positive”. After my second interview, my notes to self highlighted that “it was interesting to see some similarities in participants’ stories, but also lots of differences, and it will be good to look at those in more detail when I get to it”.

Once I had a couple of interviews under my belt, I began to feel more comfortable, though there was still the occasional ‘glitch’ here and there. I was a little disappointed, for instance, during one conversation when I realised that I was focusing so much on what my participant was saying that I forgot the follow-up questions I had initially thought of as they were talking. After that, I began to jot down key words to remind me, so that it would not happen again. On another day, in my recorded reflections, I noted that “I was a bit thrown. It didn’t seem to flow nicely. I’ll have to see what comes through when I listen back to it”. When I did listen again to the conversation, yes, the pauses were perhaps a little longer than usual, but it did not sound uncomfortable or strained in any way. In another interview, a participant answered a different question to the one that I had asked. They had been talking about seeing learners have ‘lightbulb moments’ when they suddenly realise they have understood something, and how motivating that can be (for both learner and teacher). I asked whether there had been people in the participant’s life that had had that same effect on them, but it was understood as my asking whether the participant had had this impact on many learners (still valuable information in itself). While I listened to them talking, I made a quick note to myself to see if I could phrase the question more clearly in future, should it come up; one example of the need for reflection-in-action during participant interviews.

Sometimes, I could ask an initial question and the response flowed clearly and felt fully developed. At other times, I asked follow-up questions, including “Why do you think that was?”, “You mentioned....., could you tell me more about that?”, “Could you give me an example?”, “In what way?”, and “How did that come about?”. These give some idea of how I tried to enable the conversation to unfurl gradually and naturally, and to adapt follow-up questions appropriately.

During one conversation, the participant tapped a pencil against the table throughout. At the time, I did not think anything of it, but the audio recordings had picked up every tap at

almost the same level as our voices. This made transcribing our discussion even more of a lengthy process than usual, with me navigating around the percussive sounds! After that, while pencil and paper were still available to participants, I moved them out of easy reach.

Almost all participants seemed relaxed and open throughout our conversations. I am sure that having an existing professional relationship, or at least a mutual understanding of the person and their role, helped with this (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Taylor, 2011). I can relate to a lot of what participants describe happening in and around their classrooms because I have experienced the same or similar things. Sikes and Potts (2008, p.177) explain:

Inside researchers readily know the language of those being studied, along with its particular jargon, and are more likely to empathise with those they study because of in-depth understanding of them, less likely to foster distrust and hostility among those they study, are often more willing to discuss private knowledge with those who are personally part of their world, are often more likely to understand the events under investigation, and... often more likely to volunteer information to them than they would to outsiders.

I know that there have been instances when I have nodded as a participant is talking, not simply as an indication of active listening but because of a sense of empathy. Harris (2001, p.748), citing Oakley (1979), asserts that “the research process and the generation of knowledge can be enriched when the principal researcher has similar experiences to those she is studying and can empathise with them”. One recurring example of this is participants commenting on how they used to worry about the detail and timings in lesson plans, in the early stages of their career. I too can remember trying to follow a lesson plan almost as if it were a script, particularly while on placements during my PGCE, and this always makes me smile now.

While Bourdieu (1988) draws attention to the difficulties of conducting research in the field in which you also work, Atkins and Wallace (2012) highlight how common this is in educational research, “particularly that which is undertaken as part of postgraduate study” (p.48). Wellington and Sikes (2006, p.725) suggest that this calls on the postgraduate learner to “operate in two different communities of practice”, one as a professional, and the other as a researcher or scholar. Returning to the insider-outsider continuum (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Labaree, 2002; Milligan, 2016, Taylor, 2011) referred to earlier, or the argument that “‘insiderness’ is not a fixed value” (Trowler, 2011, para. 3), these two communities of practice need not be mutually exclusive, and my approach to the research process acknowledges my insider-outsider role. This is important in research when we are striving to be “systematic, credible, verifiable, justifiable, useful, valuable, and ‘trustworthy’” (Wellington, 2000, p.14).

Transcription

Interviews were audio-recorded, and then I transcribed them. The main reason for transcribing the interviews myself was so that I could engage deeply with their content from the outset (O’Leary, 2014), and start to familiarise myself with the data; Riessman (2008, p.50) calls this the “process of infiltration”; this helped me with analysis, a key part of the whole research cycle (Wellington, 2000). Indeed, “one cannot fully understand data unless one has been in on it from the beginning” (Chafe, 2014, p.61).

While I thoroughly enjoyed listening back to the recordings of all the different discussions, I did not enjoy the transcribing process at all. I had never done transcribing before, and it felt incredibly slow and unrewarding. Braun and Clarke, though, remind us that “the time spent in transcription is not wasted” (2006, p.88); it is an important part of initial analysis (Kowal & O’Connell, 2013). In addition, “the detailed and lengthy focus on individual interviews embodies respect for individual respondents within the research context. If we do not take the time and trouble to listen to our respondents, [we risk] simply confirming what we already know” (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p.135). I also knew that I needed the transcription to be completed in order to move forward with the next steps of my project, so tried to focus on the positives of listening and re-listening to the conversations.

I had to decide on a transcription ‘system’ to use, knowing that “transcription conventions differ among various analytic traditions” (Roulston, 2016, p.72), and that “whatever system we use commits us to a particular understanding of what is important” (Chafe, 2014, p.55). Although my background is in language teaching and applied linguistics, I was not focusing on any linguistic or paralinguistic features here (such as accent, intonation, length of pauses, and so on), other than noting when a particular word or group of words had been emphasised by the speaker in some way. Instead, my interest was purely in the content of the discussion. It was clear to me that “the choice of transcription methods [should] be appropriate for the specific purposes of a given research project” (Aufenanger, 2006, cited in Kowal & O’Connell, 2013, p.65). For the purposes of this project, I like the simplicity of Roulston’s conventions (2010, p.107), and adapted these to suit.

At the start of each transcript, I included the following introduction and key for participants:

Note: Transcriptions have been edited for clarity and readability. For example, expressions such as ‘like’, ‘you know’ have been omitted. Indications of active listening on the part of the interviewer (such as ‘uh huh’, ‘yeah’) have also been omitted.

Transcription conventions used (after Roulston, 2010):

- ... one omitted word
- several omitted words
- [] author’s insertion for clarity
- () utterances are best guess

italics word is stressed, emphasised

--- hesitation, pause

Once each transcript had been completed and proof-read (again, while re-listening to the audio recording), it was then shared with the individual participant. Asking interviewees to review their transcripts reinforces both their rights as research participants, and the participant-researcher relationship (Hagens et al., 2009). It also serves as a way of triangulating the data, with participants having a second voice through this ‘member checking’ (their first voice being through the one-to-one interviews). Via e-mail, I asked each participant to check through the transcript and make sure that they were happy with my using it to tell their story. If there was anything I was unsure about, I added a comment or query in the body of the document (for example, asking about spelling of a place name, checking that I had transcribed something correctly, or asking whether it was appropriate to mention a person by name or whether this should be adjusted). Participants were able to review or edit, and to add any comments in the margin (or via e-mail if they preferred). I asked for feedback within two weeks from the date of the e-mail and, in most cases, heard back much sooner than this.

Nine participants gave their approval for me to write up their story without any changes to their respective transcripts. Two participants made slight amendments (adding further detail, or editing sensitive information), and two participants corrected things which I had misheard or misunderstood while transcribing. More substantial feedback saw one participant commenting, “I would struggle to do that part of the job, well done. I’m sorry if I rambled, it is funny to read your thoughts and words in your head, but I think you have captured me well”.

With this member checking completed, all thirteen participants were happy for me to proceed to writing their narrative.

Data analysis

‘Data analysis’ is not a discrete phase of the research process confined to the moments when we analyse interview transcripts. Rather it is an ongoing process which takes place throughout... the life of a research project... *actively* listening to participants’ stories, asking questions, and leading respondents down certain paths and not others, making decisions about which issues to follow up and which to ignore, and choosing where to probe. We [are] guided by our initial research agenda and questions, what each respondent [says] to us, and our interpretations and understandings of their words... Interview content [is] therefore a joint production. (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p.124)

In narrative inquiry, it is vital that stories remain recognisable to the storytellers: “It is important that the participant remain the author of the description. The function of the researcher is more like [that of] a supportive editor” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p.143). Bochner (2000, p.270) stresses that “the purpose of self-narratives is to extract meaning from experience, rather than to depict experience exactly as it was lived”, and that “we narrate to make sense of experience over time”. Indeed, “the work of self-narration is to produce [a] sense of continuity: to make a life that sometimes seems to be falling apart come together again, by retelling and restorying the events of one’s life” (Ellis & Bochner, 2003, p.220).

Polkinghorne (1995) provides a clear distinction between two principal types of narrative inquiry, ‘analysis of narratives’ and ‘narrative analysis’, and asserts that “both... can make important contributions to the body of social science knowledge” (p.21). In the first type, the focus is on the text of the story(-ies), with the researcher analysing themes that occur across a series of narratives. In the second, ‘narrative analysis’, “the research product is a story... that is composed by the researcher to represent the events, characters, and issues that he or she has studied” (Bochner & Riggs, 2014, p.204). In summary, “analysis of narratives moves from stories to common elements, and narrative analysis moves from elements to stories” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p.12). Having said this, the literature suggests that the two are not mutually exclusive (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Czarniawska, 2004; Wells, 2011), and this sits comfortably with me; I am deeply interested in gaining insight into individual participants’ life stories (to understand, for instance, how they have developed as teachers, what course their journey has taken, who/what have been the influences on their lives, and how they see their future), but also in identifying common and/or recurring themes across the narratives, and reflecting on how we might learn from these.

Creswell (2007) agrees that, in narrative inquiry, data analysis can involve a description of both the story(-ies) and the emerging themes. When discussing the former, Polkinghorne (1995) explains narrative analysis as “the procedure through which the researcher organises the data elements into a coherent developmental account” (p.15) and stresses that “the researcher cannot simply compile or aggregate the happenings; they must be drawn together into a systemic whole” (p.18). This is what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to as the restorying of participants’ narratives (through the aforementioned three-dimensional space narrative structure), and is in itself part of data analysis (Clandinin, 2007). Restorying enables stories to be presented in an authentic way, ensuring that voice, integrity, and mana are preserved. Lewis explains that restorying “occurs in the transition from field text to research text, and involves studying and reflecting on the data to understand the storyteller’s experience and then [retell] the story” (2018, p.16). As Slabon et al. (2014) highlight, restorying is grounded in social constructivism, with knowledge being “constructed and socially co-constructed by [participants] based on their experiences and interactions with others” (p.506). It also balances the need for researcher consistency (and

the same skeleton structure to participants' stories) with the flexibility that participants need for their stories to unfold naturally over the course of the conversation. The researcher must be able to recognise what is peripheral and what is critical to the stories of participants, so it is important for the researcher and the participant to actively collaborate.

Initially, I hesitated a little over whether to re-write participants' narratives in the first person or third person, but it was, for me, a relatively simple decision. Given that I want readers to be able to relate to these stories, I believe it is important for them to be in the first person. Writing in the third person risks "remov[ing] events from their context, [and] distancing readers from the actions and feelings" of the participants (Bochner, 2012, p.159), as if, as Turner (1993) describes it, the reader is looking through a stained-glass window. These 'windows', while they may have my fingerprints around the edges, need to be as clear as possible!

I drew heavily on the transcripts, reorganising content chronologically (past–present–future) for the most part. Having said that, not all stories make sense on a perfect past-present continuum, and that is not how we tell stories ourselves. "Narration is distinguished by ordering and sequence; one action is viewed as consequential for the next... But narratives can also be organised thematically and episodically" (Riessman, 2002, p.698). In those cases where there was a clear flow or link between parts of the story, my thinking was very much "flow trumps chronological order".

When writing participant stories, I was also very aware that "those who turn other people's lives into texts hold real power" (Newkirk, 1996, p.14), and that "writing is always an act of composing, of re-presenting" (Lunsford et al., 1996, p.xv). I therefore felt it was important to use the individual's own words and expressions as much as possible. "The relationship has to be maintained throughout the writing, and you don't write over, or voice over, other people's voices" (Kitzinger & Gilligan, 1994, p.411). Mauthner and Doucet (1998) go so far as to suggest that preserving participants' voices is a central but often overlooked issue in qualitative research. For me, wanting the storyteller to be able to recognise their own voice was key, but I also want the reader to appreciate a variety of voices, rather than my voice becoming dominant.

By providing detailed accounts of participants' stories, the findings should be rich and carry more meaning for interested parties (Creswell, 2014; O'Leary, 2014): "The aim is to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts" (Geertz, 1973, p.28). It is these "large conclusions" which will help me to move forward in my understanding of teaching excellence, and of how we can embed this in future teacher development programmes.

Stories were shared with participants, initially on an individual basis, to check that each participant was happy with how their story was being told. At this stage, one of my female participants dropped out of the project, due to other pressing commitments. In an informal conversation, she had indicated that she was happy with her initial reading of her story, but, despite two follow-up e-mails, did not reply to give me the ‘go-ahead’ to use her story. Once I had confirmed with all twelve remaining participants that they were happy with how their story had been told, I then shared the collated stories with all participants, so that they could see how their story was ‘sitting’ as part of a collection. The demographic information for these participants is available in [Appendix I](#). While I do not feel that age, gender, or ethnicity impact on or inform teaching excellence, I do appreciate that some readers may be interested in this data.

In addition, a thematic analysis was also conducted. Clarke and Braun “emphasise the theoretical flexibility of [thematic analysis], and identify it as... an analytic method, rather than a methodology, which most other qualitative approaches are” (2013, p.120). It is “a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79). Having said that, in qualitative research, it is important to remember that:

the language data are not simply single words, but interrelated words combined into sentences, and sentences into discourses... The evidence itself is not the marks on the paper but the meanings represented in these texts. It is not the printed words themselves that can be analysed by counting how many times a particular word appears in the text. Rather, the evidence is the ideas and thoughts that have been expressed by the participants. (Polkinghorne, 2005, p.138)

In other words, analysis of the interviews was primarily qualitative and content-based, rather than statistical, with each participant’s whole story (or transcript, to be exact) being the unit of analysis (Cohen et al., 2011; Denscombe, 2014). As Sandelowski (2000, p.336) emphasises, qualitative description “entails the presentation of the facts of the case in everyday language”, and this will ultimately help with readability and usefulness of my findings.

As Hewitt-Taylor states, “While not seeking to reduce data to statistical evidence, qualitative data nevertheless requires systematic analysis” (2001, p.39). A general inductive approach was used, with patterns and themes being induced from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). An iterative cycle enabled themes to be identified, compared, and consolidated (for example, by considering whether similar themes could be merged into one, and whether large, less-defined themes could be split into more defined ones for clarity). Just as O’Toole (2018, p.184) mentions her “cyclic process of analysis”, and Shagoury (2011, p.303) highlights a “cycle of action” in analysis, Dey (1993, pp.31-32) also

talks about the “circular” and “related processes of describing phenomena, classifying [them], and seeing how our concepts interconnect” (Figure 3):

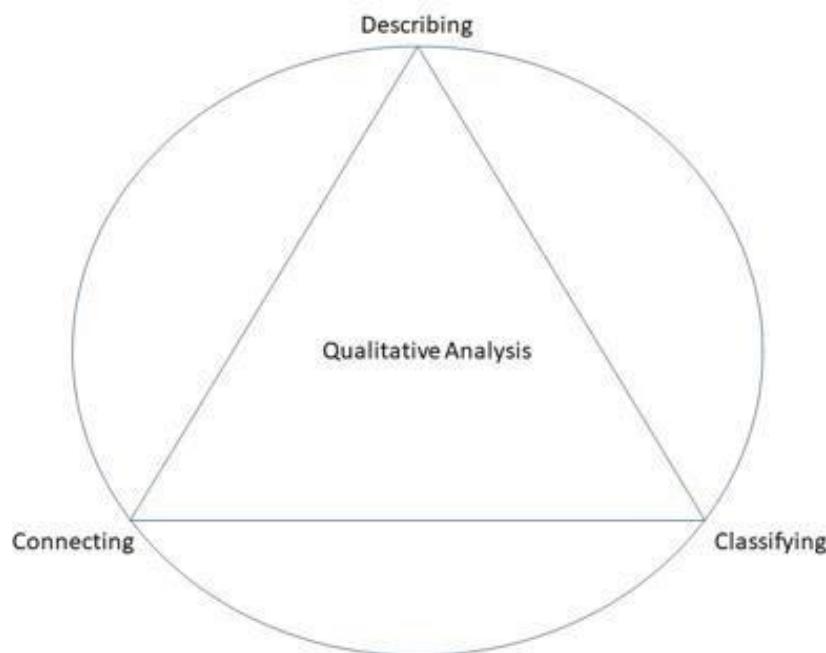


Figure 3 – Qualitative analysis as a circular process (Dey, 1993)

Braun and Clarke (2006, p.86) would agree:

analysis involves a constant moving back and forward between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data that you are analysing, and the analysis of the data that you are producing... writing should begin in phase one, with the jotting down of ideas and potential coding schemes, and continue right through the entire coding/analysis process.

They go on to discuss potential pitfalls during thematic analysis, and what it is that constitutes a good thematic analysis. They acknowledge that thematic analysis may have its critics, but contend that it is a flexible yet rigorous approach which can produce insightful outcomes.

My thematic analysis followed the six phases outlined in Table 2. Maguire and Delahunt (2017, p.3353) assert that, in the social sciences, the Braun and Clarke (2006) framework “is arguably the most influential approach, ...probably because it offers such a clear and usable framework for doing thematic analysis”. Again, this was not a linear activity, but an iterative, cyclical one, with me moving back and forward between the different phases (particularly 3, 4, and 5).

It is important to note that researcher judgement was used to determine what was considered a theme, and the prevalence of that theme. It is not a case of themes ‘emerging’ or being ‘discovered’ (Clarke & Braun, 2013; Riessman, 2008; Wellington, 2000; Yi, 2018). “The initial stages of actually getting to know the data and identifying what *are* the key issues feel more intuitive than anything else” (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p.121). While data was organised “by grouping like with like” (Dye et al., 2000, p.3) to form thematic groups, I was always aware that I was using my own judgement as to what fit together, which synonyms belonged in the same group, or what was meant or implied at times when I was reading between the lines; was there a “look alike or feel alike” element (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.347) to something I had already seen in the data? As Sandelowski (2000, p.335) emphasises, “no description is free of interpretation”. Similarly, Mauthner and Doucet (1998, p.121) emphasise reflexivity and the importance of “acknowledging the critical role we play in creating, interpreting, and theorizing research data”. While this suggests that “another researcher [would] unfold a different story” (Finlay, 2002b, p.531), my knowledge and experience in different education contexts guided me to make decisions which I feel would be helpful for as many teachers as possible. In other words, the judgment or interpretation here is what Sandelowski (2000, p.335) describes as “low-inference, or likely to result in... consensus among researchers”.

As already stated, an inductive approach was used. I was not trying to match data or themes to any of the research questions; instead, my analysis was focused on the transcripts themselves, and on their content, remembering that “the purpose of qualitative data is to provide evidence... that increase an understanding of human life as lived” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p.141). Patton (2002, p.467) explains that “the qualitative analyst’s effort at uncovering patterns, themes, and categories includes using both creative and critical faculties in making carefully considered judgements about what is really significant and meaningful in the data”. Categories may be generated through “inferences from the data, initial or emergent research questions, substantive, policy and theoretical issues, [and/or] imagination, intuition and previous knowledge” (Dey, 1993, p.106). The process was one of “continuous refinement” (Dye et al., 2000, p.3).

Table 2 – Phases of thematic analysis (after Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Phase	Process
1. Familiarising yourself with your data	I listened to the conversations repeatedly and transcribed them. Transcripts were then edited for clarity and readability. For example, expressions such as 'like', 'you know' were omitted. Indications of active listening on the part of the interviewer (such as 'uh huh', 'yeah') were also omitted. I outlined the transcription conventions used (after Roulston, 2010) at the top of each transcript.
2. Member checking	Participants were offered the transcripts of our conversations to review. Any clarifications and/or amendments were then incorporated into the texts. This contributes to descriptive validity (Maxwell, 1992).
3. Searching for themes	I read and re-read each transcript, identifying potential themes, and writing these on the hard copies next to the relevant section. I did not have any pre-set or pre-determined themes; instead, I developed and amended these as I worked through the transcripts. All data relevant to each potential theme were recorded in a spreadsheet, noting how many times each theme occurred within each transcript and across all transcripts. This is about "the counts represent[ing] a first step: the location of patterns in the data" (Morgan, 1993, p. 116), rather than seeking to make any quantitative or statistical inferences. This was an iterative process of constant comparison, with my returning to earlier transcripts each time a new theme was identified.
4. Reviewing themes	Themes were reviewed to ensure that they were "coherent and... distinct from each other" (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p. 3358), and then organised into initial groups of thematic areas or categories.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis was conducted to refine the specifics of each theme, and to combine or group similar themes, in order to consolidate the data and to generate a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
6. Producing the report	Themes were 'clustered' around the research question or questions they helped to answer, and I looked for relevant literature. Vivid, compelling extract examples were selected from transcripts. Themes were set out as findings, and discussed as part of the research report.

From a practical point of view, and to help with grouping themes, I wrote each identified theme on a coloured sticky note. While I initially considered using colours to represent particular themes, I decided against this as I felt I might make decisions too early about groupings, which would then be influenced by colour rather than by the words/data themselves.

Sticky notes were then grouped with similar themes on sheets of paper. In this way, I was able to check that there were no repetitions, and also reflect on what it was that brought these themes together, and what name could be given to these groupings or categories. A photograph of this work in progress can be seen in Image 1, and is captured in table form in [Appendix J](#).

I wrote preliminary category names on each sheet of paper, meaning that any individual sticky note(s) could be moved without my being influenced by any notations made on the note itself. This allowed me to refine groupings as I worked, for example, by combining or sub-dividing categories.

Identified themes were then compared with existing literature (for example, around teaching excellence, professional practice, and teacher development) so that recommendations may be made.



Image 1 – Organising identified themes into similar groupings

Data presentation

The power of qualitative data is “generated when we share our stories, our challenges and our passions... It is the power to share the human condition” (O’Leary, 2014, p.319). The principal output of my doctoral studies is this thesis, in which I share these “stories..., challenges and... passions”, both those of my participants and elements of my own. Clandinin and Connelly succinctly explain that “narrative inquiry is stories lived and told” (2000, p.20). Furthermore, educators turn to narrative inquiry because they are “interested in the leading out of different lives, the values, attitudes, beliefs, social systems, institutions, and structures, and how they are all linked to learning and teaching” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.xxii). The thesis also includes reflections on my own practice, and on engaging in an inquiry at this level and in this context. My aim is to reflect on my own learning, and how my practice has evolved.

Awardees’ stories in themselves can already be considered as knowledge. In addition, the stories are examined in more detail with key themes identified, to help others to understand excellence in a tertiary teaching context.

Participants’ full stories are included in the artifact sitting alongside this thesis (Image 2). A copy of this has been gifted to each participant. For the purposes of the thesis, I have focused on core aspects of the stories which inform the answers to my research questions, thereby contributing to a better understanding of teaching excellence. These narratives are available in [Appendix K](#).



Image 2 – Collected stories

Rigour

In terms of rigour, I draw on the much-cited work of Roller and Lavrakas (2015) and their Total Quality Framework. They argue that four elements – credibility, analysability, transparency, and usefulness – must be present for qualitative research to be considered rigorous (Figure 4). My intention is for my work to be both methodologically and critically rigorous, as well as being rigorous in terms of structure and argument. In addition, I feel it is rigorous in the way that I have been authentic with my participants, and in the way that I have used critical analysis, rather than merely presenting narratives.

To ensure “explicit and comprehensive reporting” (Tong et al., 2007, p.356) of this project, the 32-item ‘Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research’ (COREQ) checklist (Tong et al., 2007) has been used ([Appendix M](#)). This is one tool which contributes to the transparency and credibility of my research, and thus to the overall rigour.

Other elements which impact on the rigour of this work include:

- completing all of the transcribing myself
- giving participants time and opportunity to check they were happy with the transcripts before I moved on to restorying their narratives
- giving participants a chance to check their narratives once their individual story was ready, and then again when the collated stories were shared as a whole
- returning to the transcripts of our discussions for the thematic analysis, and setting out clearly how I conducted the thematic analysis
- writing about each step of the process in my methodology, including practical steps taken; in this way, I believe the reader can ‘re-live’ my research process.

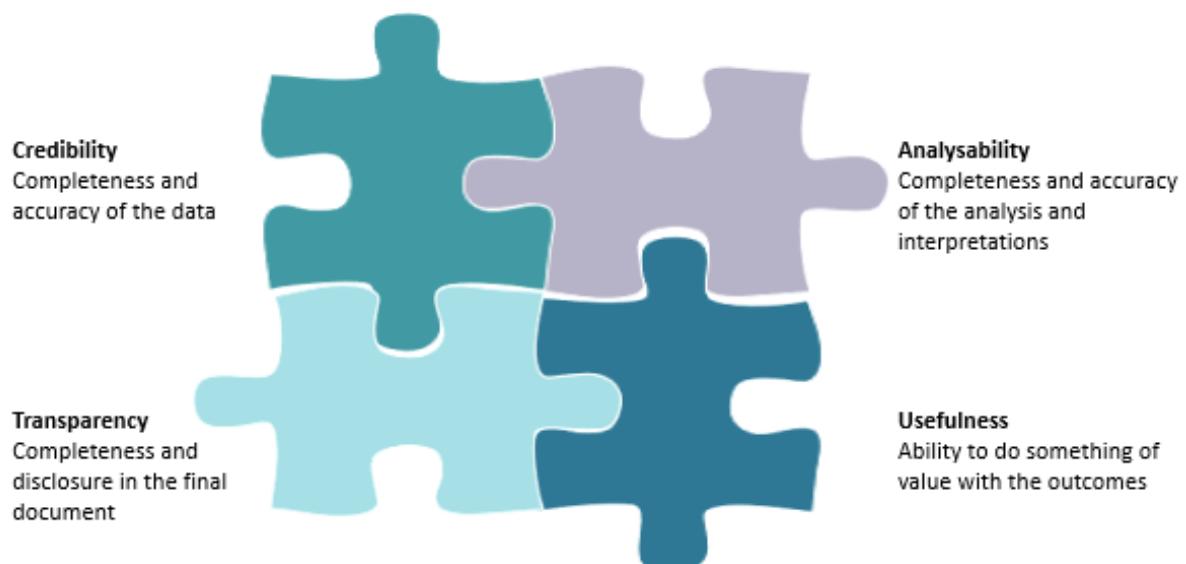


Figure 4 – Rigour in qualitative research (after Roller & Lavrakas, 2015)

In addition, the project provides information which is valid and useful for the purposes for which it was intended, thanks to the strength of the other components, credibility, analysability, and transparency.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

My findings are made up of two elements, the narrative analysis and the analysis of narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995). The stories of my participants, twelve national Tertiary Teaching Excellence awardees, have been re-storied ([Appendix K](#)) through Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional structure, incorporating temporality or continuity (past, present, and future), interaction (personal and social), and place (situation). The stories are the product of narrative analysis, which "allows for systematic study of personal experience and meaning" (Riessman, 1993, p.70). Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p.130) remind us that through reconstructing field texts, such as interview transcripts, as research texts, "our inquiry task is to discover and construct meaning". For the reader, the validity of this narrative research lies in the "personal meaning drawn from the... stories" (Garvis, 2015, p.7). These stories are at the heart of this research.

In this chapter, I move "from stories to common elements" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p.12) through an analysis of the themes that occur across the series of stories. Reflexivity was essential here. As outlined in my methodology, I was always aware that I was using my own judgement when grouping data and identifying themes, drawing on my experience in many different professional roles and contexts, and "inhabiting the hyphen" (Drake & Heath, 2011, p.25) as both practitioner-researcher and insider-outsider. I also propose a model 'The Keys to Teaching Excellence', which captures how these recognised educators embody, convey, and foster excellence in their practice.

In addition, this section discusses the findings by linking them with existing literature. I made the decision to weave the discussion into the analysis of narratives as I feel this is more natural and relevant for the reader than if presented separately. As Arlidge asserts, "learning is a process of sense-making, of adding and synthesising new information within existing knowledge structures" (2000, p.34). Furthermore, integrating personal and professional knowledge with academic research informs professional practice and how it evolves. Organising this section thematically shows how my findings sit in light of other work, places them in context, and maximises the learning opportunities.

The aim of this project has been to investigate the trajectory and professional practice of national Tertiary Teaching Excellence awardees, to explore their background and evolution as educators, their current practice, and their thoughts around future development. In relation to how I set about achieving this aim, through narrative inquiry, Flyvbjerg asserts that "narratives typically approach the complexities and contradictions of real life. Accordingly, such narratives may be difficult or impossible to summarize into neat scientific formulae, general propositions and theories" (2006, p.237). Nevertheless, narratives can be used as "data that might lead to complex understandings of human phenomena" (Otto, 2007, p.73). Looking at the stories as a whole, a range of themes are already apparent. Tony, Mereana, Daniel, and Leoni, for instance, all have stories which centre on their desire

to empower learners and see them succeed. This links with Liz seeking to bring out the best in her learners, and Adrian embracing transformation in others. Relationship building is at the heart of Caro and Megan's stories, while for Richard, passion for his subject and the ability to enable learning are crucial. Jane's story revolves around creating an environment in which learners feel comfortable, and for Matt and Steve, sharing stories and practice is essential. A genuine love of learning comes through strongly for several of these awardees, as does empathy for learners. On a holistic level, then, the stories provide insights into teaching excellence. The narratives are rich with data.

In addition, by "connecting and collocating data..., the researcher becomes the storyteller, a bridge-builder working to link the use and production of stories in the field together with the analytical discourse of research literature" (Mello, 2002, p.241). This section sets out the findings from the analysis of narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995), presenting emerging themes which occur across the series of narratives.

The key research questions guide the structure of this chapter:

1. How does the concept of excellence unfurl in the narratives of Tertiary Teaching Excellence awardees?
2. How do these practitioners embody, convey, and foster that excellence in their practice?
3. What implications for Professional Development do these narratives of excellence have?

Throughout this chapter, when participants' own words are used, the line number given refers to the transcription of our conversation, rather than to the re-storied narrative. Participants have been assigned letters (A-L) at random.

How does the concept of excellence unfurl in the narratives of Tertiary Teaching Excellence awardees?

With this question, I am looking at participants' life experience and what led them to teaching. Often, these awardees talked about how their career has developed, including critical moments or turning points, and, if applicable, moving from a profession into education. Their motivations for both teaching and for sharing their practice with others are also captured here. Recurring themes are organised under three headings: Life experience, personal characteristics, and drivers and motivation.

Life experience

Almost all participants (11 of 12) talked about the influence that 'teachers' had on them as they were growing up. I use inverted commas here because the 'teachers' were not always

people working in education; they were sometimes parents, uncles, aunts, and/or members of the wider whānau:

The people that had some of the biggest influences in my life were teachers. And the people I enjoyed being around were the ones that actually helped me learn things, and I really, really enjoyed that. (Participant A, lines 49-51)

The role of parents and/or other members of the family and community and their promotion of learning is highlighted as contributing to participants' learning environment while growing up (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991):

I did well at school, because our family valued education... we read a lot of books. We'd go to the library every week and get seven books, one for each night. (Participant C, lines 608-610)

I grew up in a house that was very much around empowerment... so I had parents that were role-models for me... Open discussions and arguments and fights were kind of normal. (Participant D, lines 290-296)

I am... someone that's come from a nurturing environment where learning and being encouraged to explore were normalised within our family, so speaking, asking, talking were very much encouraged. (Participant K, lines 40-42)

Although this is an incredibly complex issue incorporating multiple factors such as ethnicity and culture, socio-economic status, educational background, and social networks (Biddulph et al., 2003; Egalite, 2016), the landmark work of Coleman et al. (1966) suggests that an individual's academic achievement is in fact influenced more by family than by their schooling. Hirsh and Segolsson (2021, p.36) draw on existing research, including the work of Hattie (2003, 2009), when they propose that "family background and what students bring to the classroom account for around 50 percent of the variance in student achievement, whereas teacher factors account for around 30 percent". It would be easy at this stage to throw our hands up in the air and despair at the value of a teacher's role! On the other hand, although they do not clearly define what they consider to be 'achievement', Berry et al. (2010b, p.1) claim that "teachers make the greatest difference to student achievement". I would argue, however, that, teachers can make a difference to more than learners' scores and grades, those measures which most would argue represent 'achievement'. Personal and professional experience has shown me that teachers and mentors can affect learners' self-confidence, self-efficacy, and motivation, among other things. In summary, then, while family background naturally plays a part in someone's attitude towards education, and to learning in general, it does not discount the wider impact (be it positive or negative) that teachers can also have on learners.

Regardless of our individual roles in society and/or our professions, we all have our own ideas about what a teacher is. As Schoonmaker highlights, an individual's "own preconceptions and implicit theories about teaching and learning will play a major part in [their] development as a teacher" (1998, p.561). This reflects what Lortie, in his seminal work 'Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study', first published in 1975, calls the 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie, 2020): the thousands of hours which we spend in our lives as learners, watching teachers and developing our own individual perceptions of, and frames of reference for what teaching involves (Bailey et al., 1996; Borg, 2004; Shulman, 2005). "Inherent in this apprenticeship model is a behavioristic view of learning: learning is achieved through imitation of... teachers" (Britzman, 1986, p.443). While there may be ways in which these beliefs can be revisited and challenged (Boyd et al., 2013; Mewborn & Tyminski, 2006), Freeman (1992), reporting on a longitudinal study, asserts that "the memories of instruction gained through their 'apprenticeship of observation' function as de facto guides for teachers as they approach what they do in the classroom" (p.3). Schoonmaker (1998) indicates that these memories and prior experiences are "more powerful" (p.561) than a teacher education programme, emphasising that "prior experience is stored in memory not just as the recollection of an event, but as the event was felt and interpreted" (p.571). This suggests that one of the first things that teacher educators need to do is to encourage early-career and student teachers to reflect on the beliefs and biases that they carry with them as a result of their own backgrounds, cultures, and lived experiences, and to be prepared to challenge these attitudes through new learning and experiences.

While reflective practice has been widely accepted as an integral part of teacher education programmes for some time (Acquah & Commins, 2015; Beauchamp, 2015; Gorski & Dalton, 2020; Mulryan-Kyne, 2020; Roberts, 2016), it is typically reflection-in- or -on-action (Schön, 1983, 1987), rather than a potentially transformative (Mezirow, 1990, 1991, 1997) critical reflection on the self, or reflexivity (Brookfield, 2017; Liu, 2015; Liu & Ball, 2019). The literature, however, supports this need for new teachers to challenge their own thinking. Kagan, for example, underlines that "the initial focus on self appears to be a necessary and crucial element in the first stage of teacher development" (1992, p.155), Fortuin (1996, p.87) asserts that "critical pedagogy as an aspect of reflective teaching impacts on teacher competence", and Liu (2015) emphasises the need for critical reflection to lead to action:

It is indeed valuable to facilitate prospective teachers to re-examine their assumptions, understand the social cultural context of their teaching, and search for alternatives, but if there are no changed actions in the teaching that follows reflection, the value of these processes remain[s] minimal. (p.149)

I revisit the importance of reflective practice later in this chapter.

Returning to this study, the majority of participants reflected on their own academic ability and/or experiences at school while growing up.

Right from really young, I learned to think and to question, and to think about thinking... that sort of meta thinking became a really critical part of how I was in my thinking. (Participant B, lines 62-68)

It is important to note here that learning through multiple means is valuable; that participants may, for instance, have found ‘traditional’ schooling a challenge, but found other ways in which to learn:

I hated school with a severe passion... I struggled with reading to start off with, and I think, because of that, I was disengaged for lots of classes... But because of that, because of not being in school, I spent a lot of time in art galleries, at museums, at the movies, at parks, learning about other stuff that I was interested in. (Participant G, lines 33-42)

In an informal conversation with one participant, they talked about how they had noticed that many of the national Teaching Excellence awardees comment on their own experience of school having been a negative one. Kass and Miller, investigating the intrinsic motivations behind “academically excellent students’ choice of teaching careers”, found that, for many, “choosing a career in teaching served as a corrective experience for painful past experiences” (2018, p.90). Their findings suggest that people may enter teaching as a profession to strengthen their feelings of self-efficacy, for instance, to find a sense of warmth and belonging which was lacking in their childhood, or to have a positive influence on others. This is potentially one area which merits further investigation in future research.

Eight of the twelve participants highlighted that they had never intended to become a teacher or that they were ‘accidental teachers’:

I never wanted to be a teacher, ever... There's no way I wanted to be a teacher, because I didn't really like teachers. (Participant A, lines 42-43; 51-52)

At high school, I was told I would be a really good teacher, and so I said, 'I'm not doing that!'... I didn't want to be a teacher. (Participant I, lines 49-50; 61)

A search of the literature suggests that this is not uncommon amongst successful educators. Tomlinson (2010, pp.22-23) goes so far as to say that she “vowed with rancorous fervor that [she] would never under any circumstances be a teacher”, while Welborn (2005) writes about trying to “escape teaching” (p.15), before truly embracing it. Mayer et al. (2011), investigating the career pathways and work experiences of teacher educators in Australia, report that one of two key themes to emerge was that many participants saw their entry

into the teaching profession as ‘accidental’. Sit (2016) writes about the ‘confessions of an accidental teacher’, and Bullock (2018) reflects on accidentally becoming a teacher educator in literacy, after spending three years as a Science teacher.

I've been an accidental teacher, I guess, through life... If anyone had said to me, you know, "Would you like to be a teacher?", I would've said, "No, no, no... I don't wanna be a teacher". (Participant C, lines 590-597)

It was kind of accidental. It's like, I never thought of myself as a teacher, and then I suddenly realised I was a teacher... There was that moment of "That's what I am, I am a teacher". (Participant J, lines 547-548; 553-554)

All of these feelings could potentially be linked to our perceptions of what teachers do compared with the reality of what we do. Returning to the ‘apprenticeship of observation’ concept, “in entering the classroom, student teachers are re-entering a world of familiar social realities. They are already experts on teachers, students, and schools. But their expertise has been developed from the perspective of a student” (Schoonmaker, 1998, p.587). As children, our view of a teacher’s function and responsibilities tends to be very superficial: “To be a teacher, one need only act like a teacher” (Feiman-Nemser et al., 1988, p.9). Lortie (2020, p.62) suggests that a student “sees the teacher frontstage and center, like an audience viewing a play”, but, in reality, there is much more to the role: “Students do not receive invitations to watch the teacher’s performance from the wings; they are not privy to the teacher’s private intentions and personal reflections on classroom events” (Lortie, 2020, p.62). Even on entering the profession, “teaching itself is seen by beginning teachers as the simple and rather mechanical transfer of information” (Wideen et al., 1998, p.143), yet “it involves constant shifts, negotiations, actions and responses to a myriad of variables” (Freeman, 1989, p.36). As multiple authors agree (including Bieda et al., 2015; Lampert, 1985; McDonald, 1992), teaching is never static.

Alongside the need for reflexivity, this also creates challenges around one’s perceived and/or real identity. Schaefer and Clandinin (2019) describe the reflections of someone who “spoke of herself as storied into teaching. She often... imagin[ed] herself as [a] classroom teacher as her animals sat in neat rows in her bedroom”. Yet this “excellent teacher” left the profession, experiencing “a dissonance between the teacher she imagined being and the person she imagined being” (p.61). Schaefer et al. (2014) refer to this as the “the bumping between [one’s] lives on their personal and professional knowledge landscapes” (p.22). Other early-career teachers describe challenges with the tension between the teacher identity they had constructed during initial teacher training and the identity they need in order to deal with teaching in the real world (Arnon & Reichel, 2007); a “reality shock” (Veenman, 1984, p.143). Some describe “their teaching lives as “hard”... long hours, [with] physical, social, and emotional demands [making] teaching hard” (Schaefer et al., 2014,

p.23). Throughout my own career, I have often thought that the only people who can really understand the challenges and blessings of being a teacher are other teachers.

Added to this are different layers of influence, such as societal views of and attitudes towards the value and role of teachers, how teachers are treated (be it in person, in the media, and/or in policy decisions), and whether education is seen as a well-respected career path in one's own culture (Ingersoll et al., 2018; Schoonmaker, 1998). Even people working in academia report on internal challenges of their roles, including expectations around research and teaching: "Teaching is the last thing you think of because it's actually not highly valued" (Mayer et al., 2011, p.255). Farkas et al. (2000, p.10) refer to teaching as requiring "a sense of mission", and report on a survey in which 86% of new teachers believe that "only those with "a true sense of calling" should pursue the work". Tomlinson would agree, asserting that effective teachers "understand teaching as a calling":

It challenges us to be more than we think we can be and to draw on capacities we didn't quite know we had. A calling becomes a way of life, offering us the opportunity to affect individuals in a profound, enduring way. (2010, p.24)

Taken together, this suggests that encouraging new and student teachers to genuinely reflect on their motivation to teach and on their perceived identities would be valuable.

Personal characteristics

Analysis of the conversations with my participants revealed different characteristics which form part of their respective identities and impact on their professional practice. Schaefer and Clandinin (2019) highlight how, for teachers, personal and professional identities meld, and "how who they were as teachers was entwined with who they were as people" (p.57).

A love of learning was described by two-thirds of participants:

If it interests me, I'll always go and learn it... I love, love, love learning new stuff.
(Participant A, lines 124-125)

I would always pick something that I would have to go and learn... before I taught others... It was a challenge, and I enjoyed going right back to basics, to getting the books out, to looking at it, to learning about it, so I could learn together... with my students. (Participant C, lines 85-86; 106-107)

I'd been a long-term student 'cause, you know, back then it was free, so you could just study because you love learning. (Participant L, lines 76-77)

This can be extended to the idea that our teacher identity changes as we learn:

Our views about teaching and learning, and our own role in this process tend to evolve over time. These changes may be prompted by critical incidents, growth in confidence..., work with colleagues, and interactions with students, and deliberate reading, professional development, or research around teaching. (Spiller, 2011, p.2)

Beard (2018, p.34), drawing on Dewey's principle of continuity, would agree: "Teachers of children and adults themselves undergo continuous educative experiences, and so, they [move] forward in their perspective and practices".

For participants in this study, a love of learning often sits alongside an ability and willingness to recognise that there is always more to learn:

I really didn't have many years when I didn't do any self-development at all... there's always something on the go... and I think it's a good way to be in the shoes of the learner. (Participant E, lines 382-384)

You come to realise, the more that you're involved in education and the more people you meet and the experiences that you have... you know nothing... You've got to be open every day to every new idea. (Participant H, lines 155-156; 201-202)

Ewing and Smith (2001, p.22), when considering the nature of professional practice, highlight that "it is through the increasing experience of practice that practitioners are provided with the potential to learn and develop as professionals and to steadily increase the knowledge base on which they base their judgements and actions". A landmark Carnegie report asserts that "good teaching means that faculty, as scholars, are also learners" (Boyer, 1990, p.24), and Tomlinson suggests that "excellent teachers never fall prey to the belief that they are good enough. The best teachers I have known are humbled by how much more they need to learn" (2010, p.24). This sense of humility also came through in the conversations with my participants, with many having no perception of themselves as excellent, or explicitly referring to excellent teachers as "they":

I know how many other amazing teachers are out there... I don't feel that I'm better than anyone else. (Participant A, lines 740-741)

"Do you see yourself as 'excellent'?" Not yet... working on it... but definitely not yet. (Participant H, lines 190-191)

[I] felt a little bit false when [I] won the award... I'd never seen myself as an excellent teacher. I see myself as doing the best that I can for the learners. (Participant I, lines 318-320)

I don't think I thought 'I'm a great teacher', because I got the award; it's more... all of these things that I've learned, it's made me very aware of what my teaching practice is... there's millions, there's so many good teachers here at Otago Polytechnic, and they're not all award-winning teachers, still there's lots of great teachers. (Participant J, lines 214-216; 528-530)

It is difficult to perceive how student/early-career teachers might be encouraged to adopt these attitudes, if they are not already present. Nevertheless, these findings still contribute to our understanding of the characteristics of excellent teachers, and could be food for thought both for new teachers and for teacher developers.

Another theme which came through for many participants (nine of the twelve) was a sense of being a risk-taker, or even a rebel:

I remember some other lecturer going by and saying, "What's going on here?"... People would be suspicious and say "What's going on? Why are you doing this?" (Participant C, lines 302-311)

I was kind of playing with things, because I knew I could kind of get away with them, but I was... doing it literally sometimes behind closed doors... You're kind of doing it in secrecy, because it's not normalised, it's not the norm. (Participant F, lines 175-179)

Any opportunity to do things differently to what the system is, I've taken... I've always changed how we did things... I've always wanted to push the boundaries. (Participant G, lines 60-63; 284-285)

I think excellent teachers are quite brave people; I think often they step out and away from the collective... I have perhaps utilised particular learning tools or strategies that people have said "I don't know if you can do that"... 'cause it wasn't on that checklist of things that we'd agreed on... So I think, often, excellent teachers are prepared to look wide... not just accepting the status quo. (Participant K, lines 337-338; 340-352)

I would contend that this willingness to take risks or rebel against, for example, systems and/or processes is driven by the desire to do the best that one can for the learners. It is not a wilful arrogance or challenge to authority, but a belief that there is a better solution, in a particular context of learning and teaching. This leads us nicely into the next theme of drivers and motivation.

Drivers and motivation

In terms of what motivates people in life, or what drives their actions and decisions, all twelve participants talked about the importance of empowering and encouraging others, sometimes expressed simply as helping others:

Me being able to do something, that's great, but me being able to do something that makes things better for the team, that's even better... My personal value comes out of making things better for the team. (Participant B, lines 119-120; 401-402)

Maybe the most important [thing]... it's that sense of give and take, and of an open discussion and learning from one another... I think that there's an empowerment element in that... I'm trying to help other people... It's not about me, it's about... whatever they need to achieve. (Participant D, lines 225-228; 303-304)

Giving people responsibilities and that ability to develop themselves is always something that I'd wanted. (Participant G, lines 154-155)

Tomlinson (2010) cites Csikszentmihalyi's 'flow' concept (1990) when she highlights that "what makes the difference in the work ethic of high-quality teachers is that their work is regenerative; they draw energy from what they do... [the] individual feels aligned with a task and the work becomes its own reward" (p.26).

Again, these findings add to our understanding of how teaching excellence emerges, and what motivates these people to work in education. Generating a simple 'word cloud' (Figure 5) to represent the most frequently occurring words within participants' drivers, based on the analysis of these narratives, shows how the notion of 'others' lies at the heart of everything:



Figure 5 – Key recurring words within participants' drivers and motivation

How do these practitioners embody, convey, and foster that excellence in their practice?

Through careful review and analysis of these narratives, I identified five major thematic areas which participants see as being key to the practice of teaching excellence. In this section, I address each thematic area in turn (in no particular order of importance), before proposing a visual model which captures the essence of these themes.

Theme one: Building relationships

Importance of relationships

Eleven out of twelve participants talked about the significance of relationship building between teachers and learners:

Underpinning all of my philosophy was always that whakawhanaungatanga; understanding the relationship, enabling people to be successful, and trying to find different ways that worked for different people. There's no 'one size fits all'; most of my classes had multiple ways that learners could engage with the same material in a way that suited them. (Participant I, lines 43-47).

There are multiple examples in the literature which recognise the importance of teachers' ability to build relationships with others. Palmer (2017, p.11), for instance, writes that "good teachers possess a capacity for connectedness. They are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects, and their students so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves". Liu (2015) describes teaching as inherently "interactional" (p.150), while Britzman (1986, p.453) portrays teaching as being "fundamentally a social relationship, characterized by mutual dependency, social interaction, and social engagement". For Rogers (1979), it is the student-teacher relationship which sits at the core of student-centred learning. Higgs and Titchen (2001a) propose a conceptual framework of professional practice which places an emphasis on "working with and for people" (p.6).

As a teacher, I feel that most of what I do is about relationships; I just maintain and foster relationships. So I often feel like a fake as a teacher... I'm not a teacher, I'm a relationship developer, and those relationships are as creative and enabling as they can be. (Participant L, lines 96-100)

Van Tartwijk et al. (2009, p.454), discussing the importance of positive teacher-learner relationships, cite Evertson and Weinstein's (2006) concept of the "warm demander": "Warm demanders are teachers who are warm, responsive, caring and supportive, as well as holding high expectations of their students". Grieve (2010) cites Cooper (1989) when she writes that the "quality of relationship between teachers and pupils is one of the most

important factors in determining the effectiveness of a school” (p.267). She goes on to report that “characteristics concerned with relationships and classroom interactions are considered important by practitioners who themselves have been identified as excellent teachers” (Grieve, 2010, p.274), highlighting that, in her research, the qualities rated most highly by practitioners were “affective qualities” (Grieve, 2010, p.274). Grieve also suggests that, when designing Professional Development content for educators, some weight must be given to interpersonal skills, particularly “centred on developing relationships that emphasise leadership, friendliness, and understanding” (p.275). In a piece entitled ‘The evolution of my identity as a teacher’, Schoenberger-Orgad (2011, p.12) reflects “my identity as a teacher is in terms of the relationships I build with my students. I want them to succeed, and I want to give them the skills and the help to ensure their success”. The importance of wanting learners to succeed also came through in this study. I revisit this later in this section.

If, as these findings suggest, positive teacher-learner relationships, characterised by warmth, mutual trust, and empathy, are key to teaching excellence – and I believe they are – teachers still need to be aware of these as professional relationships. I draw on Grant’s (1999) metaphor of “walking on a rickety bridge” and the importance of maintaining balance: The teacher “must take greater care in how s/he walks on that bridge. A small thoughtless move can throw the student off the bridge. No movement at all can provoke unwise movements from the student... [with] some... ‘jumping’ up and down” to ensure they are noticed (p.9). With this in mind, conversations around the ethics of power and identity in teacher-student relationships are recommended in teacher education (Claessens et al., 2017; Thornberg et al., 2020).

Working with others / networking

Alongside relationship building is the value of working with others and building strong networks, within one’s own team, across institutions, and in wider communities (be they geographical networks and/or domain-specific communities of practice). All twelve participants discussed how important this is to them.

All of these people that come into one’s life... they all play a part in how one shifts your way of teaching and supervising, because they all do things differently, and, you know, you see people doing things in a different way, and you learn from that.
(Participant D, lines 188-191)

Tomlinson (2010) calls for teachers to “associate [themselves] with quality [and] develop friendships with colleagues who set high standards” (p.25). Several researchers (including Berry et al., 2010a; Bryk et al., 2000; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009) have found that collaborating with others increases teacher satisfaction (with both their position and with the profession overall), while Berry et al. (2010b, p.5), citing a 2009 survey of teachers in the United States (MetLife Foundation, 2010), report that more than 90 per cent of teachers

believe “their colleagues contribute to their teaching effectiveness”. As Viadero summarises, “teachers raise their games when the quality of their colleagues improves” (2009, para. 1).

Networking with people who are excellent in teaching has been fantastic, what we can learn from each other... it's really good to get different ways or different perspectives on what people do, and the research behind it too. (Participant E, lines 504-505; 508-509)

This means that, as well as building relationships with our learners, we cannot underestimate the impact that positive, motivated, and authentic colleagues and peers in the wider academic and/or education community can have on our practice.

Awareness of learners as individuals

All twelve participants highlighted the need for teachers to recognise their learners as individual people, bringing different experiences, expectations, and personalities into the learning environment.

A lot of the learners are not always willing to share things verbally, but they're quite happy and keen on filling in a little [sticky note] with what they think about the topic... so that their voice is heard, and I think that's one of the things, sometimes we don't listen to the people who are quiet, you know what I mean? It's the shy ones, the quiet ones, the ones [who] are maybe more introverts than extroverts... they are quite often ignored, and I think that puts it into a bit more of a level playing field, then everybody will have an input. (Participant E, lines 441-448)

Hay McBer reminds us that “respect for others underpins everything the effective teacher does, and is expressed in a constant concern that everyone should treat [learners] and all members of the [institution’s] community with respect” (2000, p.21). Hirsh and Segolsson (2021), reporting on their inquiry into students’ perceptions of teaching excellence, describe “the best teachers... as highly attentive and responsive to student differences... teachers [who] have made the effort to get to know them so well that they usually know when and how they need to help them in different ways” (p.45). For them, it is “crucially important that... teachers get to know each one of them as a person as well as a learner and, moreover, that the person and the learner cannot really be distinguished from each other” (p.50).

I think for us, the difference in excellence is that we know our students. We've got an intimate knowledge of their thinking, of their backgrounds, of their health, of their issues that they maybe have, of outside influences that they have to deal with.
(Participant E, lines 609-612)

Molla and Nolan (2020, p.75) describe a “socially just pedagogic practice” as one which is “sensitive to individual differences and promotes an understanding of students’ varied cultural traditions and learning abilities”. In his work comparing expert and experienced teachers, Hattie (2003) found that “experts are more focused on solving problems with respect to individual students’ performance in the class, whereas the experienced teachers generally focus their decision on the entire class” (p.6).

In summary,

It's about knowing your learners; you have to know them. (Participant I, lines 261-262)

Empathy with learners

Combined with the importance of respecting learners as individual people, three-quarters of these participants (nine out of twelve) reflected on a sense of empathy with, and a genuine feeling of caring for learners:

It's all about them... and you've got to put yourself in their shoes... that's been the most successful thing for me with students, is putting yourself in their shoes.
(Participant A, lines 136; 165-166)

I think that people who tend to become... who I think are great teachers... are people who genuinely come from a position of care... I think people who come from a position of genuine care and doing things in the best interests [of learners] tend to make great teachers. (Participant F, lines 379-380; 382-384)

An excellent teacher or an excellent facilitator of learning is... someone who cares for people. (Participant K, lines 325-326)

The literature suggests that “caring is the very bedrock of all successful education” (Noddings, 1992, p.27), and that teachers are more effective when they care about each learner (Lumpkin, 2007; Nguyen, 2016; Ransom, 2020; Wadsorn, 2017). For Blackie et al. (2010), “the key element which facilitates the transition from a good education to a transformative one is empathy” (p.641). Freeman takes a slightly different angle, asserting that some “aspects of a teacher’s teaching... stem from attitude toward, and awareness of, self in the classroom” (1989, p.40). This echoes Smith (1971, p.8), who observes:

There is little doubt that the attitudes a teacher has towards himself (*sic*) influence his behavior in the classroom. And there are strong reasons for believing that the teacher’s attitudes towards his pupils – e.g., his expectations of them – will influence their achievement.

For Lumpkin (2007), “caring teachers’ expectations contribute to students feeling that their efforts will be rewarded as learning becomes more meaningful” (p.159). Weinstein (2002) would agree that this Pygmalion effect exists, highlighting how the beliefs a teacher has about their students influence both the teacher’s behaviour, and, as a consequence, student outcomes.

Taken together, these findings confirm the importance of building relationships with learners, colleagues, and peers, based on genuine care and respect.

Theme two: Focusing on learners

Each participant in this study highlighted how their focus on learners drives their practice:

My hopes are that education is the best thing it can possibly be for the students.
(Participant B, lines 471-472)

This echoes Tomlinson’s view that “great teachers... look at both the content they teach and the people whom they ask to learn that content with considerable reverence...They dignify whom and what they teach by making the act of learning dynamic and compelling” (2010, p.24). Bain (2004) reminds us that excellent teaching starts with the students, rather than with the subject matter.

[An excellent teacher] is someone who will be able to adapt their teaching, mentoring, guiding, whatever you want to call it, to meet the students’ needs.
(Participant G, lines 250-251)

Prosser and Trigwell (1999) draw a contrast in this way:

Teachers who focus on their students and their students’ learning tend to have students who focus on meaning and understanding in their studies, whilst... teachers who focus on themselves and what they are doing tend to have students who focus on reproduction. (p.142)

Hattie (2003) states that “expert teachers have high respect for students... as learners and people, and demonstrate care and commitment for them” (p.8). He suggests that expert teachers focus more on the complexities of what is happening in their classroom at any given point, while experienced teachers focus more on what the teacher is saying and doing.

The ultimate... the outcome, that’s what I’m striving for, seeing them on the day, graduating... and how I get to that, I think it’s worth being able to say, “You are my

customers, and this is how I approach my teaching... towards what you need, not what I need". (Participant E, lines 175-178)

Putting it simply, as Shulman (2004, p.36) asserts, "to take *learning* seriously, we need to take *learners* seriously".

Engaging with learners

As part of this focus on learners (and, again, building on the call to recognise learners as individuals), eight out of the twelve participants talked about the importance of genuinely engaging with them:

I really strongly believe that every learner has the ability to succeed... you have to meet their expectations and keep them engaged, so as a practitioner, I worked really hard to get to know my learners, to really understand who they were and why they were there, in order to be able to meet their needs and their expectations.

(Participant I, lines 32-37)

It's about the fact that everyone in that room feels like that person's talking to them.
(Participant K, lines 473-474)

In searching for a reliable definition of engagement, Silver and Perini (2010, p.321) perhaps summarise it best: "Even the research on engagement shows a kind of conceptual slipperiness, as terms like *participation, attention, interest, and on-task behavior* all seem to be used interchangeably throughout the literature". They go on to propose that the notion of 'engagement' signifies *commitment*, as "this is what we are looking for from our students" (p.323), and highlight that an engaging classroom results in better outcomes for learners. For Fredricks et al. (2004), who put forward three types of engagement – behavioural, emotional, and cognitive – there is a sense of *investment* when students are engaged in their learning; a "thoughtfulness and willingness to exert the effort necessary to comprehend complex ideas and master difficult skills" (p.60). Marzano (2007) asserts that, "arguably, keeping students engaged is one of the most important considerations for the classroom teacher" (p.98). Others highlight how student engagement has a positive impact on multiple factors, including motivation (Fazey & Fazey, 2001; Lund, 2016; Raza et al., 2019), behaviour (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Raphael et al., 2008), retention (Bonet & Walters, 2016; Farr-Wharton et al., 2018; Kahu, 2013), completion rates (Christenson et al., 2012; Kuh et al., 2008), and overall academic achievement (Carini et al., 2006; Gunuc, 2014; Reyes et al., 2012).

Understanding that there is no one single way to engage learners, I appreciate how Silver and Perini (2010), drawing on previous work (Silver et al., 2001; Strong et al., 2003), examine student engagement "through the lens of learning styles" (p.325), and propose 'eight Cs of student engagement': competition, challenge, curiosity, controversy, choice,

creativity, co-operation, and connections. I would suggest that these could equally sit within several other elements of teaching excellence.

Wanting learners to succeed

For all twelve participants, wanting their learners to succeed is another element of their focus on learners:

Ultimately, you've got to have the students' best interests at heart. (Participant G, lines 372-373)

Back in 1996, Darling-Hammond drew attention to the responsibility of educators “not only to offer education, but to ensure learning” (p.5), while Grant describes the aim of teaching as “developing the student to her/his fullest potential” (1999, p.2). Hirsh and Segolsson’s research participants described “how the best teachers are equally passionate about the students’ learning and understanding” (2021, pp.43-44). The same authors cite Sugrue’s concept of ‘scaffolding-shepherding’ (1997) when they explain that “teachers must balance between simultaneously scaffolding learners in a cognitively challenging manner, while paying attention to their social and personal needs in ways that adequately safeguard and shepherd their social development, self-confidence and self-esteem” (p.38). In essence, this captures the idea that participants in this study want their learners to succeed not only academically but also in life generally, “empowering and giving the students the confidence to stand tall in whatever challenge they will face” (White et al., 2009, p.26):

I know that I can create good relationships with people and understand people, and support them to do things well... it's allowing people to realise their potential, to be the best that they can be. (Participant I, lines 52-55)

Excellent teachers are people who want excellence in the people that they're sharing their knowledge with. (Participant K, lines 304-305)

Hay McBer agrees: Excellent teachers “crucially, repeatedly express positive expectations and build pupils’ self- esteem and belief that they can succeed, as learners and in life” (2000, p.21). They “make students believe that learning and knowledge and development are possible for everyone and that hard work pays off” (Hirsh & Segolsson, 2021, p.47). This kind of empowerment can lead to transformation of the learner.

Transforming the learner

The majority of participants (ten of the twelve) reflected on seeing transformation within learners as an important part of their role:

A great practitioner is somebody who can facilitate some form of transformation in a learner... and that happens at different levels for different people. (Participant F, lines 224-226)

I think it's the realisation, slowly, in the students... it's just watching them, seeing that transition... that's the thing... it's sort of, you get to the end of the journey, and you realise where they've come from. (Participant G, lines 493; 497-498; 505-506)

"*Transformative or transformational* (terms used interchangeably in the literature) learning is about change – dramatic, fundamental change in the way we see ourselves and the world in which we live" (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020, p.166). Such transformation may be a result of increased confidence and/or self-awareness (Harvey & Knight, 1996), ability to understand one's world (Taylor, 2017), and/or a change in previously fixed assumptions or mindsets (Mezirow, 2003). As Cheng states, "in the context of quality enhancement in higher education, there is a growing focus on quality as transformation, which emphasises the empowerment of students" (2011, p.3). My participants would agree:

Education is a business of transforming lives... and so, therefore, we have to do the absolute best we can... How do we help people help their lives? And what does success look like for them? (Participant I, lines 393-394; 398-399)

I always enjoy working with people, and that special moment when they realise that they've captured something, they've understood something, they've moved on, and that a world has opened up for them... I really love that. (Participant J, lines 83-85)

I think most teaching is about the probable, and I'm much more interested in the impossible... and crazy, memorable experiences that will transform you and me. (Participant L, lines 365-367)

In a case study which included interviews with fifteen university Teaching Excellence awardees in the UK, Cheng found that their perception of quality centred on "transformation to develop and enhance students' learning" (2011, p.14). For Eisner (2002, p.14), the best education "is a process of learning how to become the architect of our own education", which inherently both involves and results in empowerment.

In summary, then, these findings contribute to the literature around learner-focused or learner-centred education, and illustrate the importance of engaging with and empowering learners, wanting the best for learners, and, ultimately, learner transformation.

Theme three: Facilitating learning

Ten participants described their classroom practice as facilitation:

[It's] about facilitating, and using the time to uncover the learning that's present in the room, rather than transferring it from my head to theirs... (Participant K, lines 262-263)

How can I facilitate their learning? How can I change my thinking of being the 'know-it-all' teacher in front of the classroom to the one that has got some knowledge that can facilitate the learning of the students in many other ways as well? I think that's probably the biggest thing. (Participant E, lines 528-532)

[An excellent teacher is] able to facilitate a community... able to work with a group of students, and get them on board... get them having fun. (Participant J, lines 221-223)

Kember and Kwan (2000) propose that viewing teaching as learning facilitation “emphasise[s] meeting the needs of the students and helping them to develop into... independent learner[s]” (p.484). This ties back to my previous theme of focusing on and empowering the learner. Teaching Excellence awardees participating in Cheng’s study (2011) see facilitation as “an effective way to encourage... experiential learning, ...give more scope for creativity and experimentation, and enable [students] to become independent” (p.10).

To be able to inspire someone isn't telling them what to do... it's actually facilitating their learning. (Participant H, lines 146-147)

Co-construction of knowledge

As part of this concept of facilitation of learning, ten of the twelve participants emphasised the teacher-learner partnership within the classroom, and their belief that knowledge is co-constructed:

The relationship between the supervisor or lecturer and the student is maybe the most important... it's that sense of give and take, and of an open discussion, and learning from one another. (Participant D, lines 224-226)

All the knowledge is in the room, and you've just got to get to it... everyone's got different experiences, and also different levels of understanding... They want to share their stories. (Participant A, lines 147-158)

This echoes Smith's description of expert teachers as "miners": "They [expert teachers] seemed to believe that students had all they needed with them. The teacher's job was to "mine" it, to discover it, to draw it out for students to see it themselves" (Smith & Strahan, 2004, p.364). It also captures the Māori concept of 'ako', "a teaching and learning relationship where the educator is also learning from the student in a two-way process" (Ministry of Education, August 2015, citing Pere, 1982). Littleton and Mercer (2013) would concur: "The quality of education is crucially dependent upon the nature and quality of talk between teachers and students" (p.292).

I'm always passionate to learn something new... and I really enjoy sharing that experience... and the conversations [that happen] around what we've just done.
(Participant H, lines 323-324; 326-327)

Biesta (2004) also asserts that success in learning occurs in the interactional space between teacher and learners. "If we understand meaning making as located in between the individuals who interact in a social practice, communication must be understood as being about participation and co-construction rather than about the transmission of messages from a sender to a receiver" (Hirsh & Segolsson, 2021, p.37). Learners participating in Hirsh and Segolsson's investigation into student perceptions of teaching excellence identified "the teaching-learning process in the classrooms of the best teachers [as being] characterized by the teachers' willingness to listen to the students and the teachers seeing them as competent partners whose insights and opinions should be considered" (2021, p.43). For these learners, this was "crucial to their desire to learn" (Hirsh & Segolsson, 2021, p.43). In addition, they valued teachers who "explicitly state that learning is a shared responsibility between teacher and students" (Hirsh & Segolsson, 2021, p.44). Cheng (2011, p.8) reports that Teaching Excellence awardees "stressed the importance of co-operation and partnership between lecturers and students in the teaching process" and that "teaching by itself could not produce good learning outcomes".

These ideas all tie in with my earlier themes of relationship building and focusing on the learner, and show how the individual themes are inter-connected.

Experiential learning / project-based learning

Teachers' willingness to use different approaches and strategies in the classroom has been linked to improved student learning (Coker & Porter, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2000), with experiential learning in particular "firmly rooted in adult learning practice" (Knowles et al., 2015, p.181). Kolb defines 'learning' as "the process whereby knowledge is created through transformation of experience" (2015, p.49), with his model of experiential learning (Figure 6) drawing heavily on Dewey's work (1938), around interaction, experience, and reflection (Bates, 2019), Lewin's work (1951) on action research and organisational behaviour (Knowles et al., 2015), and on Piaget's theory (1954, 1970) that knowledge construction is based on an individual's experiences (Bates, 2019).

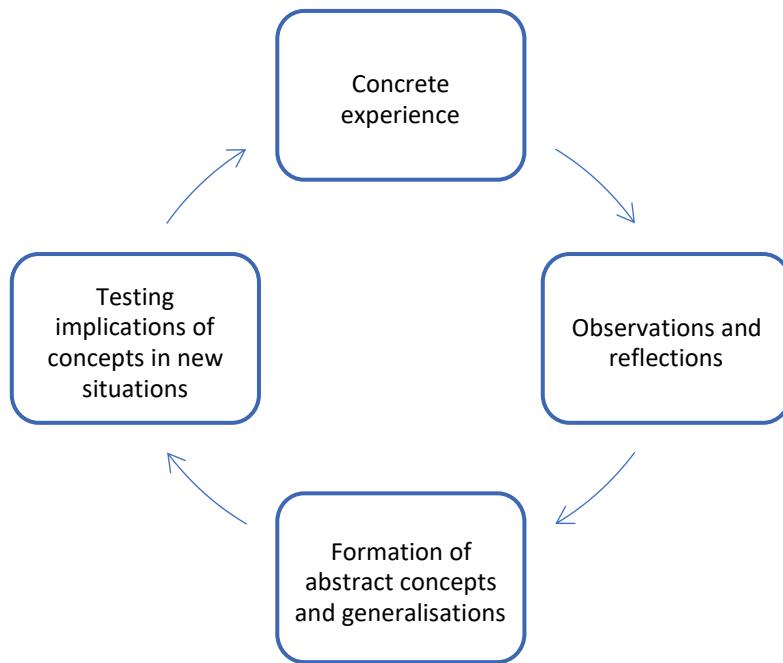


Figure 6 – Kolb’s experiential learning

While Kolb’s model has been heavily criticised (Gould, 2009; Jarvis, 1987; Miettinen, 2000), its contribution to the literature around experiential learning cannot be denied (Knowles et al., 2015), and “as a rule of thumb, the model provides an excellent framework for planning teaching and learning activities” (Tennant, 2006, p.91). Indeed, as Bates (2019, p.20) highlights, experiential learning “to this day remains the cornerstone of many educational approaches and learning programmes”.

Experiential learning and ‘learning-by-doing’ are both associated with project-based learning (PBL):

PBL integrates knowing and doing. Students learn knowledge and elements of the core curriculum, but also apply what they know to solve authentic problems and produce results that matter... PBL refocuses education on the student, not the curriculum – a shift mandated by the global world, which rewards intangible assets such as drive, passion, creativity, empathy, and resiliency. These cannot be taught out of a textbook, but must be activated through experience. (Markham, 2011, pp.38-39).

The vast majority (eleven of twelve) of these award-winning teachers highlighted the importance of experiential learning, project-based learning and/or ‘learning-by-doing’:

I was able to think outside the box... how can I make this project-based, applied, real-life scenario learning?... It all stems I think from the basics; it's applied, and that's when they do their learning... it's their own project. That's when you get the buy-in.
(Participant E, lines 232-233; 309-310)

Our shift has gone away from 'Here's the dish, this is how you do it, you repeat it, tick a box' to 'Here's a brief, interact with these people, see what they want, build it.'
(Participant H, lines 296-297)

The literature suggests that “giving students more agency in the learning process is important not only for the immediate learning experience, but [also] in terms of preparing them for the long term” (Spiller, 2011, p.3). It can help maintain or even increase student motivation (Franco Valdez & Valdez Cervantes, 2018; Gadola & Chindamo, 2019), boost learners’ self-confidence (Barron et al., 2017), and impact on programme completion rates (Hill, 2017). Bradberry and Maio (2019), who surveyed former university students to investigate the impact of experiential learning, found that it contributes to student success in their respective programmes, while also “instill[ing] numerous practical skills and provid[ing] insights that help prepare students for success in their future careers” (p.94). The fact that most of these award-winning teachers use experiential and/or project-based learning could perhaps be attributed to Otago Polytechnic’s overall culture of experiential learning, but also suggests a focus on the learner, building their capabilities, and wanting the best possible outcomes for the learner in the long-term.

Crafting facilitation skills

It is interesting that four participants explicitly described how they see excellence in *how* someone teaches, rather than it being subject-matter expertise.

I don't think excellent teaching comes from what you teach, I think it comes from how you teach it... for excellence teachers, it's not that they've taught something amazing, it's how they've done it, and how they've engaged with the class.
(Participant I, lines 371-372; 375-377)

Schön (1987, p.13) would seem to agree: “Outstanding practitioners are not said to have more professional knowledge than others, but more “wisdom”, “talent”, “intuition”, or “artistry””. This also fits with Higgs and Titchen’s concept of “professional craft knowledge” (2001b, p.x), and Grieve’s reference to “the craft of teaching” (2010, p.273). For Tomlinson, “great teaching is both a science and an art” (2010, p.26), while Grimmett and MacKinnon (1992, p.396) explain that:

Craft knowledge of teaching is not substantive subject matter knowledge, nor is it syntactical knowledge (...from the disciplines); rather it is a particular form of morally

appropriate, intelligent, and sensible know-how that is constructed by teachers... in the context of their lived experiences... and learner-focused pedagogy.

Leinhardt and Greeno (1986) characterise teaching as “a complex cognitive skill” (p.75). They draw on Sacerdoti’s (1977) proposal that knowledge for skilled performance comprises ‘nets’ of different schemata, and explain how, for skilled teachers, “many component actions are performed with little effort, because they have become automatic through practice” (p.76). Hattie concurs and suggests that ‘expert’ teachers make the most of the automaticity they develop through practice “so as to free working memory to deal with other more complex characteristics of the situation” (2003, p.8). He emphasises that his intention is not to undervalue “the importance of content knowledge – it must be present – but it is more pedagogical content knowledge that is important: that is, the way knowledge is used in teaching situations” (Hattie, 2003, p.10). This mirrors the concept of ‘flexible purposing’ (Dewey, 1938; Eisner, 2002), when teachers are able to capitalise on unexpected moments with learners to create further learning opportunities.

Two additional participants suggested there is something “indefinable” in excellent facilitation of learning:

I honestly believe that there's an element of magic... there's an indescribable element, just stuff that makes teaching... it's an art as much as it is a science... there's this bit that is undefinable. (Participant B, lines 144-148)

One other participant described excellence as a “philosophy”, which perhaps calls to mind the much-cited quote (often mis-attributed to Aristotle), “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit” (Durant, 1926, p.87):

I think [excellence] is a reflection of many things; I think it's a reflection of people who do it... it's something they do all the time... I think it's someone that's reached a level where it's second nature to do it to the absolute best, not only the ability, but that they're absolutely committed to it being all about the learner and not themselves.
(Participant K, lines 291-292; 296-298)

Looking at the ‘how not what’ idea from a different angle, Berry et al. (2010b, p.8) claim that “increasingly, research points to the fact that it is not just what teachers can access, but how they use those accessed resources to advance institutional excellence, that will determine their effectiveness and their longevity in the profession”. This idea of “institutional excellence” is interesting and is something I return to shortly.

Theme four: Creating a positive environment

Creating a place/space for learning

Two-thirds of participants (eight of twelve) discussed the importance of creating an environment in which learning can occur:

There is no planning, I don't think, for magic moments in education, I think sometimes they happen by creating the environment that allows people to feel safe... to share their experiences, (Participant I, lines 232-234)

Molla and Nolan (2020, p.78) cite their earlier work (Nolan & Molla, 2017) when they describe “an empowering learning environment [as] characterized by respect, collegiality, openness and support”. As Hattie asserts, “expert teachers are proficient at creating an optimal classroom climate for learning... where error is welcomed, where student questioning is high, where engagement is the norm, and where students can gain reputations as effective learners” (2003, p.7).

[It's] kind of creating an atmosphere where it's actually OK to make mistakes - and we all make mistakes and that's how we learn – that's cool; it doesn't matter... you can feel comfortable in a classroom with this person, that you're not being judged, that you can make mistakes and be yourself... that, for me, building an atmosphere is the most important thing, building a good atmosphere. (Participant J, lines 228-231; 233-234)

A report commissioned by the United Kingdom’s Department for Education and Employment (Hay McBer, 2000) expands on this idea: “Effective teachers use their knowledge, skills and behaviours to create effective learning environments in their classrooms. They create environments which maximise opportunities to learn, in which pupils are well managed and motivated to learn” (p.27). The researchers found that “teachers really do make a difference. Within their classrooms, effective teachers create learning environments which foster... progress by deploying their teaching skills as well as a wide range of professional characteristics” (p.9), emphasising that “outstanding teachers create an excellent classroom climate and achieve superior [learner] progress largely by displaying more professional characteristics at higher levels of sophistication within a very structured learning environment” (Hay McBer, 2000, p.9).

I believe excellent teachers create the feeling where the people that are listening, or sharing the learning experience, feel that they are valued. (Participant K, lines 664-667)

In Hirsh and Segolsson's research (2021), students highlighted "the importance of a caring and trustworthy relationship between teachers and students" (p.42), recognising that this helps build a safe and affirmative space; "a classroom environment where the students feel safe and comfortable to show when they do not understand and where they dare to ask questions" (Hirsh & Segolsson, 2021, p.42). Schoonmaker describes a student teacher "discover[ing] the importance of creating an environment that nurtures active learning" (1998, p.560), and Schaefer et al. (2014) tell the story of a teacher who connected her desire for "her classroom to be a space of affirmation and belonging for students, an uncomplicated space of acceptance" (p.20) back to her complicated childhood.

Making learning enjoyable

Tied to the creation of a place and space conducive to learning is the importance of making learning enjoyable.

I worked really hard to make teaching enjoyable, interesting... they really enjoyed games, role-plays, and as many creative things as you could think of, 'cause it helped them to learn... and I really, really, really worked my butt off! (Participant C, lines 215-216; 228-230)

I think that's quite important; I mean everything should be fun when you're teaching! (Participant J, lines 165-166)

This is also present in the literature. The subject of Schoonmaker's (1998) narrative, for instance, "believes learning should be fun, [and] shows an inclination to experiment" (p.560), which, for her, both contribute to the learning environment. Students using different technologies in Ismaile et al.'s study (2017) reported that it was fun and enjoyable, while also feeling that this improved focus and reduced levels of anxiety, with similar results reported by Anjaniputra and Salsabila (2018). James and Nerantzi (2019, p.xli) show that "academics across continents are integrating playful practices" into tertiary teaching, including through the use of Lego, Playdoh, Meccano, word-puzzles, and worms (though not necessarily all at the same time!).

In summary, participants here see value in creating an environment in which learning can not only occur, with learners feeling safe and valued, but also in which it is fun and enjoyable.

Theme five: Reflecting on practice

Importance of reflective practice

Every participant in this study talked about the importance of reflective practice as one aspect of teaching excellence:

If you can get teachers who're reflective and learning from that, I think that's... yeah it comes back to that reflective thing... being able to question. If you're not questioning what you're doing, you're never going to advance... or get closer to excellence. (Participant G, lines 336-337; 344-346)

How do we teach people how to be excellent teachers? I think we have to get them to reflect on their own practice... and you have to be open, so, therefore, you have to be vulnerable... open in their own practice and what they do... and how they reflect on that. (Participant I, lines 380-382; 386-389)

Some authors (for example, Akbari, 2007; Jaeger, 2013) question the impact of reflective practice and/or its integration into teacher education programmes, with Russell (2013) going so far as to ask whether reflective practice has “done more harm than good in teacher education”, suggesting that it is talked about extensively in theory but not modelled in practice. This perhaps echoes Rodgers (2002, p.843) when she laments that “in becoming everything to everybody, [reflection] has lost its ability to be seen”. For many, however, (including Garmon, 2005; Kreber & Castleden, 2009; Meierdirk, 2016), reflection is widely accepted as a “vital aspect of teaching practice” (Beauchamp, 2015, p.126) and a “prerequisite to quality teaching” (Mälkki & Lindblom-Yläne, 2012, p.33). Ewing and Smith (2001) remind us that “the knowledge used by professionals in their practice includes knowledge born of reflective experience” (p.21), York-Barr et al. (2006, p.xvii) highlight that “constructing meaning from experiences enhances the applicability of that knowledge beyond the situation in which it was learned”, and Schoenberger-Orgad, (2011, p.13) succinctly suggests that “as teachers, we remain as learners, and it is our job to constantly reflect on and improve what we do”.

There are days when I think ‘Yeah, that went well... yeah, I really nailed it today’, and other days where I just think ‘Ah, that could've been a lot better’, so I think... it's important to be self-reflective all the time. (Participant J, lines 192-194)

[Excellent teachers] are always prepared to critique themselves and what they're doing... We have to be able to talk about what we're learning and how we're learning, and we have to create that environment where teachers want to give up a bit of power and actually just critique the hell out of what they're doing. (Participant K, line 357; 448-450)

Russell (2013), acknowledging that it is his own personal interpretation of the work of Schön (1983), proposes that “Schön was urging us to consider much more fully and carefully how new and experienced professionals *learn from their own experiences of professional action*” (p.85 (emphasis in original text)). As Desimone states, “some of the most powerful learning experiences occur in a teacher's own classroom through self-examination or observation”

(2011, p.69). In one of his last publications, Schön himself called for a new epistemology within higher education, one which “must account for and legitimize... the practitioner’s generation of actionable knowledge... that can be carried over... to new practice situations” (1995, p.34). Rodgers (2002), returning to the work of Dewey (1933, 1938) summarises that “reflection is not an end in itself but a tool or vehicle used in the transformation of raw experience into meaning-filled theory that is grounded in experience, [and] informed by existing theory” (p.863).

In essence, these findings are consistent with the literature, with participants recognising (and indeed emphasising) the need to reflect on one’s own practice, and to be prepared to critique and question one’s own work, in order to work towards continuous improvement.

Staying relevant/current

Two-thirds of participants (eight out of twelve) discussed the need to stay relevant and current with their subject matter expertise and practices, for the sake of both teacher and learners:

I read a lot of different things... and I watch a lot of different documentaries, I listen to things on the radio, and I’m always thinking about the content and how I can include that in the class, or how a current issue can be related to what I’m doing... to try and make things relevant. (Participant C, lines 362-366)

An old dog can learn new tricks! It’s kind of looking at [something] and saying ‘Yeah, OK, my knowledge is important, but is it actually still that current? And if it’s not current, how can I bring it back to be... how can I update my knowledge, how can I improve my understanding?’... You have to keep yourself current. (Participant E, lines 395-398; 417)

I think anybody who’s passionate about their subject, it’s a very good start... which is why it’s important always to teach some new things, and update your content all the time... you need to do that for your students, but also you need to do it for yourself. (Participant J, lines 311-314)

For Haggerty et al. (2019), if teachers want “the best experience for their students, ...it’s essential to maintain currency in their pedagogical knowledge, skills and attitude” (p.63). Cusick (2001) reminds us that “knowledge for practice is never complete” (p.133), calling for all professional practitioners to be “research sensitive’... [with] an awareness of research, and [to] use systematic knowledge gained through research to guide their practice” (p.125), while Karlberg and Bezzina (2020, p.16) encourage “more participative models that can see teachers engaging in more ‘situated’ learning which incorporates a recognition that professional learning and development occur as part-and-parcel of everyday working life”.

These ideas can be tied back to elements of the findings for my first research question, with participants recognising that there is always more to learn.

Authenticity

Several participants highlighted the importance of authenticity in their professional practice:

I think that everyone has to bring their authentic self... and so, therefore, it doesn't matter who you are or what you are... [you've] got to bring that authenticity to the class, so that [you] get trust and respect... you have to be authentic, and give a little bit of yourself. (Participant I, lines 270-274; 276)

Palmer (2017) suggests that identity and integrity are key to good teaching, and that “as we learn more about who we are, we can learn techniques that reveal rather than conceal the personhood from which good teaching comes... to manifest more fully the gift of self from which our best teaching comes” (p.25). This can be linked to ‘congruence’, one of Rogers’ (1979) three core attributes needed by teachers (alongside empathy and ‘unconditional positive regard’): “Congruence requires that the face one presents in the classroom is not substantially different from the face one presents in research or in one’s family life” (Blackie et al., 2010, p.639). For Molla and Nolan (2020, p.77), professional practice “involves thinking and acting against the backdrop of one’s goals, values, understandings, and beliefs”, and I would argue that this is not possible if we are not authentic.

Ethical frameworks could form the centre of an academic as well as a practice-based engagement... I don't think I think of my values as ethical - they're just my values – but when you start to look around and think, “What is driving my relationships?”, it is probably deeply ethical. (Participant L, lines 307-310)

Authenticity also needs to extend to our learners. Excellent teachers “[allow] learners the chance to express themselves in an authentic way” (Pinner, 2019, p.3); they are “genuine, and generate the atmosphere where pupils can venture to be themselves, express themselves and not be afraid of making mistakes – an important starting point for learning” (Hay McBer, 2000, p.22). This is consistent with the importance of creating an environment conducive to learning, and, albeit less explicitly, the importance of building relationships based on mutual respect.

Other considerations

In addition to these five ‘keys to excellence’, all participants talked about two other principal considerations: the personality traits of excellent teachers, and the culture of Otago Polytechnic. I now summarise the findings for each of these themes in turn.

Personality traits of excellent teachers

Unlike the analysis for my first research question, which revealed different characteristics of participants' own identities, here participants reflected on what *they* perceived to be the personality traits of excellent teachers. Many authors over the years (including Brophy & Good, 1974; Burant et al., 2007; Jones, 1989; Seymour, 1963) have suggested that teaching excellence is related to personal qualities: "Personality is a very dominant and important characteristic of the ideal teacher" (Arnon & Reichel, 2007, p.451), although, as Tomlinson (2010, p.26) reminds us, there may be "no off-the-shelf blueprint for building a highly successful teacher".

I've known some excellent teachers who are quite quiet people... who are not bouncy... and energetic and get everybody revved up; they're very quiet, and they're wonderful at observing the people who're not managing, and noticing things that, well, that sort of bouncy people might not notice... and I've loved teaching with people who're quite different from me... we bring things to each other, and I think that there's not one kind of good teacher. (Participant J, lines 239-245)

Several characteristics are consistent with the values, motivators, and practices which have come through earlier in this analysis of narratives, including reflective practice and being aware there is always more to learn:

They don't stop when they've achieved [something], they keep going... they just want to get that good. (Participant A, lines 313-314)

There's the desire to learn... to be reflective, and to actually say I want to get better at this, and to craft it. (Participant B, lines 383-385)

The importance of relationship building, demonstrating care and empathy, and engaging with learners are also present here:

You've got to be able to listen... you absolutely have to be able to figure out where someone else is at, ... understand what they understand, and what they don't understand, and then help to move them along. (Participant B, lines 171-174)

I think you need to be diligent; I think you need to care. (Participant C, line 360)

I think it's, on the one hand, the knowledge, on the other hand, the relationship with the students, but also, I think, thirdly, the ability to bring that student into contact with other people... kind of connecting them up with other options and possibilities. (Participant D, lines 229-233)

I think... you've got to have a passion for what you're doing, and be able to convey that passion in some way, shape, or form... and I think being able to relate to the audience that you're working with, and, particularly with our... a lot of our students, is to treat them as adults, not kids... (Participant G, lines 352-356)

These findings support the idea that “the personalities of teachers and their empathic and attentive attitude towards their students [are] important” (Arnon & Reichel, 2007, p.457). Johannessen et al. (1997) emphasise the importance of the affective domain in teachers, and Weinstein’s (1990) study of prospective teachers found that their beliefs about good teaching centred on “affective and interpersonal” traits (p.279). Taking this one step further, Grieve (2010, p.266) asserts that “a teacher’s moral code of behaviour..., personal philosophy and self-belief affect their motivation and their professional actions”. Hay McBer (2000, p.19), reporting on different ‘professional characteristics’, explains that these “are how the teacher does the job, and have to do with self-image and values; traits, or the way the teacher habitually approaches situations; and, at the deepest level, the motivation that drives performance”.

It helps to be organised, to be self-aware, to be really, really respectful – and to share how to be respectful – to model professional behaviours, to be really empathetic, and to be kind, and to not put yourself ahead of, or your needs ahead of the class, to be learner-centric... to review and value and refine your own practices all the time, to celebrate with your learners, to facilitate learning through cultural practices... to always be open as a learner, to be a learner, and it's kind of just, like, noticing moments of learning, and to celebrate them all the time. (Participant L, lines 272-279)

This participant captures many of the ‘keys to excellence’ in their description of excellent teaching, as well as recognising the value of noticing “moments of learning” and celebrating with learners. Besides this being a positive practice in itself, Marzano (2007, 2010) also identifies celebrating success as one factor which contributes to establishing and maintaining positive relationships with learners, communicating learning goals and expectations, and boosting student engagement levels.

Organisational culture

Schaefer and Clandinin (2019) remind us that “teacher identities are both personal and professional, and are shaped by the contexts in which teachers live and work” (p.62). They draw attention to “the importance of negotiating... stories to live by within the professional knowledge landscapes with its in and out-of-classroom places, [and] *the need to belong, to find a place*” (p.59, emphasis added). Tomlinson (2010, p.24) agrees, highlighting the need for teachers to “find a place that fits you... an environment that nurtures fearless practice and discovery”. She goes on to suggest that if “the places in which we teach... don’t feed us as human beings and as teachers, we atrophy” (Tomlinson, 2010, p.24).

There was something about Otago Polytech... they were more interested in developing you as a person and you as an educator. (Participant A, lines 87-88)

Berger (2003) encourages teachers to build “an ethic of excellence”, arguing that this is possible not just in the classroom but also at an institutional level. “Outstanding teachers are active in building team spirit and the ‘feel good’ factor, so that people in the [organisation] feel part of the team, identify with it, and are proud of what it is doing” (Hay McBer, 2000, p.26).

I love OP... it's a vibrant and diverse community with lots of really interesting people. I like that you can talk to a variety of colleagues, students, practitioners... I like how it is an open environment. (Participant C, lines 371-374)

A survey of more than 600 schoolteachers (Rochkind et al., 2007) found that, given the choice, almost 80 percent would opt to work in an organisation where they felt supported rather than an institution with better pay. Berry et al. (2010b, p.13) report that “strong... leadership, a collegial staff with a shared teaching philosophy and pedagogical practices” and a sense of autonomy are the most important factors in recruiting and keeping accomplished teachers.

I [have] felt sufficiently challenged and happy and valued and... all of those things at OP... combined with a sense of freedom I suppose, and a sense that I could chart my own direction... I've never felt, I've really never felt that somebody is looking over my shoulder and saying you can't do that and you must do that... obviously, there are rules and regulations, and obviously you have to be accountable, I'm not talking about those things, but a real sense of freedom and possibilities to... organise new courses [and] all sorts of new things... I think OP is way more flexible about these things than many other institutions, and that staff are given way more permission to experiment. (Participant D, lines 363-370; 399-400)

Darling-Hammond et al. (2009, p.6) assert that “in many high-achieving nations where teacher collaboration is the norm, teachers have substantial influence on... decisions”. Molla and Nolan (2020) concur, suggesting that when teachers “are empowered and have voice and autonomy in their day-to-day professional practices” (p.68), they have true professional agency.

I think this is a brilliant place to work... It's a place where I feel like my voice is heard. (Participant J, lines 347-350)

[There's] the feeling that you can make change happen... and I have a sense of belonging... I've felt really respected and trusted here, and I think my managers have

been really key to that, to let me do things in the way that I do things. (Participant L, lines 408-409; 426-428)

Together, these findings are consistent with the existing literature, and support the concept that an organisational or ‘collective excellence’ can be cultivated.

In summary, in terms of how these practitioners embody, convey, and foster excellence in their practice, the analysis of narratives has resulted in five over-arching themes: Building relationships, focusing on learners, facilitating learning, creating a positive environment, and reflecting on practice. These are set out in the ‘Keys to Teaching Excellence’ (Figure 7).

Within each theme sit personal characteristics and values which came through strongly in these findings, together with elements of teaching and professional practice which also contribute to excellence. It is worth noting that Hattie (2003), whose “study commenced from an extensive review of literature and a synthesis of over half a million studies” (p.15), suggests that multiple elements make up the profile of an expert teacher, describing them as “facets of the gem-stone”, and clarifying that “there is no one necessary facet, nor the equal presence of all, but the overlapping of many facets into the whole” (p.10). These keys to teaching excellence also overlap. There are, for instance, characteristics and practices which could sit under more than one theme: For example, ‘Considering learners as individuals’ could be considered an aspect of ‘Focusing on Learners’, as well as being an essential element of ‘Building Relationships’; ‘Crafting facilitation skills’ could be part of ‘Reflecting on Practice’, as well as part of ‘Facilitating Learning’. Like Hattie, I am not suggesting that any one sector is more important than any other. I propose instead that it is about the combination and balance of these ‘Keys to Teaching Excellence’.

Interestingly, these elements of excellence are all quite different to the political and managerial discourse around excellence, with its focus on performance indicators, league tables, and other metrics. I would suggest that, for teachers, while understanding the need to be accountable, excellence bears no relation to such ‘quantification’ of practice. Instead, it is embodied in doing the right thing for learners and colleagues, and empowering individuals through care, respect, and facilitation of learning.

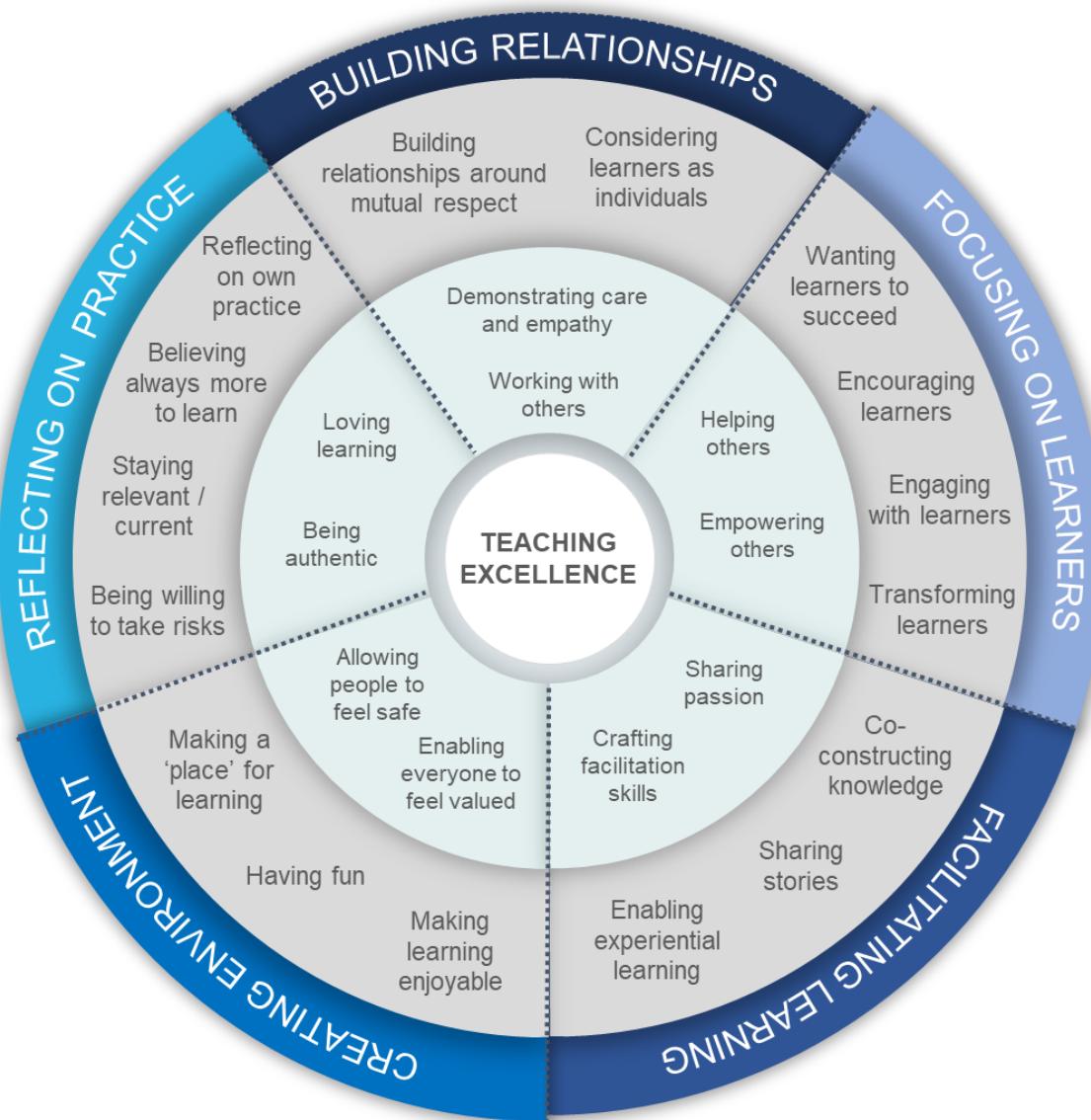


Figure 7 – The Keys to Teaching Excellence

I can empathise with Klevan et al. (2019, p.1246) when they admit that

working with the analysis and writing up the findings was accompanied by an increasing feeling of discomfort. What I had experienced and received as a researcher seemed so rich, vivid, and important. The themes that were distilled from this richness through the analysis seemed scant, in comparison.

Once I had settled on the format of this model, and how best these key themes might be presented, there was an uncomfortable moment of “Is that it?!”. The stories of these participants are much richer than can be captured in one model. Nevertheless, while the model may not be radical or revelatory to many educators, it does provide a coherent foundation to what teaching excellence looks like.

Shulman (2005, p.52), when discussing ‘signature pedagogies’ – the “types of teaching that organize the fundamental ways in which future practitioners are educated for their new professions” – calls for a close look at professional preparation, “if you wish to understand why professions develop as they do”. He goes on to highlight “three fundamental dimensions of professional work – to *think*, to *perform*, and to *act with integrity*” (Shulman, 2005, p.52). While Shulman suggests that these three elements are given different levels of attention in different professions, he is very clear in his statement “signature pedagogies make a difference. They form habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of the hand” (2005, p.59). For me, habits of the mind, heart, and hand are all visible in ‘The Keys to Teaching Excellence’ model, and I would argue that teacher educators and educational developers have a responsibility to empower current and future teachers to embrace all of these aspects of their profession.

What implications for Professional Development do these narratives of excellence have?

Given that Professional Development (PD) is one of the keys to improving institutional and learner outcomes (Berry et al., 2010b; Borko, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Desimone, 2011), I asked these award-winning educators what they would like to see in teacher development, moving forward. While this section presents some of their thoughts on this topic, I also draw on the analysis of narratives as a whole, and the implications for PD. I begin, though, by looking briefly at the nature and purpose of Professional Development.

Unfortunately, “there are nearly as many definitions of professional development as there are authors who have written about the topic” (Gordon, 2004, p.5). Kelchtermans defines PD as “a learning process resulting from meaningful interaction with the context (both in time and space) and eventually leading to changes in teachers’ professional practice

(actions) and in their thinking about that practice” (2004, p.220). This captures the importance of the learning being meaningful and resulting in changes to both thinking and practice, while also reminding us of the importance of context. I appreciate, too, the comprehensive definition put forward by Day (1999, p.4):

Professional development consists of all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group, or school, which contribute through these to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew, and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills, and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning, and practice with [learners] and colleagues throughout each phase of their teaching lives.

This reminds us that Professional Development occurs naturally, as well as through planned activities, and sits better with my thinking around professional practice. It also gives the teacher a more active role in their development, rather than being a passive ‘recipient’ of development opportunities. In summary, then, Professional Development should enable and empower teachers.

Successful PD should also lead to improved outcomes for learners, and is linked to the overall quality of teaching, educational outcomes, and innovation (Duignan et al., 2016; Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Waters et al. 2015), with NZ’s Tertiary Education Strategy (Ministry of Education, 2020) highlighting the need to “develop staff to strengthen teaching, leadership and learner support capability across the education workforce” as one of its current and medium-term priorities. Desimone (2011) proposes a four-step model of “how successful professional development leads to enhanced student learning” (p.70). While she sets out the model as a linear process, I would argue that presenting it in a cyclical format (Figure 8) reflects the ongoing and iterative nature of professional learning.

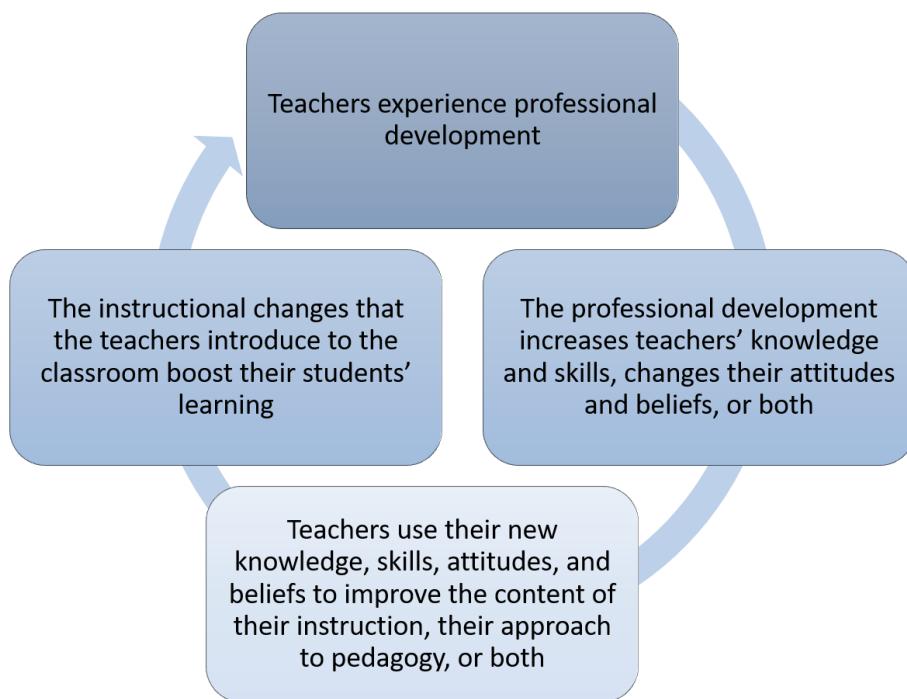


Figure 8 – How successful professional development leads to enhanced student learning (after Desimone, 2011)

As highlighted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), “the maintenance of teaching skills, the development of new skills, and the pursuit of continuing teacher education... are essential elements of a teacher’s professional life” (2004, p.81). However, the OECD (2020), while discussing the Education Sustainable Development Goal – “to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (UNESCO, 2020) – also acknowledges that there is great variation in teachers’ Professional Development across different countries.

Traditionally, PD for teachers occurs through workshops, seminars, and/or presentations, and through formal qualifications in education (Johnson, 2019), although the literature is gradually shifting the focus to Professional Development which is more situated, interactive, and social (Desimone, 2011; Haggerty et al., 2019; Mansfield & Thompson, 2017; Slowey et al., 2014). While some researchers (including Borko, 2004; Garet et al., 2001; Guskey, 2003) indicate that there is a lack of agreement on what constitutes effective Professional Development, others (Desimone, 2011; Wayne et al. 2008) suggest that there *is* consensus on the principal features of valuable teacher development. Desimone (2011) lists five key characteristics – content focus, active learning, coherence, collective participation, and duration – and asserts that these “five core features should be present” (p.70) in any PD programme. Garet et al. (2001), reporting on a national survey of teachers in the United States, also highlight that teachers consider in-service PD to be most effective when it is sustained over time. Darling-Hammond et al. add to this, citing the benefits of having time

built into teaching schedules, so that teachers' "learning activities can be ongoing and sustained, and can focus on a particular issue or problem over time" (2009, p.15). Time (and associated costs), however, both in terms of 'release' time to participate in PD and the time needed to reflect on and integrate new learnings into practice, are often cited as a barrier to teacher development (Duignan et al., 2016; Slowey et al., 2014; Wayne et al., 2008), and certainly need to be considered when planning individual and group development initiatives. As Guskey (2003) reminds us, though, drawing on his analysis of "13 different lists of the characteristics of effective professional development" (p.748), time alone does not guarantee success, and other factors (including organisation, structure, and purpose) are also essential considerations.

In this project, participants' thoughts are perhaps best summarised by the assertion that "effective professional development is intensive, ongoing, ...connected to practice, ...and builds strong working relationships among teachers" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009, p.5), with several participants reflecting on the value of collaborating with others and learning from one another:

I'm interested in developing group work, group thinking... different ways of teaching and learning... When I was doing my [teaching qualification], the really great benefit of that programme was it connected me with a whole range of diverse teachers... and we shared ideas and experiences as part of our learning. (Participant C, lines 530-536)

I think one can model, one can help people, one can support people into changing their teaching practices... their attitude about teaching... [to] more of a student-centric approach... more a sense of 'let's do it together as a team'. (Participant D, lines 309-311; 315-316)

Learning from each other is something that I don't think we do enough. (Participant G, line 566)

What [new teachers] are wanting to do is... just to actually be in a room full of other people who are experiencing the same things, and actually have a real conversation. (Participant J, lines 449-451)

The literature agrees that collaborative professional learning is beneficial (Gilbert, 2005; Haggerty et al., 2019; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Mansfield & Thompson, 2017), and "can promote... change that extends beyond individual classrooms" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009, p.5). However, "the kind of high-intensity, job-embedded collaborative learning that is most effective is not a common feature of professional development" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009, p.4). Karlberg and Bezzina (2020, p.4) highlight "the importance of individuals constantly interacting with and influencing each other; the creation of enabling

conditions and supportive structures for teachers to work together within and across schools as they engage in networked learning". This echoes the elements of empowering the learner (in this case, the developing teacher) and building relationships present in the 'Keys to Excellence' model, which is perhaps not surprising if we consider those elements as underpinning excellent teaching.

I think [teacher development] has to be the same as what we have when we deliver; it's... people alongside, working, helping, understanding, reaching... allowing people to reach their potential. (Participant I, lines 517-518)

I would like to see teacher development programmes to be reflective of the philosophy and culture of the school and of the programme... I feel that there's a disconnect at the moment... the development is very theoretical, it's still heavily text based... as opposed to being student centric. (Participant F, lines 552-557)

Rochkind et al. (2007, p.4) suggest that "teachers are more likely to say that their training put too much emphasis on theories of learning versus more practical classroom issues". This is not to say that theory is not important in teacher development, but we do need to think about how it is applied. One implication of these narratives is the call for experiential learning in teacher development; for new teachers to learn by doing. "Professional development is most effective when teachers are able to see new strategies modeled and then practice the strategy with feedback" (Johnson, 2019, p.270). This echoes the 'Facilitating Learning' theme discussed earlier in this section.

Building on Connelly and Clandinin (2000), Schaefer and Clandinin (2019, p.62) emphasise two types of knowledge, "knowledge *for* teachers and teacher knowledge":

Knowledge for teachers is knowledge that is considered by others as important knowledge for teachers to have; knowledge itself is considered an object, as something to possess or hold and that can be transferred to teachers. Teacher knowledge is the embodied narrative knowledge that lives within teachers and is expressed in their practices. Teacher knowledge is composed by teachers in and through their life experiences, in school and out of school, over time, place and relationships.

'Knowledge for teachers' might centre on knowledge of the subject(s) they teach, understanding of how people learn, and instructional knowledge ('classroom practice knowledge'), although the latter two in particular are likely to also be enhanced over time through 'teacher knowledge', as the educator gains experience and reflects on that experience to improve practice.

Sitting alongside knowledge for teachers, including the use of different teaching strategies and approaches, learning facilitation, and learner-centred education, for example, interpersonal skills also need to be integrated into Professional Development and teacher education programmes:

An academic staff development programme should offer the academic new skills and new knowledge surrounding what it means to be student-centred in teaching in higher education. Such a programme is far more likely to be transformational for the individual academic and therefore potentially for the department and institution if the relational aspect is consciously and deliberately attended to. (Blackie et al., 2010, p.644)

The ability to connect with students as individuals, and to practice with care, empathy, and respect, comes through strongly in these narratives as one important aspect of teaching excellence. Those same skills can also help new teachers in the creation of a positive learning environment for their students. Teacher education programmes may touch on practical aspects of creating a place for learning, such as classroom layout, or technology-enhanced learning, for instance, but, again, these narratives suggest that it is the interpersonal skills which make the difference between whether or not a learner feels safe and motivated to learn in any particular space and/or interaction with others. These affective skills might be enhanced through a combination of activities, including, for instance, development workshops, peer-teaching, action-research projects, mentoring, and/or classroom observation, but should be an integral part of ongoing development.

As well as collaborative professional learning, several participants talked about the importance of mentoring for teacher development:

We need experts in those skill-sets to be mentoring them, teaching them. (Participant A, line 549)

I'd like to see that, when we employ staff... that they have that opportunity to work with a skilled mentor, and someone who has that ability to imbue some confidence, more than anything... the confidence to be in the environment... There's an embedding that needs to happen, where we create the environment where that person is comfortable enough, that they know the expectations, that they can experience, they can look at the delivery and the other parts of the courses or... programmes that they're delivering, and get a sense of where they're to be placed in it, and that there's a real opportunity for them, for their voice to be heard.
(Participant K, lines 569; 576-585)

The opportunity for ongoing mentorship [is important], because in the cases that I've seen it work well, it has been... quite integrated in seeking mentorship, and just

having ongoing conversations, which are about education. You don't want people to be closed down and think that they're 'fixed' and they've stopped learning. I think, to be a teacher, you've always got to learn. (Participant L, lines 562-566)

Hargreaves and Elhawary (2019) cite the work of the humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers (1951, 1961) when they assert that the opportunity to talk with another person or people “can provide support for a problem that the learner wants to solve, by establishing a relationship with the learner that encourages them to trust their own experience rather than relying on second-hand knowledge” (p.46). They go on to describe how participants in their “coaching relationships” and Teacher Learning Communities came to appreciate collaborative learning as “a two-way process” (p.53) which led to “a sense of self-enhancement” (p.56). Similarly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2009, p.17) present a short case study of “Teacher’s Network learning circles” in Singapore, in which:

4 to 10 teachers and a facilitator collaboratively identify and solve common problems chosen by the participating teachers using discussions and action research. The learning circles generally meet for eight two-hour sessions over a period of 4 to 12 months... Teachers... act as co-learners and critical friends so that they feel safe to take the risks of sharing their assumptions and personal theories, experimenting with new ideas and practices, and sharing their successes and problems. Discussing problems and possible solutions in learning circles fosters a sense of collegiality among teachers and encourages them to be reflective practitioners.

Research suggests that mentoring is “critical to the development of effective teaching skills” (Berry et al., 2010b, p.2). Berry et al. highlight one of their case studies in which a “seasoned veteran” of teaching worked with four novice teachers “as a full-time coach, mentor and team teacher”:

This experiment in collaboration and shared expertise was a success. Despite having only first-year teachers, all four classes were excelling. According to the principal, the novice teachers were already beginning to teach as if they had much more teaching experience. All of the novices were planning to remain in teaching, defying the typical attrition rate. (2010b, pp.9-10)

This ties back to my findings around the value of relationship building and working with others, and the literature reporting that collaborating and networking improves both teacher satisfaction and teaching effectiveness. I propose, therefore, that, in these narratives, another implication for PD is the integration of collaborative learning opportunities and mentoring.

Additional implications for Professional Development are woven throughout these findings. They include the need for early-career/student teachers to reflect on the beliefs and biases

that they carry with them as a result of their own backgrounds, cultures, and lived experiences, and to be prepared to challenge these attitudes through new learning and experiences. Beginning teachers need to move past their potentially simplistic views of what a teacher is and does, and be able to accept and embrace the complexities of the role. Reflecting on one's motivation to teach, and personal and professional identities is also an important aspect of teacher development, in the hope that individuals can avoid the "reality shock" (Veenman, 1984, p.143) experienced by so many entering the profession. Johnson (2019) proposes that reflection can be used to "identify, elucidate, and then align one's teaching practices with a set of values and/or an educational philosophy" (p.264), and that this "might be considered the ultimate form of professional development" (p.266). Developing this kind of reflective practice at an early stage in one's career will prove invaluable going forward, with ongoing reflective practice identified as a key element of teaching excellence by these participants' narratives.

In summary, the narratives suggest that the same 'Keys to Teaching Excellence' could and should be applied to the development of early-career and experienced teachers, encouraging the building of relationships, a focus on the developing teacher, facilitation of learning through the co-construction of knowledge and experiential learning opportunities, the creation of a positive environment in which people feel safe and valued, and a commitment to reflecting on practice with a view to developing excellence, both individually and as an organisation.

Chapter 5: Impact on Professional Practice

I bring my *being*
To my practice
And in my practising I
am being me
And I am *becoming*
who I will be

(Higgs, 2016, p.5, emphasis, alignment in original)

In this chapter, I reflect on the impact this doctoral project and the research journey has had on my professional practice. The extract from Higgs' poem above reminds us that professional practice "cannot be separated from the person. It is always embodied and embedded in the actions of the practitioner" (Ewing & Smith, 2001, p.23). As I approach the end of the formal part of my doctoral research project, I am able to reflect on this journey and its impact on me, both personally and professionally. How do I feel about this learning experience? How has my professional identity evolved? How do I see my Professional Practice now, and what route do I see ahead? To begin, I look back at how I represented my professional identity in November 2018 (Figure 9), near the start of my doctoral journey:

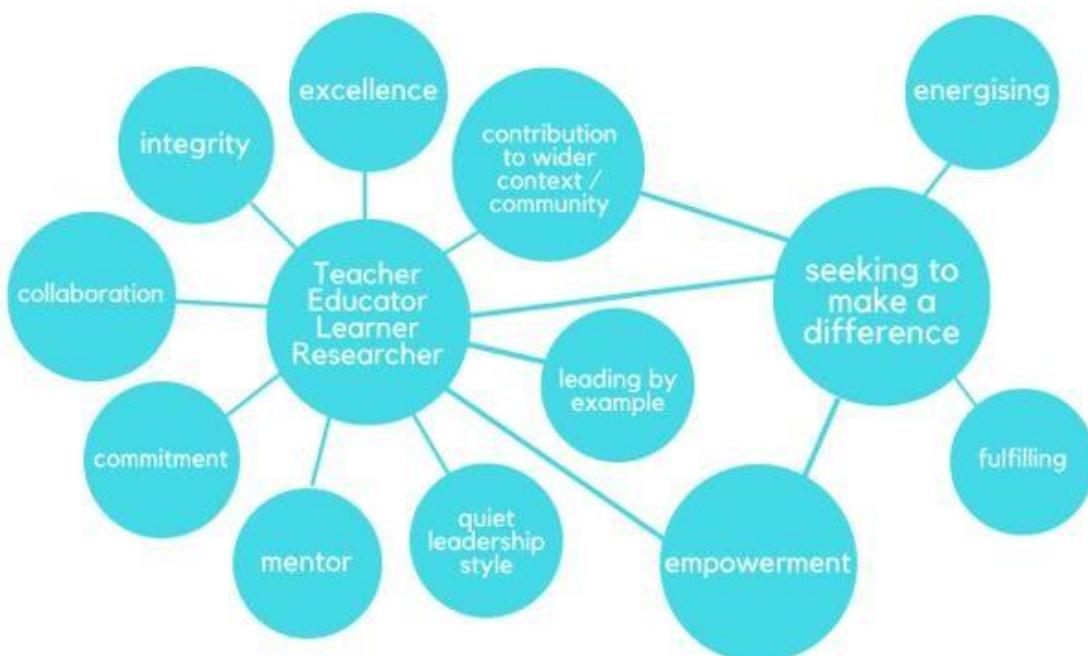


Figure 9 – My professional identity (November 2018)

In doing so, I completely agree with Muncey's assertion that "We recognise a continuity from our younger selves but there is also a sense that we are continually renewed" (2010,

p.11). I still recognise and stand by much of this identity today; after all, it developed over a 26-year period (if I take my teaching assistant role as a starting point), if not my whole life, given the underlying values and drivers present here. Yet, “when the familiar or everyday appears in a new light, the way is open for other possibilities, other ways of being” (Dall’Alba, 2009, p.37), and this doctoral experience does shine a new light on aspects of my identity.

The first clue to my current frame-of-mind is in acknowledging that I am approaching “the end of the *formal part*” of this project. Does this mean, though, that everything will draw to a close? No, I don’t believe so. In many ways, it feels as if this is the start of something bigger, and that there is much more to explore around teaching excellence and how this might be integrated into teacher development. As Shagoury (2011, p.306) summarises:

Teacher-research is a gift: to the profession, helping us change the way we see old problems and bring us new solutions; to research communities, showing us new research strategies..., and how we might take risks in writing up our research; and to ourselves, reminding us of the energy and passion in learning that made us teachers in the first place.

I recently presented the project and initial findings (Goode, 2020a) at a research symposium in New Zealand. Despite my usual nerves and those familiar feelings associated with imposter syndrome (Blyth et al., 2018; Ravindran, 2016), there were also some glimmers of excitement; a sense of “this is something I really care about, and this is that first time I really get to talk about it with my peers in tertiary education”. Over the next day and a half of the symposium, several people approached me to give very positive feedback on my presentation and/or to ask me more about the project. This in itself felt incredibly rewarding, and I was amazed to then be voted joint third-place winner of the ‘People’s Choice’ presentation. Perhaps my passion and excitement came through to the audience more than my nerves! Am I possibly becoming a more capable presenter?

This sense of ‘becoming’ is key here. As Dall’Alba (2009, p.34) explains, “learning to become a professional involves not only what we know and can do, but also who we are (becoming). It involves integration of knowing, acting, and being...”. This reminds us that learning is not just about skills and knowledge; there is a transformation that happens, and a shift in identity: “Learning and identity development go hand in hand” (Baker & Lattuca, 2010, p.809). Becoming a professional is an “emergent concept of identity formation” (Scanlon, 2011, p.13), and “an evolutionary, iterative process through which individuals develop a sense of a professional self” (Scanlon, 2011, p.14). The adoption of ‘becoming’ rejects conventional novice-to-expert explanations of being a professional. I have not arrived at a static point or some sort of finish line, having travelled along a linear pathway from novice to expert. Instead, the idea of ‘becoming’ is a better fit with lifelong learning, the idea that it is an ongoing journey, and the belief that “learning is an inherent part of living” (Hager &

Hodkinson, 2011, p.54). The American novelist John Gardner (1991, p.15) puts it in this way: “Mastery is not something that strikes in an instant, like a thunderbolt, but a gathering power that moves steadily through time, like weather”. We are always developing, always learning, and always evolving.

These ideas all fit with the literature around doctoral student identities and sociocultural learning. Identity construction is represented in different ways in the literature, but we can see common themes throughout. Wenger (1998) and McAlpine (2012), for instance, talk about ‘trajectories’ of continual movement in identity construction or formation, while for Scanlon (2011, p.13), there is an “ongoingness”. Giddens (1991) sees identity as a “reflexive achievement... shaped, altered, and reflexively sustained in relation to rapidly changing circumstances” (p.215). Markus and Nurius (1986) propose “possible selves”, as we imagine different future identities, and whether we wish to avoid them or work towards them. Ibarra (1999) suggests that we experiment with “provisional selves” to try and find how to fit into different contexts, and for others (including Baumeister & Muraven, 1996, and Mead, 1934), there is a sense of agency, as we actively choose and modify our identities based on what we need to fit best. Britzman (1992) echoes this when describing identity as a “constant social negotiation” (p.24) which is never settled or fixed.

Doctoral identity development, too, “is generally conceptualised as a sociocultural learning process of becoming an independent researcher” (Mantai, 2019, p.139). Green highlights that “doctoral education is as much about identity formation as it is about knowledge production” (2005, p.153). In this sense, perhaps the topic of the research project itself is not important here; it is going *through* the project, and doing that work that allows the learner to gain in confidence, and which triggers the transformation as a researcher; the opportunities to wear the researcher's hat, to become an authentic researcher, and to gain 'membership' of the community of practice of accredited researchers.

In the introduction to this thesis, I noted that one of my goals has been to “contribute to knowledge and academic literature around teaching excellence, teacher development, and professional practice” (p.16 of this document), while also continuing to learn. I feel confident that I have achieved both of these things. Talking with my participants about their life stories, their career trajectories, and their professional practice was an incredibly positive and affirming experience. As a teacher myself, I expected that I would be able to relate to many of my participants' experiences, but I did not realise how much I would see of my own story in them. Kearney and Andrew (2019, p.352) cite Clair (2003) when they write “through collecting stories of others I have been collecting myself”. I also hope that, by reading the stories of teachers who have been recognised for ‘excellence’, other educators will relate to and recognise elements of their own practice. The stories in themselves are new knowledge, which “reflect, or sometimes refract, a knowable reality” (Andrew, 2020, p.17), and the findings from the analysis of narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995) offer a different view of the richness of data therein. For me, these stories are universal:

“Our lives are particular, but they are also typical and generalizable, since we all participate in a limited number of cultures and institutions” (Ellis & Bochner, 2003, p.229). While my participants are all currently practising in NZ, I would argue that those key elements highlighted in my findings – building relationships, focusing on learners, facilitating learning, creating the right environment, and reflecting on practice – will sit at the heart of excellent practice in multiple contexts, wherever they may be geographically.

After my symposium presentation on this project and initial findings (Goode, 2020a), the Ako Aotearoa Manager for the South Island approached me and invited me to present to her colleagues in the managers’ network. On 3 February 2021, I presented the project to six people who lead the Ako Aotearoa network across the country, including the Teaching Excellence Awards. The presentation went well in itself, but the real benefit was that we also had around 30 minutes for discussion. The group agreed that landing on a definition of ‘teaching excellence’ is really difficult, and “such a big question” given the multiple perspectives at play. One person summarised it as being about “a positive learner experience” and something which “transforms the learner”. Another described excellence as “multi-faceted, from all angles... top-down, bottom-up” and something which also encapsulates “the impact on the learner, and where they go and use it in their community”, agreeing that “no wonder there’s not a definition out there!”. One other person mentioned that the Ako Aotearoa Chairman’s comments, included in the introduction to the booklet given to new awardees each year, often describe excellent teachers as passionate about their subject(s), and able to help students of different abilities to reach their learning goals.

One of the managers wondered whether something about priority learners should be included in the ‘Keys to Teaching Excellence’ model, and asked where I might see “helping *all* the learners” sitting. My response was that I hope this is *already* captured in, for example, ‘enabling everyone to feel valued’, ‘making a place for learning’, ‘allowing people to feel safe’, ‘considering learners as individuals’... I also suggested that, when working with teaching staff at OP, we try to encourage them to see that ways of supporting Māori and Pasifika learners, for example, are good for *all* learners so, if those practices are embedded in everything we do, on a daily basis, they should already be part of our practice, rather than being a separate element that we ‘add in’ sometimes.

Some of the managers were impressed at how many awardees there are at OP, and asked whether I think there is anything within the organisation that contributes to this. I talked about the content around organisational culture coming through in my findings - that staff do feel listened to, and feel they have a voice. I also talked about the mentoring support offered to award applicants, and that, while not all of OP’s awardees have worked with a mentor, many have. I mentioned the expectations around new staff completing a teaching qualification in their first three years at OP, and others agreed that not many organisations do this. I suggested that, at OP, this contributes to a culture in which we think of ourselves and our colleagues as dual practitioners.

One of the Ako Aotearoa managers asked for my views on the difference between competent and excellent teaching. I think that, for me, competent teaching is about meeting organisational and/or governmental expectations - “doing what’s expected” - but there is often a lack of personal connection or commitment to the individual learner. I said that ‘seeing the learner as an individual’ would be the key to differentiating between competence and excellence; it underpins our ability to make a difference for each individual learner. One of the other managers thought that it might be the difference between what teachers ‘should’ do, and what teachers ‘could’ do, which I like too.

All in all, it was very positive to be able to talk about this with other educators who are looking at it with ‘fresh eyes’, and to hear their feedback. Reassuring, too, to hear them describe the project as “very interesting” and “really worthwhile and valuable work”. Given that they are stakeholders in the national Teaching Excellence Award scheme, I left our discussion feeling incredibly encouraged and motivated. I feel that I have started contributing new knowledge to the conversation around teaching excellence, and that others can see the value in this.

In addition, I have continued to learn throughout this process, on multiple levels. Learning about the research process, research methodologies (particularly narrative inquiry), and data collection and analysis, for example, was expected. I have a better understanding of the importance of reflexivity, and identifying and understanding my own worldview and position. I have also learnt, though, that my organisational skills and attention to detail have been essential, and that my intrinsic motivation can be almost unwavering! I reflected on the importance of “time, tools, and tenacity” as part of “a doctoral candidate’s survival kit” in a presentation during a Professional Practice symposium (Goode, 2020b), with the audience appreciating the practical nature of the advice shared. My academic writing, already one of my strengths, has improved, and is something I enjoy much more now than I expected to, while also gaining a sense of satisfaction from it. My weekends and annual leave have been structured around study routines. I have grown accustomed to small piles of journal articles and books in most rooms of the house, appreciated the faceless people at the other end of a multitude of library ‘interloan’ requests, and have accepted that my research project, and academic reading and writing have become ‘nested’ in my headspace for some time now.

Motivation for pursuing doctoral study can be “...the desire for personal satisfaction and intellectual stimulation” (Boud & Tennant, 2006, p.295), and this is certainly true in my case. Sinclair et al. (2014, p.1976), drawing on the work of Gardner (2009), infer that “‘happy’ candidates, who enjoy their candidature, ...may be more driven to complete their doctorate [and] this experience may also be conducive to the formation of an active researcher”. I have thoroughly enjoyed my candidature, and I can see elements of “an active researcher” unfurling in me. In addition, “professional learning can enhance... professional agency”

(Molla & Nolan, 2020, p.67), building the “capacity to make choices, take principled action, and enact change” (Anderson, 2010, p.541). I return to this later.

The less formal elements of my doctoral experience, through different interactions with my doctoral supervisors and peers have also been very positive. Higgs and Titchen (2001a, p.3) explain that professional practice is “a process of dynamic professional socialisation”. Furthermore, “becoming a researcher does not happen in social isolation” (Mantai, 2017, p.636). I have rarely felt that anything I have been working on was unachievable. Yes, there have been moments when I have felt confused, ‘stuck’, or even anxious, but being able to have open conversations with my supervisory team has put me on the right path. Similarly, while conversations with fellow doctoral candidates have often been about mutual support and ‘checking in’ with each other, rather than having any particular procedural or research focus, these too have been beneficial, as we empathise with one another, reassure others about possible fears, and celebrate each other’s successes. There has been a sense of ‘belonging’ to the ‘D. Prof. Prac. community’. As Emmioğlu et al. highlight, “experiencing a positive academic climate... is seen to be influential in doctoral success” (2017, p.74), so I do not underestimate these relationships with peers and supervisors.

In the wider socio-political context, there have been additional factors in play. The governmental review of vocational education in NZ, which began in 2018, saw all sixteen state-owned Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics become subsidiaries of one national organisation from April 2020, to be fully operational by 1 January 2023 (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2020). During 2021, the centralisation of many services (including perhaps Learning and Teaching Development) is expected, meaning increased uncertainty about jobs and the potential of having to relocate to a different region for work. I am very aware that my recent and ongoing professional learning will contribute to my ability to make choices (Anderson, 2010), as different pathways potentially open up for teacher developers in New Zealand.

Massive shifts in education practices also occurred worldwide, as we responded to the global COVID-19 pandemic. For many of my doctoral peers, projects were disrupted by the national lockdown in NZ (March-May 2020) and/or international border closures resulting from the pandemic. I was one of the lucky ones, in that I had completed my data collection. The project itself, then, was not affected, but my study routines and productivity were impacted. The longer we were in lockdown, the more I struggled both to write coherently, and to separate work, study, and ‘life’ spaces. As Hager and Hodkinson (2011, p.47) summarise:

For experienced professionals, there are occasionally major changes in working practices that bring with them greatly intensified periods of learning... The metaphor of learning as ‘becoming’ should not imply that learning is some sort of

unproblematic linear developmental process. Becoming is partly unpredictable, erratic and uneven.

I never thought that my doctoral journey would be a linear process, and “uneven” is certainly more relatable. “It is about shaking us out of our deep, safe and comfortable slumber” (Klevan et al., 2019, p.1251). Can I see, though, what it is I am becoming?

Am I the same teacher now as I was in 1997? I hope not! That does not mean I thought I was a poor teacher then, but I recognise (and appreciate) a continual evolution of my practice as a teacher, in which learning is “an ongoing part of everyday practice” (Hager & Hodkinson, 2011, p.46), as well as the impact of developments in socio-political and educational contexts. Having said that, there are connections between the self I was in my early career, and my current self. In January 2021, for example, I noted in my research diary that I had been wondering what my mentor and peers from my PGCE would think of my ‘Keys to Teaching Excellence’ model. I could not remember whether we had talked about learner-centred teaching at all at that time, and the importance of the teacher-pupil relationship. Looking through my ‘PGCE Portfolio of Professional Development’, made up of essays, notes, lesson plans and observations on different aspects of professional practice, I found an essay I had written in late 1996, in the first term of the programme. We had been asked to write on the topic *‘Explain what you understand to be ‘good learning’ and the link between good teaching and good learning. In what ways, if any, have your views of teaching and learning developed since the beginning of the course?’*. Even then, I had written that “we never really stop learning, and constant self-evaluation is an important process in teaching”, reflected on my beliefs around encouraging and empowering pupils, noted the importance of a teacher’s passion, flexibility, and willingness to incorporate variety in different activities, and emphasised the need to create a positive learning environment.

Much as I grinned at some of the simplicity of my writing, my 1996 essay concludes that “Everyone should be given the opportunity to achieve their own potential, working at their own pace, whilst still being challenged, through the teacher acknowledging the fact that each and every pupil has something to contribute. Good learning requires good teaching, and, to quote James Pye, author of *Invisible Children*², “Teaching is most effective when the teachers know their pupils as **individuals**””. In essence, although my practice has certainly evolved over time, the fact that I was in a secondary teacher education programme in the UK in the 1990s did not mean that core aspects of ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ teaching would be described differently than in the early 2020s in a tertiary context in New Zealand.

In the same way, thinking about continual evolution of practice, when I first joined Otago Polytechnic as a Learning Designer in 2016, my practice was different to what it is now. It

² Pye, J. (1989). *Invisible children: Who are the real losers at school?* Oxford University Press.

could be argued that this is because the scope of our work is constantly shifting, and that the role of the Learning and Teaching Development team has changed with time. In addition, though, my confidence in some aspects of our work has grown. I used to feel, for instance, that ‘Research’ was something undertaken by people far more intelligent than me, and that it was not something within my reach. I can completely relate to Klevan when she writes, “I used to think that becoming a researcher was about acquiring certain knowledge and skills in order to fulfil the role of researcher” (Klevan et al., 2019, p.1243). Instead, a single conversation with our Director of Research and Postgraduate Studies, and the opportunity to collaborate with two colleagues on a peer-reviewed journal article (Goode et al., 2018), helped me stop seeing research with a capital ‘R’, and as something to be afraid of. That was perhaps a turning point, though I could not pinpoint for sure when this change really occurred. The impact can be seen in the number of my research outputs ([Appendix L](#)), with regular contributions to journals and conferences since joining OP.

There have been other moments when I have ‘glimpsed’ my inner researcher: successfully defending my research proposal to the confirmation panel in May 2019; seeing my work in peer-reviewed publications and presenting to peers in different contexts (two aspects of what Gardner (2009, p.384) calls “professional socialisation”); gaining in confidence as a member of Otago Polytechnic’s Research Ethics Committee (2017-2020); putting myself in a peer’s shoes while attending their oral defence; being asked to supervise a research project by two of my Learning and Teaching Development colleagues, and hearing people comment on being able to see my energy and passion when I talk about this research. Does this mean I consider myself a researcher now? Yes, *to a certain extent*. I return, however, to the image of ‘becoming’: I am becoming a researcher. A diary entry from July 2020 suggests that there has been a definite transformation in my thinking. Have I developed new skills and knowledge? Absolutely, but it is ongoing. Am I more confident? Yes, in many respects, but it is ongoing. I may not have all the answers, “but I feel more confident in *not* having the answers” (Klevan et al., 2019, p.1251). As Turner and McAlpine (2011, p.58) explain, “doctoral study can provide opportunities for students to experience a range of activities which are also undertaken by researchers, [and] the experiences of [researchers] are part of the same journey as that being embarked upon by [doctoral students]”. Again, this suggests the idea of continual development and ‘becoming’: doctoral students and researchers are on “the same journey”, just at different stages of it.

If we consider the Researcher Development Statement (Vitae Careers Research and Advisory Centre, 2010), developed by Vitae, “the global leader in supporting the professional development of researchers” (Vitae, 2020), I would say that I have developed skills in all four domains – knowledge and intellectual abilities, personal effectiveness, research governance and organisation, and engagement, influence and impact – as set out in Figure 10.

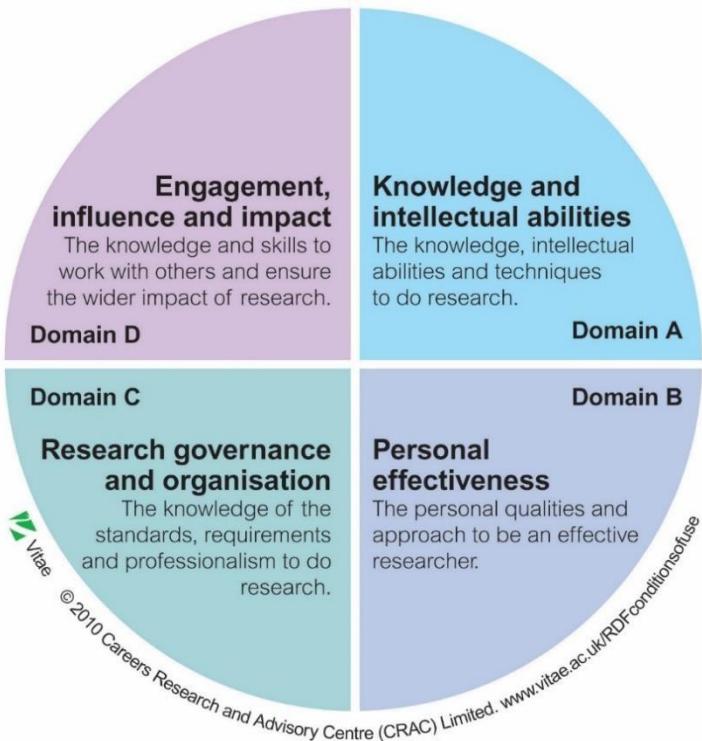


Figure 10 – The 'Vitae Researcher Development Statement'

This does not mean that I have the same breadth or depth of knowledge and skills as more experienced researchers might have, but it does suggest that I have set a solid foundation on which I can build. My doctoral journey has contributed to my identity as an educator and as a researcher, and I continue on the journey of 'becoming'.

In terms of a broader contribution to the organisation and to my peers in tertiary education, I have already begun dissemination of the research and of my reflections on the doctoral journey, including two symposium presentations in November 2020, and through my conversations with Ako Aotearoa. In 2021, I plan to

- present the research findings to my colleagues in the Learning and Teaching Development team, to Otago Polytechnic's Leadership Council, and to Learning and Teaching teams across Te Pūkenga
- share the collection of participants' stories in book format
- liaise with colleagues across OP to decide how best the 'Keys to Teaching Excellence' model might be introduced into our organisational culture and staff communications
- present to the wider organisation during a Staff Development day

In addition, future research outputs on teaching excellence in practice and on the implications for teacher education, as well as on professional doctorates and work-based learning, will contribute to discussions in the wider educational community, while also

highlighting some of the work and culture of Otago Polytechnic. I firmly believe in the potential impact of these narratives and the ‘Keys to Teaching Excellence’ model at both individual and organisational levels, including the professional practice of teachers, teacher educators, and Learning and Teaching Development teams.

Where do I see my own journey going? If I imagine different future identities, I see two “possible selves” (Markus & Nurius, 1986). The first is a teacher educator, working in formal teacher training programmes and in mentoring, particularly for early career teachers. The second future self is an Associate Professor, focusing on research into learning and teaching, and teacher development. The ideal for me would be a balanced combination of the two, so that I could continue to do work in which I feel I can make a difference, alongside others in ‘the classroom’, whatever that may look like in different contexts, while also embracing these new research skills, contributing to the scholarship of teaching and learning, and gaining satisfaction from writing. I am still guided very much by the core values and drivers underpinning my professional identity (Figure 11), and, in many ways, this project has affirmed some of those for me.

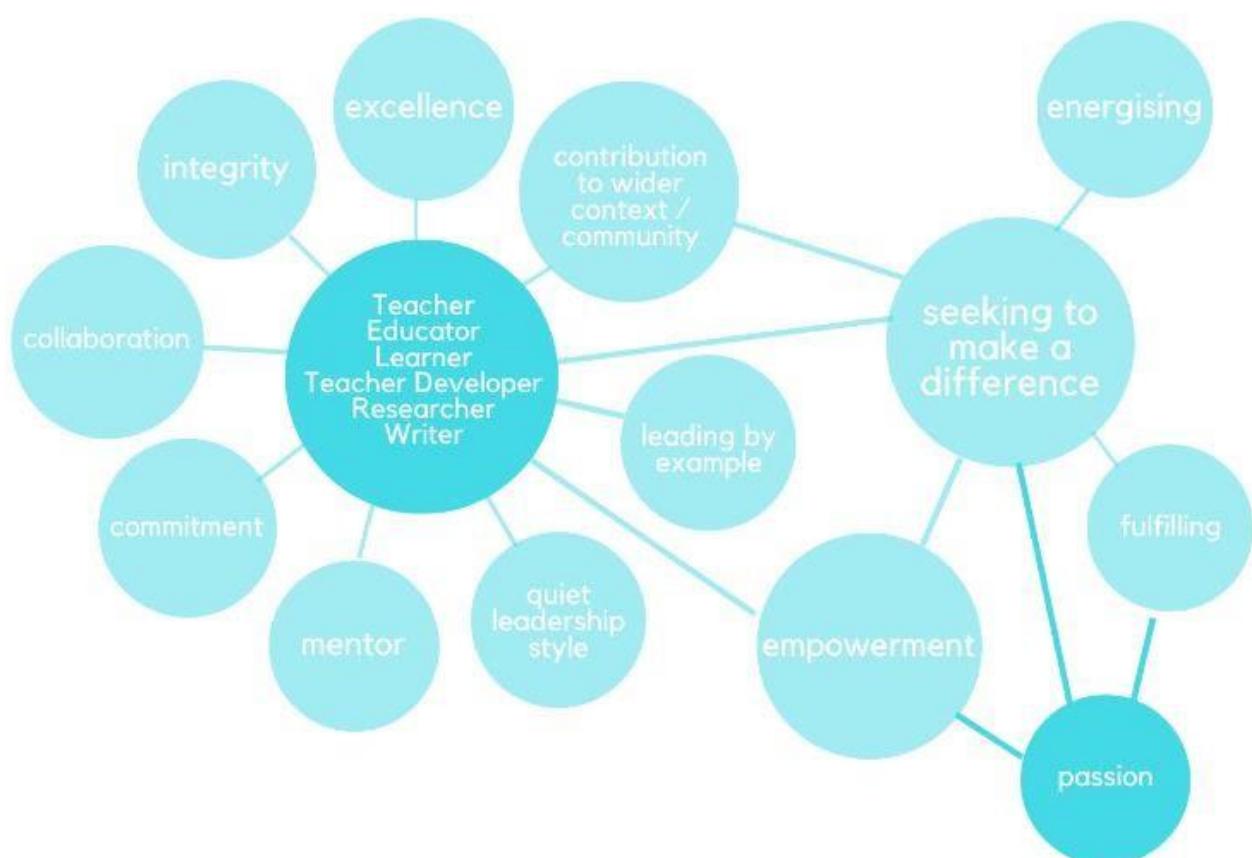


Figure 11 – My professional identity (Feb 2021)

It is a good thing to care deeply about the work that we do as teachers, and to want to be able to make a difference for others. Given that the feedback on this project so far has been incredibly positive, I genuinely look forward to seeing what the future holds for this teacher/researcher/writer, and to sharing my pursuit of excellence with others.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Overview

Throughout this project, my aim has been to investigate the trajectory and professional practice of national Tertiary Teaching Excellence awardees, to explore their background and evolution as educators, their current practice, and their thoughts around teacher development.

This has been achieved through narrative inquiry, with semi-structured one-to-one discussions with awardees resulting in twelve re-storied accounts of their lives and careers, key influences, turning points, and their professional practice. Through narrative analysis, the stories are findings in their own right, complemented by my analysis of narratives, setting out themes which occur across the set of stories.

The project has been guided by three research questions:

1. How does the concept of excellence unfurl in the narratives of Tertiary Teaching Excellence awardees?
2. How do these practitioners embody, convey, and foster that excellence in their practice?
3. What implications for Professional Development do these narratives of excellence have?

My findings show that the concept of excellence developed in these awardees through the early influence of ‘teachers’ – sometimes those working in education, but also family members, and/or people in the wider community – and through an environment in which learning was encouraged and enjoyed. While many participants admitted that they never intended to become teachers, personal characteristics, values, and drivers have all contributed to the development of their professional identities, often through a love of learning, a recognition that learning never stops, and a desire to encourage and empower other people.

Excellence in practice is fostered and demonstrated in five key areas: Building relationships, focusing on the learner, facilitating learning, creating a positive environment, and reflecting on practice, with multiple elements contributing to each area. Relationships with others, for instance, includes those with colleagues and peers, as well as with learners, and centres on relationships grounded in genuine care and respect for others; focusing on the learner includes a real desire to see students succeed, not only in their studies but in life in general. Participants also reflected on what they consider to be the personality traits of excellent teachers, and on how organisational culture has both contributed to and enabled a sense of a ‘collective excellence’ at Otago Polytechnic.

These narratives have several implications for Professional Development. Elements of practice underpinning the five ‘Keys to Excellence’ can be woven into teacher development programmes, the work of teacher educators and learning developers, mentoring programmes, learning circles, and informal learning opportunities. These award-winning teachers want to see Professional Development which is both collaborative and connected to practice. Interpersonal skills and reflective practice, including reflection on personal and professional identities, also need to be embedded into teacher education and other development programmes, setting them up as an integral part of ongoing development.

Significance

These findings are significant for several reasons. First, I hope that educators will read these stories and recognise elements of their own practice, to (re-)inspire and (re-)motivate them in their work. The findings also contribute to existing research and knowledge around what teaching excellence looks like. While previous literature has examined different aspects of teaching excellence, teaching awards, and/or their impact, there does not appear to be anyone who has looked at the development or trajectory of award-winning teachers. Educators, trainers, mentors, and curriculum designers are likely to appreciate the practical applications of these findings, and how they might be incorporated into formal qualifications and continuing professional development opportunities moving forward. In addition, my own professional practice is visible throughout this thesis, through reflections on my practice and on my development as a researcher; something I am confident that others will relate to and through which I myself can see growth. Last but not least, this work is significant to me on a personal and a professional level. My own love of learning and pursuit of excellence in my professional practice, as well as wanting a sense of achievement, have all been key drivers over the past three years. Seeing the project come together and feeling a sense of both gratitude and pride is all incredibly rewarding, and will contribute to my own next steps in my career.

Johnson (2019, p.253) cites multiple authors when he reminds us that “Teachers are the most significant variable in determining the quality of education students receive and the amount of learning that occurs”. Developing teaching excellence in oneself and in others, then, raises the quality of learning for our students, which is ultimately why we work in education.

Limitations

This research does not offer a definitive definition of ‘teaching excellence’, but that was never the intention. It does, however, contribute to the literature and to ongoing conversations around this complex subject.

I recognise that the narrative inquiry here has captured the stories of twelve practitioners in a particular organisation within the tertiary context in NZ. Nevertheless, participants do

have different backgrounds, ethnicities, and come from different discipline areas. I firmly believe that others will be able to relate both to the stories and to the analysis of narratives, and recognise elements of their own professional practice, regardless of physical or educational context.

Further research

There are, of course, opportunities for further research on teaching excellence and on becoming an excellent teacher. From a personal perspective, the next step will be to embed these findings into teacher development at Otago Polytechnic (and ideally across NZ's new national Institute of Skills and Technology, Te Pūkenga), and to conduct some action research to investigate the impact. Kennedy (2014) places action research in the 'transformative' section of her spectrum of models of Continuing Professional Development, and this type of transformation is key, at individual, team, and organisational levels.

I believe another worthwhile project would be to talk with students (former and current) of these award-winning teachers, to gather their views on the professional practice and impact of these educators. This would contribute to the literature on student perspectives of teaching excellence, as well as complementing the narratives gathered here.

While, during my conversations with participants, we touched on aspects of applying for a national teaching award and of the impact of winning, these topics could be investigated in greater depth, including discussion with mentors who have supported award applicants. This would benefit those in similar positions in the future.

I would also like to see this project extended on a national level, to capture the stories of recognised teachers working in different regions, different organisations, and at different levels of education (including primary and secondary). This would provide a more complete picture of what teaching excellence looks like across NZ, and contribute to the ongoing conversation internationally.

Coda

In this coda, my aim is to capture my reflections during the time between the formal submission of my written thesis (June 2021) and the oral assessment. Thinking about the research process, my findings, and the overall doctoral experience has continued, with a sense of genuine excitement at what might come next. I have also presented the project to three different groups of stakeholders (August-September 2021), and consider some of those conversations here.

With my thesis submitted to the examiners, my focus turned to preparing for the oral assessment. While reflecting on the project and on how I might structure my final presentation, I realised that I have essentially been doing three things:

- Shining a light on different concepts and contexts, bearing in mind that, while I am highlighting these, they are always part of something bigger. Related to this is the recognition that the work I am doing is in the light of those that have gone before me
- Looking closely at concepts, at the existing literature, at elements of practice, and so on
- Reflecting on who I am, and on who I aspire to be

Each part of my presentation was therefore guided by one or more of the tools shown in Figure 12.



Figure 12 – Tools to guide final presentation³

Growth and transformation

I also drew on the image of a koru – an unfurling fern leaf (Image 3) – as a symbol of growth through my professional practice journey. For me, this represents the key concept of ‘becoming’, as discussed in [Chapter 5](#). We are *always* developing, always learning, and

³ Clipart Library. (2016-2019). *Mini flashlight clipart*. [Illustration]. <http://clipart-library.com/clipart/1510972.htm>; Winkler, M. (2020). *Magnifying glass*. [Photograph]. <https://unsplash.com/photos/afW1hht0NSs>; Tintin75. (2015). *The mirror*. [Illustration]. <https://www.canstockphoto.com/the-mirror-25182408.html>

always evolving. I experience this in my role in the Learning and Teaching Development team too: a continual development of the self, both in terms of my own development, and in that of the colleagues I support.

The image of growth is also a good fit with professional practice. As an emerging discipline, I would say professional practice is developing out of a new understanding of work-based learning (as opposed to work-integrated learning), and of how learning at work relies on applying knowledge in different sets of circumstances, reflecting on that, and adjusting and refining it, in a continuous spiral.

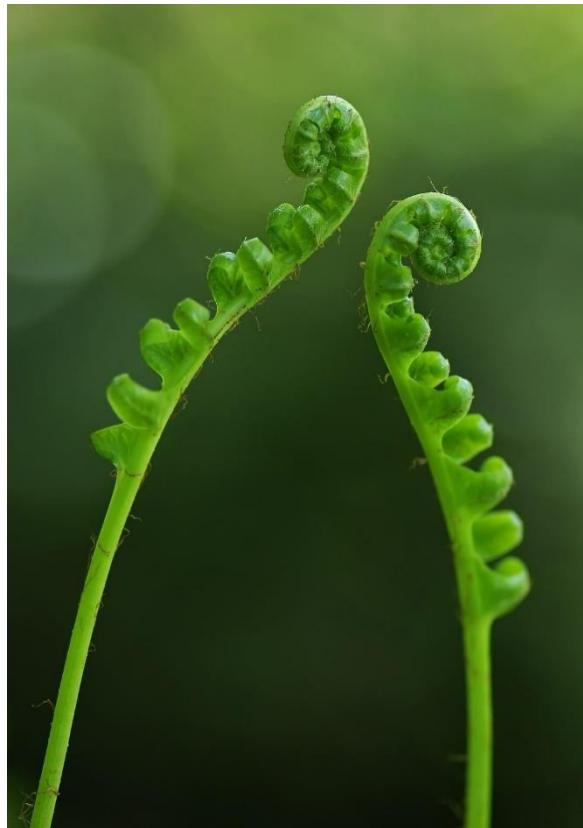


Image 3 - Unfurling ferns⁴

As well as growth, transformation is visible throughout this project, both for myself and my emerging identity as a researcher, and the transformative potential of teaching excellence for participants. Many of my participants described applying for the award – going through the process itself – as empowering and affirming. Importantly, it was not necessarily the award itself, but reflecting on their practice and writing about that which they consider affirming. Similarly, the project and this ‘process’ of working on the project has been affirming for my view of myself as a practitioner and as a researcher, becoming a member of

⁴ Ferrand. (2014). *Fern*. [Photograph]. <https://pixabay.com/photos/fern-plant-green-flamenco-437964/>

the community of practice of academic doctors, and a sense of belonging to that community.

It was a real pleasure to gift-wrap the copies of my artifact ‘An Excellent Adventure’, write a card for each of my participants, thanking them for their time and their willingness to share their stories, and to deliver these around campus. I feel the book gives the stories the space they deserve and a life of their own, outside of my thesis. Some of the feedback from participants is captured in Figure 13.

I've been reading the stories that you put together, it feels like another life when I did all that...
And teaching was great fun. Those were the days.

Thanks for celebrating OP and the hard work some people have done.

It's been a pleasure to work with you and I love the way you presented your findings -
Thank you for my copy of the book

it was humbling to re-read my story..... thank you

Thank you for the lovely gift and card dear Claire, much appreciated!

Dear Claire

What a treat to come in this morning to find the beautiful book of stories and the lovely card. I'm really looking forward to sitting down and reading them all

Figure 13 – Feedback from participants

Excellent teachers or excellence in teaching?

At the time of writing this coda, 22 national Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards have been won by educators at Otago Polytechnic since 2007, which is a very high rate of success. I have already addressed, in [Chapters 4](#) and [5](#), elements of organisational culture and ‘top-down’ initiatives which I would argue contribute to this success. These include the importance of the role of the mentor working alongside applicants on their award portfolios, and the fact that new staff are expected and supported to complete a teaching qualification in their first three years at OP, which contributes to a culture in which we think of ourselves and of each other as dual practitioners. However, I also believe that, from a ‘bottom-up’ perspective, individuals are strongly motivated to be the best they can be. We genuinely *want* to be excellent internally, and we want to be seen as excellent externally.

I have recently been reflecting on the question of whether the concept of excellence is more attached to *teachers* or to *teaching*, and how these are different. My findings suggest that

there are elements inherent in these awardees (such as their love of learning, their desire to empower people, or their authenticity) which would suggest we are actually talking more about excellent teachers. Having said that, many of the elements of excellence which came through in my findings are things which we can embed into teacher development (such as facilitating learning, sharing stories, and reflecting on practice), and these can contribute to excellence in teaching. At its core, this has made me think of the ‘Are excellent teachers born or made?’ question. I feel this is a very interesting point to reflect on, and something which I would like to pursue further when writing future articles.

Reflections on ‘voice’

Thinking about ‘where to next’ has also involved reflecting on questions around ‘voice’, and the decisions I have made around voice, both as a researcher wanting to (and needing to) respect the voices of others, and my own voice as a scholar. This is a methodological issue in narrative inquiry, and one in which my aim has been to find a balance.

All research is essentially telling stories. However, the ethics of telling the stories of others is different to the ethics of telling the story of my research. For my participants, I am a custodian – a Kaitiaki⁵ – a guardian and protector. I have a responsibility for the stories. It was very important to me that I treat these stories with respect, and that I uphold the voice and the mana of each of my storytellers. In the narrative analysis, my focus was very much on this. I also want the reader to appreciate a variety of voices, rather than my voice becoming dominant, and I am confident that this has been achieved in the narratives. That is a different responsibility to my responsibility as a researcher, and contributing to academic knowledge. In essence, I have been an author as curator, gathering and bringing together these stories, and an author as researcher, looking for common threads across the stories.

Linked to this was my decision to use letters to represent participants in the ‘Findings and Discussion’ chapter ([Chapter 4](#)), while using participants’ names in the re-telling of their stories ([Appendix K](#)). I believe that I was being very careful in making sure that I was protecting participants. Though I had checked on several occasions whether each participant was happy for me to use their real name or would prefer for me to use a pseudonym, I was still aware that, with the narratives, I had re-storied our conversation, whereas in the discussion section I was using participants’ exact words.

I have also realised that sometimes my use of the passive voice, particularly in the discussion section, contributes to effectively ‘hiding’ my identity, where I could instead have been more present as an author. My aim was to find a balance between writing in an academic voice, writing in a more subjective way (which narrative inquiry does allow for),

⁵ The Māori Dictionary defines ‘kaitiaki’ as “trustee, minder, guard, custodian, guardian, caregiver, keeper, steward”.

and ensuring the content was accessible to the reader. Furthermore, I was not sure of the extent to which a very subjective narrative inquiry would be appropriate in my thesis. Yes, I could have woven my own narrative through the discussion; the turning points in my career and in life generally, and the stories, learners, colleagues, and mentors who came to mind as I listened to my participants' experiences. These include a year-9 pupil (aged 13) asking me, "Why do we have to learn French, Miss? We're never going to get out of Birmingham", a question which taught me the value of learners relating to lesson content much more so than did my teacher training. There is also Stéphane, a teenaged boy I taught one summer in France. He was struggling in English at school, so his parents enrolled him in one-to-one classes, which he really did not want to attend. This was until I discovered that he was a huge 'Star Wars' fan, and I was able to use that to inform my lesson planning, in an effort to re-invigorate and engage him with the English language. The change in his demeanour was incredible, and he would bound into class each day, eager to share something new he had learned overnight. At the end of his course, his parents came to thank me, and his parting words to me were "May the Force be with you!". There is the impact of being informally mentored by two colleagues while working in Nancy, France: Hélène, a senior staff member at the University, and John, my Head of Department at the Business School. Both recognised that I was quite shy, but saw that something changed in the classroom. They were caring, nurturing people, and their feedback was always constructive. I doubt that my knowledge and skills would have developed significantly at that time had it not been for their support, and the informal but ever-present opportunities I had for professional learning. Another part of my story sees me being invited to speak at the House of Lords as a representative of the TESOL field, one of the proudest moments of my career. I often look back and wonder how this happened; a quiet girl from rural Worcestershire asked to speak at the House of Lords in London – it was completely surreal. These people, images, and emotions are always with me, and have contributed to who I am as a person and as a practitioner.

Initially, my thesis did indeed begin and end with my own story, as well as including a selection of journal entries in which I reflected on why I had made the choices I have during this research process, or what I was grappling with at a particular moment. My journal helped me to explore my own biases, assumptions, successes, and challenges, and will be something I look back on as an important part of my doctoral journey. A small sample of diary entries are shared in Figure 14.

However, when working on final edits to my thesis, prior to submission, my own narrative and the research journal entries are two aspects which were cut, feeling that perhaps there was too much of myself in there. I was conscious that my 'practitioner' voice was sitting alongside my researcher voice and my curator voice. It was a considered decision to take out some of the 'me as practitioner' for the thesis. I feel that, going forward, I will be more comfortable to include my own voice in articles drawing on this research, and this may even make the articles richer.

21 Feb 2019:

Met with Martin today. Good to hear his feedback on my Lit Review so far - very positive, very much on the right track...

Martin suggested thinking of 'excellence' perhaps as the hub of a wheel; what are the spokes? As he was talking, I had a clear image of light refracting through a prism, and asked if that could work. Martin very positive about this. Conveys the complexity of the notion of 'excellence', much more than if I were to just talk about a 'lens'; **Refractive thinking?**

15 March 2020:

I re-read something today that I'd put aside a while ago, and this jumped out at me: "In a nutshell, coding is the data analysis process that *breaks the text down into the smallest units and reorganises these units into relatable stories*" (Yi, 2018, para 16, emphasis added). I really like the simplicity of this, and it matches what I have done visually...

20 August 2020:

Met with Martin, Megan and Sue today...

Listening back to recordings, I'm noticing how much more I'm speaking up and 'defending' my thinking.

Figure 14 – Extracts from my research journal

I have realised too that I can be more critical, and there will be an increased level of criticality in future articles, embracing the opportunity to drill down more deeply into the narratives and into my own practitioner stories. This will include returning to other themes ([Appendix J](#)) which I noticed during data collection and analysis, but which were not related to my research questions, and which, because of space and time, I chose to save for future work. These include reflections on applying for the award, the impact of and the perception of the award, views on identity, and concerns about education practice and context.

Disseminating the findings

On 17 August, I presented my findings to OP's Programme Leaders and Service Directors (approximately 25 colleagues in all), with a view to asking for their thoughts on next steps. There was some good discussion and some valuable suggestions, including recording some 'talking heads' clips, with awardees talking through their 'how' and relating their practice to the 'Keys to Teaching Excellence' model, and hosting a 'Teaching Excellence' symposium, with the five main 'keys' as themes/strands for presentations and workshops.

The manager of the Southern Hub of Ako Aotearoa was hoping to be able to attend this presentation, but I met with her later that same day and we also talked about next steps. She would like me to talk with staff at other institutions across Aotearoa New Zealand, particularly those which have not had a lot of success with the national awards. For me, it is not about enabling more people to win these awards – or that has certainly not been my focus – but it is about raising awareness of these elements of practice, and embedding them into teaching. Having said that, I can absolutely understand how the stories of my participants, and/or the thematic analysis, may help educators to identify and reflect on elements of their own practice. This has been one of my hopes throughout the project.

With New Zealand going into a national COVID-19 lockdown from the evening of 17 August, my presentation to my L&TD colleagues was postponed until 20 September, after our return to campus. The focus was very much on how we can embed my findings into our level 7 tertiary teaching qualification, and into the work that we do across OP and Te Pūkenga. One week later, I presented the project and my findings to the Kaiako⁶ sub-committee of Te Pūkenga's Learning and Teaching Advisory Group, made up of educational developers and learning and teaching leaders from across the country. The discussion was engaging and very positive, with everyone interested in the findings and how we might collectively embed them into our practice.

Extending the conversation

During the time since submitting my thesis for examination, and thanks, in part, to the opportunities to present the research to different groups of interested stakeholders, my reflections on the question 'What now?' have been ongoing, with core ideas captured in

⁶ The Māori Dictionary defines 'kaiako' as "teacher, instructor".

Figure 15. Some of these actions and projects will be interlinked and iterative, and I see enormous potential to extend the conversation around teaching excellence.

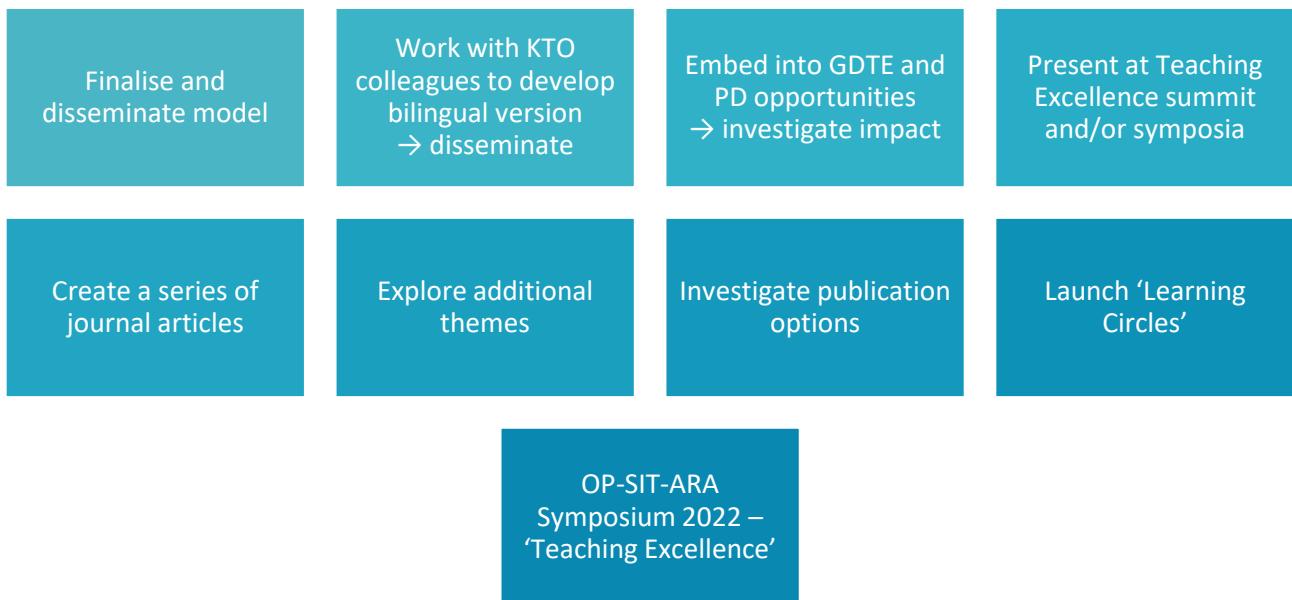


Figure 15 – Extending the conversation

For me, the most important next step is finalising and disseminating the ‘Keys to Teaching Excellence’ model, and then working with my colleagues in the office of the Kaitohutuhu (KTO) to develop and share a bilingual version. These efforts will be closely followed by collaboration with my peers in L&TD to embed my findings into our tertiary teaching programme and Professional Development opportunities. I would also like to explore whether we could have ‘Teaching Excellence’ as the central focus for the OP-SIT-ARA Symposium which OP is scheduled to host in 2022.

In the wider arena, I am aware that there is a ‘Teaching Excellence’ summit, organised by the Times Higher Education group, as well as various international symposia and conferences on teaching excellence, so I will be working on submissions for some of those. In addition, I would like to investigate options for publishing participants’ stories in a book in the future, subject to participants’ approval.

Presentation to the assessment panel

On the morning of 9 September, I presented my research project to an international panel of examiners, via video-conference. In many ways, I would have liked this event to have been face-to-face, but with panel members in different locations (and varying degrees of COVID-related lockdown), it was not to be. While it was quite surreal to be ‘defending’ my doctoral work from my kitchen table, I feel I overcame my initial nerves, and the presentation went well.

My three assessors had sent through some initial questions for me, resulting from their reading of my thesis, and my responses to these were an important part of the presentation, as well as informing elements of this coda. I am grateful for the time they had already invested in reading and reflecting on my work, and acknowledge that their feedback helped me to think more about some aspects of the research and of my writing.

My aim that morning was to present the project from slightly different angles, rather than simply regurgitating content from the thesis. I began by talking a little about myself and why I had chosen the topic of ‘Teaching Excellence’ for my research. I then moved to the importance of ‘becoming’ and transformation through the project, before giving a brief summary of elements of the research, supported by a visual timeline ([Appendix N](#)). Next, I turned my attention to the questions asked by the assessment panel, before considering the impact of the project so far and my thoughts about next steps. I finished with a reflection, highlighting my own growth and learning in particular, and celebrating the positive experience my doctoral journey has been.

I would compare the discussion with the three panel members, following my presentation, to a conversation with interested colleagues or critical friends. It was far less intimidating than I had imagined it to be, and I could see myself continuing the conversation with any or all of the assessors over a cup of tea in some distant future. I do not say this lightly, having heard many tales of doctoral candidates feeling like they had been through an interrogation. I appreciate that I was challenged to think more critically about aspects of my thesis and of the ‘next steps’ I had outlined, but it was also re-assuring to hear some of the assessors’ feedback and genuine interest in the topic and in my findings. It was not until I left the video call that I realised how much I was physically shaking, and I am still unsure if it was nerves, adrenalin, or a mixture of both. The oral assessment was the culmination of three years of work, and it took a few days for it to thoroughly sink in that it had actually taken place.

To close, I look ahead. It is with a mix of excitement and trepidation that I approach the future, seeking to share my work widely and to build on the growth in my practice as a researcher. Understanding how we can develop excellent practice in teachers and in educational developers, both through formal teacher training programmes and through continuing professional development, is important nationally and internationally, and my doctoral project will feed into my future research as I expand on my findings and their implications.

This coda has demonstrated how, even over a relatively short time span, growth and reflection have continued. I am still ‘becoming’, with new insights into this thesis and the different voices we use in research, as I continue my own pursuit of excellence in practice.

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Appendix A: E-mails sent to each participant

E-mail sent once transcription completed

Hi [name],

The transcription of our conversation is available here [*linked*] - you should be able to access it directly, but do please let me know if any problems with the link. It is probably easier to read if you open in the desktop app, once you have accessed the online version.

Please take some time to check through the transcription and make sure that you're happy with it. If there's anything you'd like to review or edit, please feel free to add any comments in the margin (or just e-mail me, if you prefer).

If you could let me know, by [date] please, whether you're happy for me to use this to tell your story, that would be much appreciated.

Thank you again for your time, and for your willingness to share your stories with me.

Kind regards,

Claire

E-mail sent to update participants – 27 January 2020

Kia ora koutou,

Happy New Year to you! I hope you had a lovely, restful break.

I just wanted to update you on where I'm at with my DPP research project, 'Investigating the stories of Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award Winners'. Thank you again for your time and for your willingness to share your story with me, a few months ago now. I'm aware that you may not have heard from me for some time, but I have been working away in the background!

I worked on transcribing all of our conversations and completed those in December. I've now started working on thematic analysis. Once that is complete, I will begin 're-storying' our discussions one by one. Once your individual story has been drafted, I will share it with you to give you the chance to suggest and/or request any changes to be made.

If you have not yet confirmed with me that you're happy with the transcription of our conversation, do please let me know as soon as is possible. Do remember that you are welcome to ask for things to be omitted from or altered in the transcription, if there is anything you would prefer not to share more widely.

I will send another update at some point in April. If you have any queries at any stage, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Many thanks.

Warm regards,
Claire

E-mail sent to each participant – 24 April 2020

Kia ora [name],

I hope this finds you well, and that you have managed to take a break of some sort over Easter, especially given our current circumstances.

I apologise in advance for the length of this e-mail, but I do need to cover various things at this stage (and hope to spare you from lots of e-mails going back and forwards!)

I've been focusing on writing up participant stories, and your story is now available here [[linked](#)]. You should be able to access it directly, but do please let me know if any problems with the link. It is probably easier to read (and see comments, footnotes etc.) if you open in the desktop app, once you have accessed the online version.

I've thoroughly enjoyed revisiting your story of teaching excellence, and hope that I have done it justice.

A few notes/requests from me:

1. Please read through your story and check that you are happy with it. I have tried to use your own words wherever possible, but have re-organised content (usually chronologically) to help with flow. If there is *anything* at all that you are not happy about, or not sure that you want to see included, please highlight and add a comment (and/or track changes) to let me know. This is not a problem at all - It is really important to me that you are happy with your story!
2. Please answer the query I've noted in a comment in the document
3. If there are any additional images that you would like to be included, now is the time to do this. Please feel free to either a) insert the image(s) where you would like in

the text and add caption/image title, or b) attach the image(s) to an e-mail and let me know how you would like it to be incorporated

4. Are you happy with the extract I've included at the opening to your story (just underneath the title)? I have chosen something which I think captures the 'essence' of your story and/or philosophy, but can of course change it if you would prefer a different extract.

My plan is to put all of the participant stories (13 at this stage) into a small book as a separate 'artefact' to submit alongside my final thesis (I'm thinking A5-size, at this stage, but will talk with staff at the printery to get their advice).

I would also like to gift a copy of this book to each participant, as a gesture of thanks for your participation, and a copy to Phil Ker, given that so many participants have talked about OP culture generally, and/or Phil's leadership more specifically. This would mean that each participant will get to read the stories of the other participants. So, my next questions:

1. Are you still happy for your story to be included in the 'artefact' for my DPP submission?
2. Are you happy for your story to be included in a book for each participant and for Phil, please? If so, would you like a copy for yourself?

If there is anything else at all that occurs to you, or anything that is not clear, please don't hesitate to let me know. I'm more than happy to talk via e-mail and/or in person/video-call if you would like to.

If you could please get back to me **by 15 May** with any feedback, requests, photos etc., and your thoughts on inclusion in the small book of stories, I would be really grateful.

Many thanks.

Take care.

Ngā mihi nui,
Claire

E-mail sent to update participants – 9 August 2020

Kia ora koutou,

I hope this finds you well. I wanted to drop you a line to give you an update on my research progress.

Your stories of Teaching Excellence have now been collated into a single document, available here [[linked](#)]. You'll see, as explained in the introduction, that I have organised the stories principally in alphabetical order, with the stories of the Culinary Arts team grouped together to close. I thought you might like to see how all of these sit together as a collection.

In recent weeks, I've been working on my methodology, and am about to move to focus on writing up my thematic analysis. I will be happy to share that with you all in due course.

If you have any feedback at all on the 'Stories' document, please do let me know. If I haven't heard from you by 24 August, I'll take that as an indication that you're happy with the document as it stands.

Many thanks all.

Warmest regards,
Claire

E-mail sent to update participants – 6 Dec 2020

Kia ora koutou,

I wanted to drop you all a note before we reach the summer break, to give you an update on my progress.

I am starting to explore options for printing the collated stories, as an artefact to sit alongside my thesis, as previously mentioned. With this in mind, I wanted to give you all the option of including a photo of yourselves in a practice setting (e.g. in a classroom, workshop, studio, clinical setting, kitchen... wherever it may be!) with your story, if you would like to. There is no obligation!

If you would like to do this, please send me a good quality photo file. Any other people in the photo should not be identifiable. If you know that the Comms/Marketing team already has a particular photo of you that you would like to use, I will need to get the OK from them for it to be included.

If I don't hear from you by 18th December, I will assume that you do not wish to add any photos to your story.

Other than that, I am currently working on writing up the Findings and Discussion chapter, before moving on to my Conclusion and an 'Epilogue'. I recently presented at the OP-SIT-

ARA Symposium in Invercargill (outlining the project and some initial findings), and received some great feedback. Jennifer Leahy, the Manager for Ako Aotearoa's Southern Hub, was at the Symposium, and has asked me to present to other managers across Ako Aotearoa in early February.

Do please let me know if you have any queries at all.

Wishing you all a happy, healthy, and restful break over the summer.

Ngā mihi maioha,

Claire

Appendix B: Research ethics approval

29 March 2019



Claire Goode
Learning and Teaching Development Team
Otago Polytechnic
Private Bag 1910
Dunedin 9054

Dear Claire

Re: Application for Ethics Consent

Reference Number: 803

Application Title: Investigating the stories of Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award winners.

Thank you for your application for ethics approval for this research project.

This letter is to advise that the Otago Polytechnic Research Ethics Committee review panel has approved your application, following responses to questions and issues raised in the feedback report.

We wish you well with your work and remind you that at the conclusion of your research to send a brief report with findings and/or conclusions to the Ethics Committee.

All correspondence regarding this application should include the project title and reference number assigned to it.

This protocol covers the following researchers: Claire Goode.

Regards

Richard Humphrey
Vice Chair, Otago Polytechnic Research Ethics Committee

Otago Polytechnic

Forth Street
Private Bag 1910
Dunedin 9054

Freephone 0800 762 786
Phone +64 3 477 3014

Email: Info@op.ac.nz
www.op.ac.nz

Appendix C: E-mail sent to the Office of the Kaitohutohu, as part of initial research consultation – January 2019

Hi all,

I'm currently enrolled in course one ('Articulating Practitioner Research') of the DPP, and would like to start the consultation process re. my proposed research project.

In this project, I plan to use narrative inquiry to examine the lives and careers of *Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award* winners, currently working at Otago Polytechnic, to make meaning of their respective experiences. The core of my research project is a socially-situated investigation into excellence in our institution. The aim is to investigate the trajectory and professional practice of award winners, to explore their background and evolution as educators, their current practice, and their thoughts around future development.

The names and contact details of all national awardees are publicly available via the Ako Aotearoa Academy of Tertiary Teaching Excellence website. 18 award winners currently work at Otago Polytechnic. With the exception of one awardee (on the researcher's DPP supervision team), all will be invited to participate in this project. The majority of potential participants are based in Dunedin, with one awardee located in Central Otago.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with up to 17 participants, on a one-to-one basis. Each interview will take between 1 and 1.5 hours. Interviews will be audio recorded, and then transcribed by the researcher. Narratives will be written based on data from these semi-structured interviews, then shared with interviewees for feedback and amendments. This serves as a way of triangulating the data, with participants having a second voice through this 'member checking' (their first voice being through the one-to-one interviews). In narrative inquiry, it is vital that stories remain recognisable to the storytellers. Restorying through the three-dimensional narrative inquiry framework (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) will enable stories to be presented in an authentic way, ensuring that voice, integrity, and mana are preserved. It also balances the need for researcher consistency (and the same skeleton structure to participants' stories) with the flexibility that participants need for their stories to unfold naturally over the course of the conversation.

Participants will be invited to bring to their interview one or two photographs or objects, which hold special meaning for them as an educator. Giving participants an opportunity to provide their own insights into the story/ies behind each photograph/object, and to reflect on their meaning, will complement the narrative nature of the conversation. If participants are willing, photographs (or photos of the meaningful objects) will be included in research outputs alongside the textual presentation of each participant's story.

The researcher has twenty years' experience in education, carried out in a wide variety of institutions and in different contexts, predominantly in multicultural settings in which the learners have been non-native speakers of English.

Research will be undertaken in a culturally sensitive and appropriate manner, respecting differences and ensuring privacy, in full discussion and partnership with participants.

Looking at the initial consultation questions on Moodle:

Will the research involve Māori?

It will not be known until the project is underway, how many of the participants identify as Māori. However, the researcher will provide sufficient time for any participants to consult with their tangata whenua should they wish to do so.

Is the research being conducted by Māori? No

Are the results likely to be of specific interest or relevance to Māori?

Yes, of interest and of relevance, insofar as

- i. the research is being conducted in New Zealand
- ii. all participants (and the researcher) are employees of Otago Polytechnic, committed to the principle of partnership in everything that we do, and to the Māori Strategic Framework. (It is possible, for example, that participants may talk about the OP culture, and the Māori Strategic Framework, and how they have been influenced by this in their practice).
- iii. both the topic (teaching excellence) and the narrative approach to gathering data will be of interest and relevance to Māori, through allowing participants to tell (and reflect on) their own stories of how they have developed as educators. Exploring the trajectories of award winners, their thoughts around teacher development, for instance, and reflections on what it means to be an "excellent" tertiary teacher, will empower future development of outstanding tertiary educators.

Could the research potentially benefit Māori?

Yes. Anyone involved/interested in tertiary teaching (and/or teacher development) could benefit from this research, as well as anyone interested in examples of narrative inquiry. It is likely that at least some participants' stories will reflect their growing up and developing as practitioners in the context of New Zealand.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further info at this stage and/or if it would be beneficial for us to discuss in person.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,
Claire

Appendix D: Feedback from the Office of the Kaitohutohu

Whāia te pae tawhiti kia tata whāia to pae kiā maua

Pursue the distant horizons so that they may become your reality

Office of the Kaitohutohu Research Consultation Feedback Date: 7 March 2019

Researcher name: Claire Goode

Department: Doctor of Professional Practice (D. Prof Prac) Capable NZ

Project title: Otago Polytechnic Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards

INDIGENOUS INNOVATION: Contributing to Māori Economic Growth	
TAIAO: Achieving Environmental Sustainability through Iwi & Hapū Relationships with the Whenua & Moana	
MĀTAURAKA MĀORI: Exploring Indigenous Knowledge	
HAUORA / ORANGA: Improving Health & Social Wellbeing	<p>This research may include teachers that identify as Māori who have been awarded the Otago Polytechnic Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award, therefore it is important to consider the range of cultural aspects that may differ from non-Māori, so that synergies and differences are available for further consideration.</p> <p>One aspect of this could be the significance of culturally responsive learning environments and how this factor may have contributed towards teaching excellence. This may be an important factor for future learners, teachers and institutions. It is important to incorporate an indigenous perspective and consider the potential value of "being of service" to whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori community.</p> <p>The researcher may also like to include some semi-structured question about the cultural and/or spiritual significance of the significant object. For Māori, this may lead to a deeper dive into links with traditional practices and/or culturally constructed understandings between the taonga (valued object) and the participants approach to sharing knowledge and passion for teaching excellence.</p>

	<p>Cultural consideration is also important when arranging potential interviews. Please consider the place, space and time, the possibility to bring whānau, asking permission to photograph the taonga and or person, creating a potential space for karakia and te reo Māori. Please feel free to liaise with the Office of the Kaitohutohu if you require further support.</p> <p>We wish you all the best in your research Claire.</p>
TO LIVE AS MĀORI: Kaitiaki to Ensure Māori Culture and Language Flourish	

UNLOCKING THE INNOVATION POTENTIAL OF MĀORI KNOWLEDGE, RESOURCES & PEOPLE

Name: Kelli Te Maihāroa

Position: Tumuaki: Rakahau Māori | Director of Māori Research, Otago Polytechnic

Appendix E: Invitation e-mails

- *First Call*

Dear ...

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research project investigating the stories of Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award winners.

The research aims to explore the lives and careers of Tertiary Teaching Excellence awardees, to make meaning of their respective lived experiences. Capturing these stories can help others understand how recognised tertiary teachers have developed and evolved as practitioners, and can bring about changes in practice.

Participation is voluntary and will support my doctoral research. An information sheet is attached to provide further details on the project.

If you would like to participate in the study, and/or view the consent form, please respond to this e-mail.

Should you require any further information regarding this project, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best regards,

- *Second Call (after one week)*

Dear....

I just wanted to follow up on my e-mail of (date), and to ask again if you would be willing to take part in my doctoral research project, investigating the stories of Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award winners.

I'd be grateful if you could let me know whether you would like to participate in the study, and/or view the consent form. Please find attached the information sheet, for your convenience.

Should you require any further information regarding this project, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best regards,

Appendix F: Information sheet for potential participants

[Print on Otago Polytechnic departmental letterhead]
[Logo, name and address of Department/School]

Investigating the stories of Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award winners

INFORMATION SHEET

Introduction

My name is Claire Goode, and I am a Doctoral candidate with Capable New Zealand at Otago Polytechnic. I have more than 20 years' experience in education, carried out in a wide variety of institutions and in different contexts, predominantly in multicultural settings in which the learners have been non-native speakers of English.

This research project focuses on the stories of Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award winners, currently working at Otago Polytechnic (OP). The aim of the project is to investigate the lives and careers of Tertiary Teaching Excellence awardees, to make meaning of their respective lived experiences.

Please read this information sheet carefully, before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, thank you. If you decide not to take part, there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind, and I thank you for considering my request.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Otago Polytechnic Research Ethics Committee (reference 803).

Invitation to participate

You are invited to take part in this project, to share your story: your trajectory, your thoughts around teacher development, and your reflections on what it means to be an “excellent” tertiary teacher.

The names and contact details of all national awardees are publicly available via the *Ako Aotearoa Academy of Tertiary Teaching Excellence* website. All Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award winners currently working at OP are being invited to participate in this project.

What is the aim of the project?

The project aims to tell the stories of Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award winners. Stories are recognized as a powerful way of sharing experiences, both for the story-teller and for the

listener. Capturing these stories can help others understand how recognised tertiary teachers have developed and evolved as practitioners, and can bring about changes in practice.

Narrative inquiry will be used to explore, celebrate, and share your lived experience through your life and career, and as your practice has developed over time.

The key questions guiding this research are:

1. How does the concept of excellence unfurl in the narrative of Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award winners?
2. How do these practitioners embody, convey, and foster that excellence in their practice?
3. What implications for Professional Development do these narratives of excellence have?

Through these doctoral studies, my goal is to contribute new knowledge around professional practice, and to empower the future development of outstanding tertiary educators.

What will participants be asked to do?

If you choose to participate, you will be invited to take part in a one-to-one conversation, to share your story of excellence in tertiary teaching. Guiding questions will be organised around a ‘three-dimensional narrative inquiry framework’ (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and the researcher will work in partnership with you to generate, transcribe, and edit your individual stories. The narrative inquiry framework will enable stories to be presented in an authentic way, ensuring that voice, integrity, and mana are preserved.

You will also be invited to bring to your interview one or two photographs or objects, which hold special meaning for you as an educator. You will have an opportunity to provide your own insights into the story/ies behind each artefact, and to reflect on their meaning. This will complement the narrative nature of the conversation.

You will receive a copy of the transcript of your one-to-one conversation, which you can review and edit, before returning it to the researcher by a mutually agreed date and time.

Can participants change their mind and withdraw from the project?

You may withdraw from the project at any time, and without disadvantage to you of any kind.

Should you choose to withdraw, your individual story will not be included in any research outputs. However, once the thematic analysis of data has occurred, it will not be possible to withdraw this information, but no specific quotations (from a participant who has chosen to withdraw) will be included in any publications.

How will information be collected and used?

If you choose to participate, you will be invited to take part in a one-to-one semi-structured conversation (lasting approx. 1 - 1.5 hours). These will be conducted preferably in person (in a location agreed on by you and the researcher), or via skype.

It is not possible to predict what will be shared during the one-to-one discussions, given the narrative nature of the conversations, and the different lives and experiences of each participant. Whilst every effort will be made to ensure you are comfortable and at ease during the conversation, the researcher is aware of the impact that the narrative methodology may have (for instance, telling aspects of a story which could be emotional). You will be free to take a break, decline to answer any particular question(s), ask for the audio-recording to be switched off, and/or to stop the discussion, at any point.

If you are willing, copies of your meaningful photographs (and/or photos of your meaningful objects) will be included in research outputs alongside the textual presentation of your story.

If you are willing to share your award portfolio, these will also be reviewed during the thematic analysis stage of the project. Data referred to in the thematic analysis will respect and protect the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants, to the best of the researcher's ability.

Demographic information (including age, gender, and ethnicity) will be obtained from each of the participants as part of this project, and may be included in research outputs and future publications.

How will confidentiality and/or anonymity be protected?

You will have a choice as to whether you are named in research outputs, or whether pseudonyms are used. The researcher will ensure complete consistency in any outputs (i.e. if any awardees do not wish to be named, then pseudonyms will be used for all participants). The names of all Tertiary Teaching Excellence awardees are publicly available, and this list can be filtered by region and/or by institution. The communities both of awardees and of Otago Polytechnic staff are relatively small, and participants *may* be easily identifiable (within the Otago Polytechnic community) from their respective narratives.

Data referred to in the thematic analysis will respect and protect the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants, to the best of the researcher's ability.

The researcher recognises the need to respect the identities of people no longer with us. It is very possible that participants may talk about kaumātua and/or mentors who have passed away. Being respectful of these people will be an important part of the researcher's approach, and they will negotiate with individual participants around how they would like this to happen.

Data storage

The school (Capable NZ) and Otago Polytechnic is responsible for safe data storage and disposal of all research data. Data collected will be held on a password-protected shared drive, with restricted access (for the researcher and project supervisors only). Any hard copies of data will be stored in a locked cabinet, accessible to the researcher, the project supervisors, and the Postgraduate Co-ordinator within Capable NZ. All hard copies of consent forms will be stored in a separate location from the project data. Raw data will be retained on a password-protected shared drive for a period of seven years after completion of the researcher's Doctorate, after which it will be destroyed.

If you are willing and happy for your photographs (and/or photographs of meaningful objects) to be included in research outputs, they will be scanned at high resolution; any originals will be returned to you.

Study results

- Once complete, a written copy of your story (including photographs, if shared) will be available to you and, with your permission, included in the researcher's doctoral thesis.
- Themed results may also be used in future conference presentations and/or academic articles.
- You would also be welcome to request a summary of the research findings, by contacting the researcher.

Participant's Rights:

Participation is voluntary. You are under no obligation to accept this invitation.

If you agree to participate in the study, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any time;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- be given access to a summary of the research findings when it is concluded.

If you have any questions about any aspect of the project, please feel free to ask the researcher and/or the lead supervisor.

Project contacts:

The researcher and/or the lead supervisor will be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time. You may contact them at:

Claire Goode (Doctoral Candidate / Researcher)
Learning & Teaching Development team,
Otago Polytechnic, Dunedin

E-mail: Claire.Goode@op.ac.nz
Phone: (+64) xxx xxx xxxx

Martin Andrew (Supervisor)
Capable New Zealand,
Otago Polytechnic, Dunedin

E-mail: benedictandrew@gmail.com
Martin.Andrew@op.ac.nz
Phone: (+64) xxx xxx xxxx

Committee Approval Statement

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Otago Polytechnic Research Ethics Committee (reference 803).

Appendix G: Participant consent form

[Print on Otago Polytechnic departmental letterhead]
[Logo, name and address of Department/School]

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Investigating the stories of Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award winners

I have read the Information Sheet about this project in full, and understand what it is about. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage of the project.

I know that:

- My participation in the project is entirely voluntary, and I am free to refuse to answer any particular question.
- I am free to stop participating at any time.
- I can choose to withdraw information provided, without giving reasons and without any disadvantage. I understand that, once the thematic analysis of data has occurred, it will not be possible to withdraw this information, but no specific quotations (from a participant who has chosen to withdraw) will be included in any publications.
- I will receive a copy of the transcript of my one-to-one conversation, which I can review and edit, before returning it to the researcher by a mutually agreed date and time.
- I will have a choice as to whether I am named in research outputs, or whether pseudonyms are used. The researcher will ensure complete consistency in any outputs (i.e. if any awardees do not wish to be named, then pseudonyms will be used for all participants). Data referred to in the thematic analysis will respect and protect the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants, to the best of the researcher's ability.
- Any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for seven years after completion of the researcher's Doctorate, after which it will be destroyed. If, for any reason, it is to be kept longer than seven years, my permission will be sought.
- The results of the project may be published and/or used at a presentation in an academic conference, but my anonymity / confidentiality will be preserved as agreed.
- I can ask to receive a copy of the research findings.

Additional information given or conditions agreed to:

- If I am willing, my Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award portfolio may be reviewed during the thematic analysis stage of the project.
- Should I wish to, I may consent to having my name (or a pseudonym) used in future publications.

- Should I wish to, I may consent to having the photographs supplied by me used in future publications.

I agree to take part in this project under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

..... (signature of participant)

..... (full name of participant – please
PRINT)

..... (signature of researcher)

..... (full name of researcher – please
PRINT)

..... (date)

This project has been reviewed and approved by Otago Polytechnic's Research Ethics Committee (reference 803).

Appendix H: Interview guide / prompt sheet

I would like to get a sense of who you are and what contributed towards you receiving a national teaching excellence award - Tell me about you, the tertiary teacher.

The educator	What brought you to this place? How has your career developed? (turning points, critical moments...) What were your hopes, dreams for your practice? Tell me about the transition from professional (nurse, tradesperson, engineer, artist...) to educator? (How do good educators emerge from professionals?) How have your opinions about your skills changed over time? How do you see your own practice now?	The community What keeps you here – what is special about this place? What does the community expect from you? What does the community know about you? Tell me about key changes that you've experienced in the learning and teaching community Tell me about challenges/barriers you experience, and their impact on you What overall experience do you bring to your practice?
Excellence	What is an “excellent” teacher? Tell me about applying for a Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What resources did you use to talk to the concept of excellence?▪ What mentoring did you have (during the application process) and how did that help you?▪ Were you able to look at the applications of previous awardees? Did that help? What impact (if any) has winning the award had on you / on your teaching? To what extent do you think your excellence has come about from your life experience? What does excellence in action look like? Can excellence be taught? / Is it possible to teach this thing we're calling ‘excellence’?	Reflections What are your passions/motivations in sharing your practice with others? Do you think there is a difference between excellent teaching in a polytechnic compared to that in a university? What tools are important in tertiary education? How do you see your future evolving? / What are your hopes for the future? What would you like to see in place, in terms of teacher development in a tertiary context?
		Meaningful photo(s)/object(s) Tell me about the photo/item you've brought with you. Why is this important to you? / What meaning does it hold for you?

Appendix I: Participant demographics

Participant identifies as		Iwi affiliation	Age (at time of interview)
gender	ethnicity		
Female	New Zealand Pākehā Māori	Ngāpuhi	46
Female	Pākehā		50
Female	European		52
Female	Māori Pākehā	Ngāti Kurī and Ngāpuhi	56
Female	New Zealand Pākehā		62
Female	European, of Dutch descent		64
Male	Māori Pākehā	Ngāi Tahu	44
Male	Pākehā		50
Male	European		53
Male	Kiwi		55
Male	European		55
Male	European Pākehā		59

Appendix J: Themes and subthemes identified

Reflecting on Self	
Personality / Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ resilience ▪ risk taker / rebel / rogue ▪ always aware there is more to learn ▪ love of learning ▪ innovator / early adopter ▪ modesty / humility ▪ willingness to challenge self ▪ going the extra mile ▪ self-belief ▪ work ethic ▪ determination ▪ respect ▪ authenticity ▪ focus, commitment ▪ cultural intelligence ▪ unaware of own potential ▪ OK to fail ▪ lack of confidence ▪ generosity ▪ compassion ▪ recognising own strengths ▪ do as you would be done by ▪ willingness to be vulnerable ▪ accountability ▪ open-mindedness ▪ lack of ambition ▪ being an outsider ▪ being an introvert ▪ hatred of public speaking ▪ caring too much, self-sacrificing
Drivers / Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ impact, helping others ▪ empowering others ▪ enjoyment of / passion for teaching ▪ encouraging individuals ▪ encouragement of colleagues to develop / mentoring ▪ protecting others / standing up for others ▪ effecting change ▪ recognising others' strengths ▪ social responsibility ▪ sense of purpose
Life experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ teachers (formal/informal) as influences ▪ own academic ability ▪ teaching in different contexts ▪ accidental teacher ▪ transition (professional to educator) ▪ family as influences ▪ not wanting to be a teacher ▪ first role in tertiary ed ▪ own experience of school ▪ success(es) ▪ first interest in teaching ▪ industry experience ▪ working in challenging contexts ▪ initial teacher education/teacher training

Reflecting on the award		
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ awardees moving away from teaching ▪ award validating teaching style ▪ benefits of being able to network with other awardees ▪ award giving confidence ▪ potential roles for awardees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ missing teaching ▪ sense of own accountability ▪ increased visibility and opportunities ▪ award being good for institution / dept ▪ awardees 'giving back' ▪ financial reward (of award)
The application process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Importance of application process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ importance of narrative (in application)
Perception of award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ unrecognised excellent teachers ▪ own discomfort with award ▪ colleagues not understanding ▪ political view of awards ▪ perception of awards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ award as recognition ▪ award being down to luck ▪ award as something for CV ▪ award as promotional tool (for prog)
Views on 'Excellence'		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ personality traits of excellent teachers ▪ no perception of self as excellent / excellent teachers = they ▪ excellence comes from how you teach, not what you teach ▪ excellence is innate ▪ indefinable element ▪ excellence can be learned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ importance of feeling excellence / excellence as a feeling ▪ no recipe ▪ not about qualifications ▪ excellence as a philosophy ▪ excellence as a habit ▪ excellence comes from experience ▪ need time to become excellent ▪ excellence can be role-modelled
Professional Practice		
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ view of teaching/teachers ▪ professional identity ▪ transition (professional to educator) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ notion of service ▪ idea of a vocation ▪ teacher as an actor / performer

Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ focus on students ▪ love of subject ▪ co-construction of knowledge ▪ making learning enjoyable ▪ facilitating learning ▪ creating a place/space for learning ▪ redesigning programmes/courses ▪ flexibility ▪ staying relevant/current ▪ sharing passion ▪ sense of pride ▪ subject knowledge ▪ ability to tell stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ critical thinking ▪ ability to listen ▪ mining knowledge ▪ importance of understanding theory ▪ training vs. educating ▪ importance of teaching being research-informed ▪ unplanned 'magic' moments ▪ creating resources ▪ importance of scaffolding ▪ Approaches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – experiential learning – project-based learning – work-based learning
Reflective practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ importance of reflective practice ▪ student feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reflecting for action ▪ reflecting in action
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OP culture ▪ teaching culture: uni vs poly ▪ importance of feeling valued ▪ leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ having autonomy ▪ impact of group size ▪ OP's commitment to staff development ▪ importance of feeling safe
Relationship building		
Importance of relationship with learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ wanting learners to succeed ▪ awareness of learners as individuals ▪ empathy with students ▪ engaging with students ▪ transforming the learner ▪ developing learner capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ challenging your learners ▪ students as influences ▪ meeting students' expectations ▪ guiding learners ▪ seeing students as adults ▪ rewarding learners
Relationships (other)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ working with others / network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ supportive/positive colleagues

Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ challenges / demands on academic staff ▪ balance: teaching vs research ▪ teachers stuck in their practice ▪ changes in education ▪ disconnect between education and industry ▪ gender differences (e.g. women being given larger classes than men) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ lack of support ▪ flaws in current teaching qual ▪ challenges in mentoring others ▪ gender imbalance across awardees in trades ▪ teachers' fear of theory
Looking ahead / The future		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ future training opportunities ▪ hope to influence education more broadly ▪ lack of interest in managerial roles ▪ wanting to be in the classroom ▪ wanting better education for learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ unclear future ▪ future changes to courses/progs/delivery ▪ progs becoming more tailored ▪ teaching overseas

Appendix K: Narrative analysis - Stories of Tertiary Teaching Excellence

Why is it that we remember some teachers and not others? What is it that makes a teacher excellent, and do recognised educators see these traits and/or practices in themselves? Are these factors something which can be learned?

In August and September 2019, I had the pleasure of sitting down with many of Otago Polytechnic's national Tertiary Teaching Excellence awardees for one-to-one conversations. While I had a core set of questions that I wanted to cover, it was also important to let the conversation flow naturally, and to allow people to reflect on key moments in their respective careers. What was it that drew them to teaching? What has influenced them as they have developed their practice? How do they describe their professional practice now? What would they like to see in teacher development for the tertiary context moving forward?

The awardees include teachers from a wide variety of professions, including nurses, artists, designers, carpenters, and chefs. Some now hold formal leadership roles; others demonstrate leadership in their subject area. Stories are organised principally in alphabetical order, with the stories of four members of an award-winning team grouped together to close.

Participant summary

The following details have been drawn from participant interviews and from publicly available information on the [Ako Academy website](#)⁷.

Participant	Principal Discipline Area	Year of Award(s)
Caro	Communication Design	2014
Jane	Creative Studies	2012
Leoni	Art	2011
Liz	Nursing	2017
Matt	Carpentry	2016
Megan	Sport and Exercise	2016
Mereana	Nursing	2017
Richard	Mathematics	2016
Adrian	Food Design	2008; 2014
Daniel	Food Design	2014
Steve	Food Design	2014
Tony	Food Design	2014

⁷ Ako Aotearoa. (n.d.). *Tertiary teaching excellence awardees*. <https://ako.ac.nz/our-community/tertiary-teaching-excellence-awards/>

Caro's Story

"As a teacher, I feel that most of what I do is about relationships; I just maintain and foster relationships... I'm a relationship developer, and those relationships are as creative and as enabling as they can be, because it's about enabling everybody".

I'm a really creative person and a really social person, so those kind of drive my teaching philosophy in a way, in that it's about people; it's *always* about people. I've been teaching for 20 years, the first seven were at the University of Otago, and the next thirteen here at OP. I started here as an Academic Leader, so that was taking on and developing curricula, and I've felt that I've had a *huge* amount of freedom and trust here. I've had the opportunity to direct the whole curriculum, the content and delivery of the programme, and then get a team on board to do that in the same way. I think we're all pretty clear about the what and why. I have taken a lot of licence. I'm not a traditional teacher.

I never intended to be a teacher. I think I ended up in education, because it's the main industry in Dunedin and, at a certain point in my life, I wanted a good job to get out of the house. The thing I did *before* I left Dunedin, and before I had children and stuff, was studying. I'd been a long-term student. Back then, it was free, so you could just study because you love learning. So, I decided to pick up another course. The last course I'd finished before taking a couple of years out was Women's Studies, then it changed to Gender Issues, I think. I went and enrolled, and I got the best mark in the class. I was only doing one course, and it wasn't too hard, and I said, "Well, now that I've got the best mark in the class, will you give me a job?". They laughed and said, "No, we don't have any jobs here, but you could try Design Studies". Now, at the time, I was like, no, Design is too stupid; it's not academic enough as a discipline, it hasn't got interesting enough aspects to it yet. It was quite a young discipline then. Anyway, that particular person became my academic mentor at the University, and she kept asking me, "Have you applied yet? Have you gone and talked to them?", and eventually I got a job. I got *one* tutorial a week, so it was literally just a *tiny* little job. Then the next semester, the guy that was supposed to be coming didn't arrive, so I ended up doing seven tutorials a week *and* running the lecture series, so I was kind of thrown into it. And it was a job I could figure out. I was closer in age to the students than most of the lecturers, and it was *just* as computers were starting to be taught, so I first taught Digital Design.

Along the way, I realised that people need to know about the world. Design can't be about *you*. It's not like Art; it has to talk to someone about something, and be heard and understood, so it's a relationship. So, as a teacher, I feel that most of what I do is about relationships; I just maintain and foster relationships. So, I often feel like a fake as a teacher; it's not that I'm *not* a teacher, but I'm a relationship developer, and those relationships are as creative and as enabling as they *can* be, because it's about enabling

everybody. I create opportunities for students within real-life contexts, and I create opportunities for people outside of education, to better understand how they can work. For example, this year I've been working with Orokonui⁸. I'd never actually been to Orokonui, except for conference type things, but they seemed to fit with what I was hoping to do. So, I actually sold the opportunity to two students to do postgrad work there, before I'd even talked to the people at Orokonui, and when I first talked to them, they were like, "Why are you here?". But as we talked more, we realised that we had lots of ideas that could help them that they hadn't thought of, and that maybe there could be a useful relationship. After the first few months, I said to them, "Now, my third years are about to start their student projects, so are there any graphic design projects that you have, that you'd like us to do?". And they were like, "Oh actually, yes we do", and they came up with about five projects (three with the education section, and two with the marketing side) and I put five students on them. Then, all year, I've been going up every Thursday. I've got a van and I'll just take whoever needs to go and talk to the Orokonui team, or even just hang around there; we've just become part of the community there, as these projects have evolved. And out of this relationship, students have identified other potential projects, they've worked on those projects, and then, in response, the people at Orokonui have learned more about what they need than they'd ever known. They hadn't imagined these things. One student has been designing a colouring book, and we know there are not many resources for young kids, no educational resources focused on those species available in Otago. For this student, it's a joy of a book to design, like an illustration project, and for Orokonui, they've suddenly gone, "Oh yes, could we get 10,000 of those printed, please? And we've got a sponsor who we think would be perfectly suited to this. And *congratulations*, we didn't realise we *needed* this!". Along the way, they also realise "Oh, look, what if you put a voucher at the end saying, you know, bring your family back and get half-price tickets or something, then we can get more people back", so there are really practical things too. All of that is based on the relationship we have there; it's a *relationship* project.

I've always enjoyed art, and I've always been creative. I might describe myself as an 'expert learner', in the sense that I've always been successful at school. When I first came down to Dunedin, it was to go to Art School. I think I probably chose Art because I found it was a subject that I couldn't easily succeed at, or that there wasn't an *answer*, so there was more effort required. I *failed* Art School, two or three times, actually. It was back in the days when there was no brief, there were no learning outcomes, there was no *explanation* for how or why you failed... so, I could never understand, and no-one was going to answer those questions. I got A's or E's, and I couldn't understand it; I never got a B or a C, it was always an A or an E. I never knew which way it was going to swing! I actually gave up on that dirty 'A' word for quite a few years! I was so over it; it was just ridiculous and so demoralising.

⁸ Orokonui Ecosanctuary, just north of Dunedin

But I'd started working at *Critic*, the student magazine, just as computers were coming in. So, we taught ourselves how to use the computers, the first Macs, at a time when publishing was becoming democratised, I guess. I know there's always been a democratic kind of element to the *writing*, but it was also like the *making* of it, and it was a time where I started to integrate what I was learning in Women's Studies, at that stage, and poststructuralist theory: For example, the idea that there's no such thing as being easy to read, and the writer is always making *suggestions*, but the reader is also bringing their readerly ways of understanding to something, and the role of the designer is integral in this relationship. We were a small group of writers, designers who really had fun together, and we were there at the cusp of the internet, before anybody had heard of the internet, and we did a newspaper series that was part of Wellington Festival of the Arts in 1993. So, I was kind of really interested in the democratisation of knowledge and thinking, and that's where I learned about Design. There was no *teacher*, and our work was politically motivated, but I had come from learning printmaking at Art School, so it was an easy transition to make.

In the end, I think I have five degrees now, and I'd never intended to get any! I was just learning for the sake of it. I would literally open up the University calendar at the beginning of the year, and look through and go "Ah!". I'd enrol in five papers, even though I really only had time for one or two, and then I'd just withdraw from the uninteresting ones. It was at that point that I understood how an engaging lecturer made all the difference. If they were boring, I would drop out; it was "No, sorry, I can't stand listening to you and your boring delivery". That was way more important than the topic or the content. For me, it was more about "How interesting are you going to make this learning experience?". My most interesting lecturer was a woman called Sarah Williams. She was from Berkeley and she was teaching Women's Studies at Otago University, just for a few years. She made us read really radical theory, but *do* something with it. And it's that approach that I think I've taken on; it's like "Do something with that". As groups of students, we created and made public an amazing poster series (Guerrilla Girls-style), and we made films, and we had a really quite radical approach to making change with that knowledge. That kind of set the *groundwork* for my approach as a teacher. When people begin teaching, they often say they think back to, say, "How did I learn that? That's how I'll go about teaching it". If you had a boring experience as a learner, you're probably going to be a boring teacher. I don't think I probably ever struggled with being boring! Even when I was working at university, one of the first elective courses I set up was called 'Beyond Apple P'. You know, you're not just sending something to the (digital) printer. What happens when you take it off the printer and out into the world? I'd also be working on live projects, which no-one else was doing really; they were using more conceptual, in-house projects. Now I think that's part of what we do that's different here at OP. This year, we have 48 different clients that we're working with in Communication Design, all live. Orokui is one of those, with six projects, but there are 47 others. They're mostly social and environmental organisations. I'm not really interested in working with business, and students will have as much time as they

want to do that sort of work, but the learning we do is all very transferable. Often, social and environmental organisations aren't the best clients because they don't have much experience working with designers, but they will have a problem or a series of problems that you could help them with, so our work together becomes a learning experience for everybody; it's not just the OP learners; *everybody's* learning.

I think that working with Sarah Williams was definitely a turning point for me. It was the first of those moments when I thought, "Oh, you *want* me to make things happen? How can I twist this learning upside down?". Later, when I was looking for a job, I went back and did one course, I think it was called 'Women in the Media' or 'Gender in the Media', which just seemed awfully appropriate. I remember going to a tutorial - and I knew my tutor - and saying to her, "Can you tell us, here in this class, how do you get an A+? I want to know exactly, like how many pictures do you want, how many quotes do you want, what do you need in your bibliography, your reference section?". And so she said, "Well, the best sort of essay has got this and this and this", and then she said, "But to get an A+, you really need to critique the question", and that was another lightbulb moment for me. I've never had *less* than an A+ since then really, because you can do the work, but you really have to say is that the right question, or could the question have been asked in this way? In which case you would be getting a different kind of answer. I think those are valuable moments in terms of being a *learner*. In terms of being a *teacher*, those a-ha moments are maybe trickier... I'm learning with the group. Yes, there have been multiple students, and probably an early one or two, who've only really experienced failure in education, and who even *want* to fail, and it's a question of how do you find that engaging experience for them, that is going to transform them and take them so far beyond what anybody ever expected? Again, the solution has always been around finding meaningful engagement with relevant communities. It's when those learners experience success that we're all transformed.

When I first started teaching, I was brought in as a young person to teach software and I just learned it as I went. I didn't know the software that they wanted me to teach, so I'd just learn it the day before and write notes, and, in the end, those notes became the course book, because there wasn't any existing course material. At the university, I was the first person in the department to say, "Hey, isn't it a good idea to write the assessment at the same time as the brief, and give students both of those things?", and they'd never thought of that. Nowadays, I'm not very good at software at all, because I don't teach software and I don't use it very much, and those are 'use them or lose them' kind of skills. Having said that, I've got a process for teaching that stuff if I need to. I believe anything is teachable and learnable; there is no thing that's not, but now I think that my more valuable teaching skills are around building relationships. It's interesting, because with the review going on at the moment, we are thinking, "Oh, will we have a job in two years' time, or is this place going to change beyond recognition?". I'm not really interested in going back to teaching those old sorts of skills; I think that kind of teaching isn't really interesting to me now, but I still find it hard to see what I do as useful in a different context. Most of my learners are school

leavers, so they've got a lot of growing up to do, and I think, as much as anything we teach them design skill-wise, the real value is about having professional expectations, and about being able to maintain professional relationships, giving and receiving feedback, letting us know if you're not going to turn up... some of those things are really valuable lessons. I think you'll always be able to learn skills on the job, if you don't have them when you leave, but we give students a lot more of those opportunities to practise with people they don't know, and for me that's probably the joy.

What is an excellent teacher? I think I can suggest a number of concepts. It helps to be organised, to be self-aware, to be really, really respectful, and to *share* how to be respectful, to model professional behaviours, to be really empathetic and to be *kind*, and to *not* put yourself or your needs ahead of the class, to be learner-centric - and that may or may not get feedback that says 'excellence' - to review and value and refine your own practices all the time, to celebrate with your learners, to facilitate learning through cultural practices, to *always* be open as a learner, to *be* a learner, and just to notice moments of learning, and to celebrate them all the time.

In terms of applying for the award, I'd been getting 100% feedback in my teaching evaluations for a few years, and really good comments, so I think probably my manager at the time noticed that and said, "Hey, why don't you apply for this?" (At that stage it was nomination for an OP award). It was very humbling. This led to an OP nomination for the Ako awards (Sustained Teaching Excellence). The exciting part for me was the relationship with my mentor while working on the application. I didn't know her before then, and she's now a really good friend. Again, it was about being a learner, and loving and enjoying that moment of one-on-one learning, because the way that she wanted me to write it was not the way I would have written it myself. I think I learned *heaps* through the process, identifying and developing my teaching philosophy, through reflecting on myself and my practice. There are not very many opportunities that you get to do that, to think deeply about your practice. It's a hugely lovely thing to be able to do.

I think winning the award has been just one of a number of things or people that have given me permission to be different, to be me. It probably helped me get the Fulbright scholarship that I went on, a couple of years after that. The Fulbright, again, gave me really interesting teaching experiences. It was a half teaching half research scholarship, and initially I thought, "How am I going to do this? I have no idea how I can walk into another country and teach the way I do", but I did. I took my way of being (and teaching) with me, and it was transformative. Even though we were talking about different things, and we weren't even planning to do project-based learning, we ended up doing project-based learning, which was really deeply transformative. So, I guess it's the flow-on effect, and actually it was wonderful to know that just being me, and doing things my way in another completely different context where no-one was expecting that, was still OK, and still worked.

My idea of a teacher is someone at the front of the class, and I don't think I'm that; I'm somewhere in the *middle* of a class, and getting people to go outside... Then once you're out there, you're just embedded in this experience where everybody's learning, and you can pick out pieces. It's like, what's possible isn't impossible until you move outside of the frame of expectations of what's probable. I think most teaching is about the probable, and I'm much more interested in the impossible, and the crazy, memorable experiences that will transform you, *and* transform me.

I don't know that you can teach excellence. You can empower people to develop. The teacher at the front of the class, yes, you can give them all those words to describe what they're doing, and you can ask them to identify things in their experience. You can show *examples* of excellence, maybe, but still, they can't copy examples, can they? I think they have to own their practice, and do it in a way that is real and meaningful and exciting to that person. If it's not exciting to that person, if it's just copying someone else's model, it won't be authentic, and it won't be exciting. In fact, it will probably be scary! There might be elements that are learnable, but maybe it's also about personality. Can you *change* people to become excellent teachers? I think there are some things that you can't change about yourself. Might those things stop you from being an excellent teacher? Sometimes. Can you still be an excellent teacher? Yes, *sometimes*. We have to learn and develop; that learning and teaching thing is pretty tied up together. Maybe that's enough. I don't think everybody's ever going to like one teacher, are they? There are different learners who like different approaches to learning. I'm probably not very good for a student that really likes to sit down and take notes and be told exactly what to do, because that's not me, but some students *do* like that structure. They're definitely not the majority; most will happily be drawn into an adventure, and they'll learn along the way, but some would prefer a classroom where it's safe and the limits are clear. You *know* when you've had a good class, and you know if you've got the skills of engagement - those are things that I *guess* can be taught, but there's still that 'X factor'.

I think the 'Teaching Excellence' awardees at OP are all really, really different. We tend to think of teaching as a skill, but it's so much more than that; you're dealing with so many people's lives. It's both formative and transformative. It's interesting because not everyone wins, you know, that is nominated. And it's *not* about the award; it's about looking beyond that. These are just examples of people who someone else has said is OK. Well, 'excellent' is the word that they use. On the whole, though, when I go to Ako events, they're full of really interesting people; every single one of them is an *amazing* person... you realise you're part of this community of amazing people. They go beyond, they think innovatively, they've got really great personalities, they're *all* amazing people. It's a really nice environment to be in too. They're really interesting people, and they don't *look* the same; they come from very different backgrounds and contexts, but they all do have something special.

Thinking about the wider community, it's relationships that keep me here. But it's also the feeling that you can make change happen. Because of that, I have a sense of belonging. The change that happens needs to be free of me; it's not dependent on me. It's dependent on the community, wanting, doing, and making change. It's about knowing what needs to happen, and asking for that change to happen; having a voice, among other voices... a voice in the choir.

I've felt really respected and trusted here, and I think my managers have been really key to that, to let me do things in the way that I do things, even though they're more work, they're more random, or they're more difficult to quantify. Regardless of the qualification aspect, the success of the student as a person is really evident, so I feel really grateful for having a couple of great managers. I've also gone from a lecture hall of 150 or 200 people through to a classroom of 40-50 people, where you can actually have relationships with each of them, or know where they sit in the world, and so I prefer that, for sure. That doesn't mean there aren't some excellent teachers in university contexts, who may or may not be prize-winning. I've known lecturers who've been fabulous, who've not been able to put an application forward just because, maybe, they're not in the right sort of academic position, for example.

I think I would define my practice as a *social* practice, which includes art and design, and teaching, and community work, and, when I was in the States, I had a look at some other places teaching in that way. I think the closest one that I found was in Vancouver, so I'd love to spend a semester in Vancouver, to see and learn from people a bit more like me. I haven't found many people who think like I do, or practise like I do. That isn't to say you can't take it anywhere and try it; it's about being able to share a little bit more, find a community of practice. I can totally stay busy, with 50 projects a year in Dunedin, and I am really committed to that local space as a form of sustainable practice, but I also want to connect with others who understand and practise in that way.

I decided a long time ago that I really was more interested in local and international practices than national, because national can be a bit competitive and I don't really like that. But we are in the process of applying for a DESIS Lab, which is 'Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability', and that might enable projects that might have national interest or reach, and it comes with an international network. Having one foot in the classroom seems important, and I know I don't want to be a manager, but what's the most effective way of sharing what I do, and could we do it *across* institutions? Possibly.

I think there is a risk of awardees being moved away from the classroom, and I've had comments in colleague feedback, for instance, saying, "Don't leave the classroom. Keep your foot back in there". Now, I only teach postgrad students and third-year students, and that suits my way of teaching... As postgrad programmes grow, they need leadership as well, and I don't know how to split my time. And then what's going to happen with this

national integration of programmes? I'm happy with leadership; it's a concept and a practice that I feel totally comfortable with, but along with that comes less and less time for teaching. I wish I could drive this next part, but it feels like we're in a rocky ocean and we're not sure how the storm's going to go. I'm just going to hang in there for a while. Part of what I like most about the Polytechnic is the institutional culture of *trust*, of *enabling* people, and that's why I haven't accepted jobs for other places in the last couple of years... but there have to be opportunities to grow, as well as a good environment. If both of those two things change, and both of them might, then I don't know what it will look like.

With teacher development, I've seen my team engaging with more formal teacher training with really varied results. In some cases, people are still coming out of it without knowing what a learning outcome is, and that was only last year. Then, in other cases, people are really applying themselves and doing great work, and thinking and learning through the programme. It is useful when some of those expectations are made clear, and there are opportunities to organise learning *with support*; those things are good. Beyond that, maybe there could be case studies of how people do things differently, and the opportunity for ongoing mentorship. In the cases that I've seen formal teacher development work well, it has been around the person seeking mentorship, and just having ongoing conversations about education. You don't want people to think that they're 'fixed', and they can stop learning. I think to be a teacher, you've always got to learn. It's probably around gaining confidence as a learner, so that you're constantly in a professional development frame of mind, and thinking, "How can I do that better?". If anything, it's about that self-criticality and reflection, and knowing how to use a student evaluation to improve your practice, and try things, and iterate. That seems like the most practical thing.

Meaningful items for me are things which show my place as the teacher is not at the front of the classroom; it's very embedded in a practice and a process, where the learners are leading it, and telling their stories. That's definitely a meaningful thing for me. I've had cards from learners, which have just been really nice, and I might have one or two of those on my desk. I do love my work, which is good, and these things can sometimes, I think, give us permission to keep on doing it.

Jane's Story

"For me, being an excellent teacher is being able to work with a group of students, and get them on board, get them having fun... You can feel comfortable in a classroom with this person; you know that you're not being judged, that you can make mistakes and be yourself".

I wanted to be an artist when I was at school, and I studied Art. My parents really encouraged me away from going to Art School, with "Oh you'll never earn a living being an artist" kind of thing, so I ended up working for the government first, and then I worked for IHC⁹. None of those things were particularly what I wanted to do. I started teaching in the 1980s, and I was involved in teaching music first, and a bit of drama. I'm not really sure how I even got into teaching. It was probably through IHC... I worked for IHC on a horticultural block in Nelson. It rained a lot, and you couldn't always work outside, so I used to do things for weekday sort of activities, and I ended up getting people into acting. We got this kind of drama group together, and then I worked with a couple of other people who were in a theatre group in Nelson, and we started producing plays. As part of that, there was quite a lot of music involved too, and I used to really enjoy teaching. I thought, "I'd quite like to do this", so I moved from IHC into various community groups, where I did things like after-school programmes, and I worked a lot with teenagers playing music, and I did quite a lot of bone carving and things like that in those days too. I taught courses for long-term unemployed people. Then slowly, I found my way back to my art practice, which took quite a few years, but also music; I did a lot of music at school as well. So, my art and my music were my first loves. I worked as a musician for years, in various bands, and I also did a lot of sculpture and painting and things, before I came to Art School as a student. Then I came to Art School and did my Bachelor's. I did know, as I was going through Art School, that I'd really like to teach, but it was from the point of view of having some qualifications, rather than being more in sort of community-teaching type things.

I would say that key turning points in my career have been the ability to design programmes. How exciting it is not just to be told you're teaching this, and this is the way we want it, but to be able to develop and design new programmes, and design the course content within those programmes; to be able to actually think about things more holistically - what is it that we want, developing courses that suit that Graduate Profile, and thinking, "How can we do this in exciting ways?". There are many, many ways for people to learn about the Treaty of Waitangi, for example. When I was learning, I went to some quite boring Treaty workshops, I must say, and now I'm looking at the Treaty with my students, and finding ways to bring that learning into the everyday classroom. So, for example, because I'm teaching in Art and Design, we're looking at things like post-Treaty legislation, and people are developing art projects around it. In some ways, it's sort of finding ways to

⁹ New Zealand's leading provider of services for people with intellectual disabilities

hide the veggies. Lots of people are “Ugh! I don’t want to do all this Treaty stuff again”, but then, here you are, you’re a citizen of Aotearoa New Zealand, and this is a responsibility for *you* as an artist or designer to understand these things and how they impact on *your* practice, so how can we do it in a way that’s meaningful? It’s that kind of thing that is often a turning point for me; to think that there are exciting ways to teach material which wasn’t taught in that way, when I was young. I found school *really* boring.

I *loved* playing music when I was a kid, and I *really* wanted to do music for School Cert. I was a guitarist and, when I got to high school, I was told “Oh, a guitar’s not a proper instrument. You have to do piano or violin”. I’d thought people weren’t doing that kind of thing now, yet my grandson is a drummer, and he wants to do music at school. He’s been told he has to play the piano or the guitar. At least a guitar is a proper instrument now, but he still can’t play the drums, so nothing’s changed!

My move into teaching all happened so *slowly*. I think I was living in Nelson, and there were some night classes starting up - community programmes - and I think the course was called ‘Making Music’. I think that was how I started getting into teaching the full-time music courses. It was for people who had instruments lying around in their cupboards and *wanted* to play, but didn’t quite know how, and it was about learning how to play together. There was a group of about twelve people, of a whole range of ages and a range of abilities. That course went on for about twelve weeks, and was really successful, so I was asked to do it again. I did several of those and that gave me the idea to put in a proposal to run three-month courses for long-term unemployed people. They were both Music and Drama, and they started in Nelson, then I did them in Golden Bay too.

I think it was around *that* time that I thought, “Oh, I’m actually quite a good teacher”. Before that, I hadn’t really thought about it in terms of *teaching*; it was more just kind of helping people play. I’m not sure if it was my own instinct or feedback from people that helped me realise that; probably a bit of both. People obviously were enjoying it and saying how much fun they were having. I think that’s quite important. I mean *everything* should be fun when you’re teaching, so if it’s not fun for the students, that’s no good! I remember some very miserable music lessons when I was a kid. I had one *amazing* music teacher in Form 2, who was a kind of shining light for me. He would have everybody playing. I learned a lot from him... I used his approach with my students, and still *do* in various things; it’s about contributing what you can, not waiting until you’re ‘good enough’ to do it. It’s much more of a *community* in the classroom.

I always *enjoy* working with people, and that special moment when they realise that they’ve captured something, they’ve understood something, they’ve moved on, and that a world has opened up for them; I really love that. Being a practising artist informs my teaching all the time, and my teaching also informs my artwork, because, for me, it’s a very holistic

process. It was all kind of accidental really. I never thought of myself as a teacher, and then I suddenly realised I was a teacher... I realised as I was making my CV for the Professor role, and I had written 'Artist and Educator' or 'Educator and Artist', or something like that, and I realised that I value these roles equally.

I think I feel quite confident, or I have felt quite confident in my teaching for quite a long time. Yes, there are still days when things don't go as well as you'd hoped, and things can go wrong, particularly with technology, which I always find challenging. You can plan a class really well and things can still fall apart. It happens to the best of us! So, there are days when I think, "Yeah, that went well. I really nailed it today", and other days where I just think, "Ah, that could've been a lot better". I think it's important to be self-reflective *all* the time... I think you need to also think about things: technology's changing, there's always new information, there's always new stuff out there to be showing your students, and keeping on top of, so you're really only as good as your last class. I don't think I thought, "I'm a great teacher", because I got the award; it's more a case of putting together all of these things that I've learned, and it's made me very aware of what my teaching practice is.

Initially, I won an Otago Polytechnic staff award in the February, and I was told I should apply for the national one. I did enjoy it when I wrote it... I did enjoy reflecting on all of my teaching experience and what it meant, and also thinking about my teaching philosophy. I'd done that a bit with my GCTLT¹⁰, but I went into that in more depth for the award, and actually began to realise the things that were important to me.

I would say an excellent teacher is a teacher who's really aware of all of the different needs of the students, I think, and being able to be in a classroom, and kind of know where people are at who are in your class, and they'll all have skills in certain areas and not in others, and to be able to facilitate a *community*. For me, being an excellent teacher is being able to work with a *group* of students, and get them on board, get them having fun. Often, they're learning things that they might have been resistant to, but you're doing it in a kind of fun way, so they're not so resistant. It's kind of breaking down the resistance, and that resistance is often from *fear*, of making a fool of yourself... so, kind of creating an atmosphere where it's actually OK to make mistakes. We all make mistakes, and that's how we learn, and that's cool; it doesn't matter. So, I guess, for me, that's what a good teacher is. You can feel *comfortable* in a classroom with this person; you know that you're not being judged, that you can make mistakes and be yourself, and there's a good enough atmosphere within that classroom, that people are not ashamed of doing badly in front of other students. Somehow that, for me, building an atmosphere is the most important thing, building a good atmosphere.

¹⁰ Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Learning and Teaching

I think you have to be a warm person too. I have not enjoyed being taught by people who are cold; that's just my experience. Personality is so interesting. I've known some excellent teachers, who are quite quiet people, who are not bouncy and energetic, and get everybody revved up; they're very quiet, and they're wonderful at observing the people who're not managing, and noticing things, maybe, that sort of bouncy people might not notice. I've done a lot of team teaching, and I've loved teaching with people who're quite different from me. Together, we bring things to each other, and I think there's not *one* kind of good teacher.

Passion is another thing which makes you a good teacher; you've got to feel *passionate* about your subject, and, if you do that, your students feel passionate about it too. In my teaching feedback, I get a lot of that, that I'm really energetic and really passionate, and they love coming to my classes, *because* they can feel that energy. Good energy feeds on itself. So, I think anybody who's passionate about their subject, that's a very good start. That's why it's always important to teach some new things, and update your content all the time. You need to do that for your students, but you also need to do it for yourself, otherwise you'd be sleepwalking through your day!

I use much the same approach whatever subject I'm teaching. A lot of my teaching now is actually supervising Master's students, one-to-one. I've got a level-4 classroom-type situation, with an Art and Design History course, which could be really boring... but I spend most of my time taking my students out. We go to galleries all the time, and, what they're doing in that course is writing, and we do all our writing *in front* of artworks and in front of design objects. So, we're out there in the world. They're not only describing things, but they're actually responding to the *effect* that a piece has on them. They're not looking at stuff online, not looking at stuff in books – yes, you can do that for backup – and it's made a *huge* difference. That's been a big change, and I've really, really enjoyed that. Another thing I've been doing is taking level-4 students to see Master's students' exhibitions, and getting the Master's students to talk to them about their work. Many of those Master's students used to be level fours, so it's been matching learners up with people who did the same course as them, and they're thinking "Wow! This is a pathway". They can actually see, "This is a viable pathway for me. This is somebody who was where I was; no school qualifications and now they've got their Master's", so sometimes you only need to, like, *show* that doorway to make a difference.

Every year, the very first class that I teach with my level-4 students is the introduction to the Art History course. I always bring in lots of objects for students to talk about, and I introduce them to this idea of the difference between, like, *describing* something - you know, you can describe anything in formal terms, and it's the beginning of, really, Art History speak, so, formal terms: line, colour, tone, texture, all of those kind of things - so what's the difference between *that* and having an *emotional* response to an artwork? And I ask them to have both kinds of responses, and the emotional response could be that this

thing reminds me of a story, a person, something in my past, something I want to do. There are some key things that I always have, to help kind of start them off, and every year I always bring in different things, apart from this one object, which I bring every year, because it is the object that people totally engage with, and they always write really good things about it. It's this beautiful, hand-woven thing, made out of reeds, like a bird's nest, made by this woman called Willa Rogers, who's an artist in Nelson, and it's gorgeous. I bring it in, and every year people gravitate towards it, and write heaps about it, and how they feel when they see this nest. It is a beautiful object, but it's also that feeling of the nest and safety and security. It's an object that you could look at and have an emotional response with quite easily, and I guess that's kind of nicely symbolic too, because it's like they're first starting off, the year ones, starting off in their learning.



*Image 4 – Woven nest
(photo credit: Jane Venis)*

Energy is really important. What keeps me in the OP community, for example, is I think it's a *brilliant* place to work. I have really supportive colleagues, and it's a place where I feel like my voice is heard; I've got ideas for change, and things like that. I really enjoy the Dunedin community too. I think it's a very energetic, vibrant community. It's a good place to live, very creative. I moved down here in the mid-1990s when I enrolled at Art School, and I've been

here since then... I was just really enjoying the career, and realising that I was in the right place.

Things change over time, of course. The main thing is that learning is much more student-centred than it used to be. I always have lots of time for the students to talk about things in groups and talk about things together, or even just bounce ideas back when *I'm* talking about various things, so it's not me just spouting off to them. I think that's a big change.

I don't know what the future holds. At the moment, I'm really enjoying what I'm doing... I'm *really* enjoying my new role as a Professor. I'm also doing quite a bit of mentoring, as part of that, and I'm enjoying that, so I want to keep doing that. The research is going well; more international research is always good... and all of those things feed into the teaching too, so we are seeing very interesting international work all the time, and then we're bringing that back and sharing it with our students.

I think *experience* is what trains people to be excellent teachers. Can we train people to be excellent teachers? The answer *should* be 'yes'; it should be 'yes', but I'm not sure. I think team teaching is a really good way of learning, you know, working alongside other teachers who are beginning, because I think people get thrown in at the deep end quite a lot with teaching. They might be practitioners and then they apply for a job, and they get a teaching role, and they're doing formal teacher training too, whilst they're teaching, which is quite a lot of pressure, whilst they're also learning to teach... Can you teach somebody excellence? *Observation* is a very good way of learning. I've done observations, and I've been observed. I would say, though, that I think teaching observations are only useful if the person being observed knows what it is that they want feedback on. Having somebody in there observing you when you're teaching can be quite sort of terrifying, and it can be terrifying, you know, for the observer too, because you realise the person is trying to put on a good show. Really, it's better if they say, "Look, I'm really, really worried about *this* part of my practice, and there's this particular thing here that I'm concerned about, and I really want some support, and can you observe, and what do you think?". I think that kind of teaching observation's really useful, because it comes from the person being *observed*, rather than somebody that's thrust upon them, and they're told that this has to happen.

With teacher development here, a lot of the formal teacher training is all online now. From conversations I've had with new teachers, they *hate* it being online... people are struggling with it being online. What they're wanting to do is just to actually be in a room full of other people who are experiencing the same things, and actually have real conversations, how it used to be. There you are, you're alone, you've started a new job, you're teaching for the first time, you're working with students, you haven't really done it before, and you have to do this course. There you are, sitting on your own in front of a computer doing it, rather than being in a supportive classroom environment. That's the feedback that I've had from a lot of people, so I think that would be a really good change, to have more opportunity for

face to face... I think they're just missing that personal element. Those discussions are important, those conversations with other people who're learning to teach too.

I think it would be really good to have some teaching forums... Ako teachers could work... we could sit around, and learner teachers could be sharing some of their issues, and, you know, bounce ideas off people with more experience. I mean there's millions, there are *so many* good teachers here at Otago Polytechnic, and they're not all award-winning teachers, but still, there's lots of great teachers. You know, it's just if you're lucky, and if you've been chosen, and you go for the award, but I mean there's *equally* good teachers who haven't had the award, who've got lots of things to share. Across the Poly, I really like the development days when there are lots of different workshops that you can choose from. There was a really good Staff Development Day last year; it was fantastic... heaps of different workshops that were really, really good. Things like that are great for our own development, and you need that in teaching.

Leoni's Story

"I think of excellent teaching as empowering students, of excellent teaching as based on real understanding and depth of knowledge, as being flexible, depending on whatever situation one finds oneself in".

My first teaching experience was when I was 20. My partner went to work at a university in South Africa, which is my first country. It was near a College of Education, and I was asked to work there. In the first instance, it was to teach English, which had been my third major in my first degree... I had started university earlier than most people, so by the time I was 20, I had already completed my English major. I studied for a BA in Fine Arts, a four-year degree with a triple major in English, Art History, and Painting, and obviously, all the other studio and academic subjects. It was a very difficult and problematic situation, because all the students at that college were African people, from a range of African ethnicities. Most of them were slightly older, in their 30s, and for many of them, this was almost a second-chance education. I think the last thing they wanted was a young, female, European person teaching them. Initially, I experienced a lot of pushback from the students... At that point in time, there were no support systems in place. You were just given a job, and told to get on with it.

I decided to have a good look at the curriculum, and realised that it was completely Eurocentric. Fortunately, there were no formal audit documents that precluded one from being a bit flexible, so I tried to relate, say, prescribed books or prescribed short stories to African equivalents. I had the advantage that my second language had been Sesotho, which is an African language, so that helped me to understand some of the difficulties. It wasn't an easy task, because most of the students there were *not* Sesotho, they were Xhosa-speaking. Also, many African languages are based on predominantly oral communication, which meant the basic tenets of the whole situation were deeply problematic to start with. It was based on a Eurocentric idea, on an established canon of literature, and many of the readings prescribed were *completely* outside the experiential world of the people that I was supposed to be teaching. One thing I tried was eliciting the students' help in reconstructing elements of the curriculum. I'd ask them, "What do you know?", "What have you read?", "What stories can you tell?", "What are the things that have played a role in your life?", and I tried to incorporate their responses into what we were actually doing in the class. I felt that it worked after about six months, but it was a very difficult experience for me.

After about a year teaching English at this college, I was asked to move to teaching Art. They could find another English teacher, but they couldn't find somebody to teach Art. I continued working there for about another two years before we moved away. I was sad that I had to leave then, although the second part of the job had had its own challenges. For example, they had this huge hall where people were supposed to have their Art classes, and there were very large groups of students at the time. When I switched from the English

position to the Art position, over that holiday I went to have a look at this space. It was dusty, and brown, and uninspiring, and dirty. There was going to be *no* help with changing this place, so my partner and I just got stuck in over the holiday, and painted it, can you believe it, orange and green! Still today those are my *least* favourite colours, because we had to paint a *lot* of walls, and wallpaper a lot of dingy tables. Anyway, when the students arrived for the new term, they walked into this brightly painted new place, and it was a good start. So, my key learnings from those experiences were around the importance of adapting to the circumstances, involving students in their own learning, and creating a place, a *physical* place, that is actually inviting, rather than being soul-destroying or uninspiring.

After that, I was appointed as a lecturer at a South African university, when I was 22. I worked there until I had children, a few years before we emigrated to New Zealand. I worked at the University up the road in Dunedin for a while, and then Otago Polytechnic decided to start their first Master's programme, which was the Master of Fine Arts, and I was asked to head that up. I decided to go for it, because it was quite a challenge to start the first postgraduate programme in the Dunedin School of Art. I was the Programme Manager for that for quite a while, while also teaching Art History and Theory, and supervising postgraduate students.

Moving from South Africa to New Zealand, I didn't find many differences in teaching *practices*, but there was a dramatic difference in terms of content, and the frames of reference were drastically different. The class sizes were smaller here too, which was a welcome surprise! Obviously, I'd come from Africa, and the whole African context and learning environment is very different from New Zealand. I had to learn about the context and the content, much more so than the teaching practices, because I'd worked in a studio context before. The studio context is very different, in terms of teaching and learning, from a traditional lecture-style delivery, so I was already used to more experiential learning. I'd been using what people would call innovative teaching practices anyway, because that's what you do in the studio context. I'd also changed delivery styles with those first students in my English courses; instead of lecturing, it became more of a *workshop* kind of environment, which was one of the reasons why I think it worked, because the students had expected me to just lecture at them, rather than working with them.

In terms of formative turning points in my career, there is one which had a huge impact on my teaching and supervision... quite a long time ago in South Africa; we're talking about the late 1980s, we're talking about apartheid South Africa, we're talking about intermittent states of emergency security called by the government, which made all sorts of things impossible, like large meetings, protests, and so on. I was working and living in the larger Johannesburg area. This wider region includes a population of roughly 12 million people, in the most cosmopolitan metropolitan area in Africa. There were about 48 different language and cultural groupings in this area. At some point in all of that, given those circumstances,

my university decided to initiate a project to bring all these groups together, and I was invited to be the project leader for this initiative. We thought people could be brought together around a massive exhibition of material culture, which means artworks, but doesn't exclude other things, like textile designs or traditional objects. Long story short, I invited nine people to start looking into this project with me and, after a while, we found the money to do it with. Over time, it evolved into a massive project which we called the *Intercultural Visual Kaleidoscope*. We had two years to prepare it, and then the whole event played out over a period of six months. I was a complete wreck afterwards, because it was a real *risk*, but it was an incredible success at the end of the day. In terms of personal impact, it brought me into contact with an exceptionally wide range of people; it really extended and deepened my understanding of different cultures, different languages, different ways of working around things, and different ways of organising things. I would say that each one of those different sets of people had different ways of managing themselves, of communicating, of making things, of doing everything really. The idea wasn't just to be involved in the project, but also to be involved in it *with* one another. It was a really pivotal event in my life, which had a big influence on the way that I've been able to work with people from different cultural groups and the way I work in the classroom.

Coming to New Zealand, I was introduced to Māori culture, of course, which I'd known very little about before that. I had some Pasifika students in my class, from different parts of the Pacific, and international students too that came to the Dunedin School of Art. In many ways, despite the different content, different context, and different environment, I actually found it easy to work with these students, because I'd become flexible and used to working with people from a range of cultural backgrounds. At the moment, I'm working with people at our Auckland International Campus, and they're *all* from different countries... Again, I find it a familiar context and a comfortable workspace, and I think this all started with that South African project now so long ago.

Things change over time, of course. As one example, there's been a move from studio-based learning to experiential learning involving external bodies, and industry placements, with connections between students and the actual workplace. Over time, I also got to work with different lecturers, different studio supervisors, different people in the Art History and Theory context, and so on. All people who intersect with one's life play a part in how one's way of teaching and supervising develops and changes, because people all do things differently. One sees people doing things in a different way, and one learns from that.

I think an excellent teacher is a combination of things. I think one definitely needs a really thorough and deep knowledge of one's subject, whatever that might be. That might be one discipline, it could be cross-disciplinary, or it could be multi-disciplinary, but, at the end of the day, the student is coming to you for that knowledge. It's not just the knowledge either, but also the knowledge of where to *find* the knowledge, because nobody can know everything. As a lecturer or supervisor, I need to guide students around where we can look for what is actually valuable or viable information, and what's just rubbish on the internet.

So, I think an understanding of the discipline or disciplines, and how to negotiate around them, is fundamental. The second thing, and maybe the most important, is the *relationship* between the teacher and the student. It's that sense of give and take, and of open discussion and learning from one another. It's not about laying down the rules or being too dogmatic, and it's not about making it your project. I think that there's an *empowerment* element in that; not playing power games, but empowering somebody to rise to the occasion of whatever it is they're studying. Thirdly, I think the ability to bring a student into contact with other people, whether that's in the institution, or locally, nationally, or internationally, is really important. It's about connecting them with other options and possibilities, and that might also include employment possibilities. In a way, one becomes a conduit for students to connect them with other things and other people. So, for me, I think it's the knowledge, an empowering relationship with the students, and being an enabler for productive relationships and networks.

I think there are elements of 'excellence', if I may say that, that have come about from my life experience. Firstly, I think that I grew up in a house that was very much around empowerment, rather than disempowerment, and I had parents that were role models for me. My mother was a music teacher, and my father was an architect. Their open discussions and arguments were all normal in the sense that disagreement and critical thinking were encouraged. Secondly, I think I had fantastic supervisors for both my master's degree and my doctorate, really *critical* people who were super supportive. They were really focused on the *work* and on *helping* me, rather than playing games with me, or trying to be in charge, so those people played a big role in my life. Thirdly, and very importantly, I have a partner who plays out these things in his daily life in his own work, empowering people rather than disempowering them. Finally, I've had some amazing students and colleagues. Through all of it has been, at the centre, my trying to help other people; it's never about me, it's about the student's project; it's about whatever they need to achieve.

Achieving a National Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award, and the whole event at Parliament, was really lovely. I enjoyed applying for it too! I was asked to put together a portfolio, and I had a colleague mentor me through writing it. It was a lovely experience, a lovely process, and it was actually quite fun; we still laugh about it today... The award itself feels like validation of a long time of teaching. It's not an easy job; one is faced with many, many different students, with many, many different needs, and it can be very difficult. Also, in terms of a field like Art History and Theory, which is my main discipline, it's about supporting a student who's being supervised both in the studio and for writing. It's like a kind of bridge between the physical *making* and a conceptual understanding of what one is doing and how to translate that, and articulate that, in writing. This is a *really* complex thing to do, and not many people can do it well... To do both really well, one has to focus on the individual project, and one has to be extremely flexible, because every student brings another project to the party. It's not like they're all doing a task and you're assessing that task; literally every single person is different. So that's a real challenge, and I felt that the

award validated that. A big part of my portfolio was around that kind of teaching, and how I understood the difficulties of it, so it was very much a validation.

I am not sure if it's possible to teach 'excellence'. I think one can model it, one can help people, and one can support people into changing their teaching practices. Often, in the first instance, it's not about their teaching practices, but more about their *attitude* to teaching. It's no good specifically *telling* these people what they should do or not do, but by modelling it, I think one can gradually change a culture. For example, it might be by focusing on a student-centric approach, with a sense of "Let's do it together as a team!". That can have a huge impact on what the student actually experiences. Instead of one course, then another course, then another course, they can then experience a programme more as a whole.

Having said that, I've also come across teachers that will never fundamentally change, and, personally, I think that a deep reason for that is a kind of insecurity and a sense of inferiority, which makes people hang on to things. They hang on to power, and they hang on to a way in which they've always done something, and it all results in the students' experience being disempowering, which is the exact opposite of what we're trying to achieve at Otago Polytechnic. I think that's a fundamental thing that maybe one *can't* change, and people will often default to those kinds of positions under stress, or in new circumstances, or when they are expected to do something in a new way. They might default to old patterns because of a fundamental sense of insecurity. I also think, if you grow up in a context where people make you intellectually challenged all the time, one just gets used to it and uses it productively. In the most positive possible sense, in the Dunedin School of Art, for example, when I was Head of School, people would say to me, "This is the dumbest idea we've ever heard!", and I would say, "Right, OK, let's go back to the drawing board", and one just got *used* to being criticised, and it's part of life and it's part of a natural way of being.

I don't think excellent teaching is different in different contexts. I think of excellent teaching as empowering students, of excellent teaching as based on real understanding and depth of knowledge, as being flexible, depending on whatever situation one finds oneself in, and so on... I don't think there is a fundamental difference across different contexts. That's not to say that the context is not different. For example, in a polytechnic kind of context which is more *applied*, one is more likely to be faced with the need to look at each student individually. One has smaller groups, there's more workplace and studio-based teaching, and one is also more aware of the students' connections with the world out there. In the university model, at least at undergraduate level, one is more geared towards having a group of many students, lecturing to them, and then having tutorial assistants who will do the rest. For me, the fundamental tenets are equally important, however, even if there is a shift in context.

The community here at Otago Polytechnic is very important to me. I value a sense of collegiality and a sense of community at work, because I don't experience myself coming to work as an isolated individual. I loved working in the Dunedin School of Art because there was a real sense of a team and of collegiality. I'm also really involved with a lot of people around research now, and again find that collegiality and interaction with people really valuable. I think I'm basically a relationship person.

Over the years that I've worked here, I've been offered other positions at different places in different contexts. Even though most of those positions were pretty attractive, at the end of the day, I've felt sufficiently challenged and happy and valued at Otago Polytechnic, with a sense of freedom, and a sense of being able to chart my own direction, that I've stayed. I've never ever felt that somebody is looking over my shoulder and saying you *can't* do that, and you *must* do that. Obviously, there are rules and regulations, and one must be accountable, but there's a real sense of freedom and possibilities here. I think Otago Polytechnic is way more flexible about these things than many other institutions, and I think staff are given way more permission to experiment and to be more flexible around things. Phil Ker's leadership, and the whole leadership team have made all of this possible at Otago Polytechnic; I hope he and all of them know how much we all appreciate what they have enabled for us all over many years. In the wider community, and on a more personal level, I love Dunedin. My partner has always worked here, and my children grew up here; I'm happy here.

I've seen a lot of changes in the learning and teaching community over time. At Otago Polytechnic, I think there's been a shift towards a greater understanding about work-based learning, and more of an understanding of the importance of connecting with workplaces. In some cases, people are also starting to understand that they *can* learn something from Art and Design, because teachers in that space have always worked in those more flexible ways, where the project is driven by the student and not by a set curriculum. I would say those two things - that sense of work connections, and a veer away from lecture-type presentations, and thus from the power of the lecturer - have shifted over time. They might seem obvious changes, but I don't think they happen overnight.

Looking ahead, I think we'll continue with the work we're doing right now, but I think there will be more opportunities to work on a national basis. For example, I'm the Otago Polytechnic representative on the ITP¹¹ Research Forum. There are 16 institutions that send their Research Director to this forum, and there's a sense, for the first time, of working more collaboratively. I *firmly* believe in the clear connection between research and teaching; they're not two separate things in my mind. I think that Otago Polytechnic can play a major role in this. I think that we've got a clear picture of what research is at a

¹¹ Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics

polytechnic, what it can be, what role it plays, and also what the governance issues are around it.

In terms of teacher development, I think there are still people on the ground at Otago Polytechnic who cannot see the use, the value, the importance, or the practical implications of learning and teaching support. This might be because they are really doing a great job without that support, or they've just become set in their ways or, alternatively, because they don't know enough about what it can offer them. There are other people who see it either as a superimposition of yet another compliance, or they don't have a sense of a personal, professional relationship with the people that could help them. For me, even some of the best teachers I've come across can still benefit from some learning and teaching development. I think there's a *relationship* problem or legacy; maybe it's a historical thing of people having felt in the past that things are being done to them, rather than for them. Things like that can have a ten-year legacy; it can be very hard to change perceptions. That is probably the biggest obstacle in my view, to people actually saying, "I want to teach better, I want to have access to the best teaching practices, I'm not an expert on this, let me go and ask people for help, to let me improve it".

I have two objects here that are particularly important to me. The first is a little item made from Bakelite, which is the material they used to make music records with, in the olden days. We had a student in the Dunedin School of Art, who is now living in Australia. This particular student was very much an out-of-the-box thinker, who ended up being very successful. However, he encountered a real problem with bullying here at the Art School. I tried to broker things for him, because I thought that he was being treated unfairly... as the Programme Manager, I saw a lot of things happen, and I put up a fight for him. I'd make things possible for him, simple things like access to studios, access to IT, things like that. Long story short, he completed his studies, did really well, and then went away. Maybe five years or so later, I just got this thing in the post, without any letter or anything. I knew it was from him, because he worked with Bakelite; it was his *signature* material. I got this in an envelope without a return address, but he would know I knew it was from him. It's always been a special object for me.



Image 5 – Bakelite heart, crafted by a student

The second thing is a few metres of this material. For the project in Johannesburg, one of the people who was involved from the Armenian community there had a textile factory. We asked him if he could make a few metres of this material, which translates the *Intercultural Visual Kaleidoscope* into all the languages I mentioned earlier. The man came back, and he'd made 500 metres, so it became a signature part of the exhibition. At the end, we cut it all up and kept a piece each.

These items are from totally different contexts. One represents a major pivotal point in my life, and the other represents a good relationship with a student, and all the other things that go into teaching, often not directly related to the teaching itself.

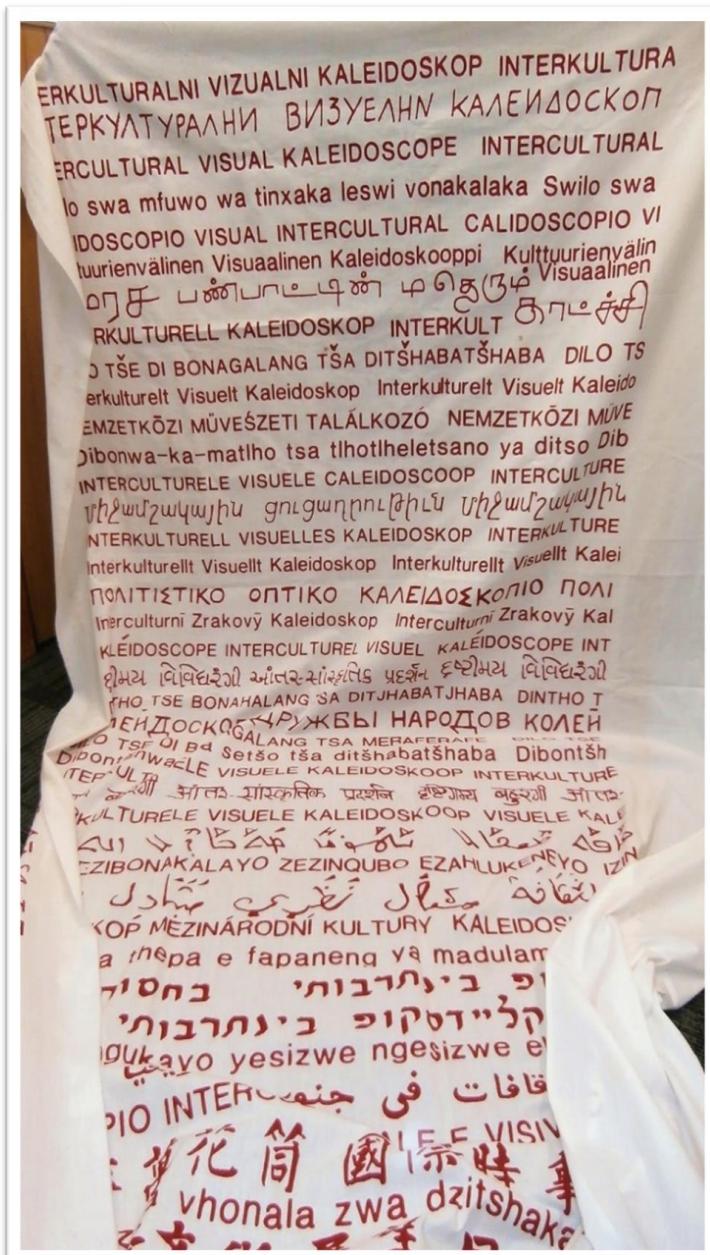


Image 6 – Material made for the Intercultural Visual Kaleidoscope project

Liz's Story

"I think excellence is about bringing out the best in your learners, in whatever way, shape, or form that you can do".

I guess I've been an accidental teacher, through life. My very, very first teaching experience was as a violin teacher when I was 14. I used to teach in a summer school holiday music programme. That was just because I was experienced in playing; I got to grade five in the violin. I had all these little kids to teach, and I didn't really *like* it that much. If anyone had said to me, "Would you like to be a teacher?", I would've said, "No, no, no! I don't want to be a teacher!". It wasn't something that I always wanted to be at all.

It didn't ever *occur* to me that I could *be* a teacher. I became a nurse because my mother had been a nurse. I grew up in Nelson, and I didn't have to leave Nelson. I was just there in that very small community. I'd never been on an airplane. It never *occurred* to me that I could go beyond home, beyond where I lived, and do something. I lived with my family... We didn't have a *car*, we had bikes, so I had a very small geographical view on the world. I did well at school, because our family valued education. We read a lot of books, and we'd go to the library every week and get seven books, one for each night. I knew I wanted to do something different at the end of my sixth form, but in my last year at school, I went to the Headmaster and he said, "Well, you're going to be a prefect in school next year". I said, "No, I don't *want* to be a prefect! I want to go back, and I want to do School Certificate Maths, Music, and Typing, and I'm just going to do a certificate". He said to me, "No seventh former in my school is going to do that. Here's your leaving certificate". I got signed out of school, and that was it.

My very first teaching moment was when I was a newly registered nurse. There were four of us who were assigned to the medical intensive care unit, when I was 21. At the end of my fourth week, I was the only nurse remaining out of that group. I was determined I was not going to be bullied or disadvantaged in any way in my nursing career, and I thought, "What is it that I need to do, to make it work for me to be here?". So, I looked at my surroundings. There was a very dictatorial Charge Nurse who withheld information from people. There was a culture of staff who had been there for one to three years who regarded themselves as very experienced, and they also withheld information from other staff, and then there were doctors who were the kind of "Do it my way, or else" kind of guys, usually guys. That was the first time I actually thought about why I was unhappy or why I wasn't successful. I *wanted* to be a nurse and I liked the idea of being in an intensive care unit. It was about information being withheld from staff, so I thought that I could empower myself, and I could teach others, and we could work together as a group.

I thought, "Well, I'm going to learn on the job. I'm going to make this work for me". I started to collect cardiac rhythm strips, and I pasted them into a big exercise book. I wrote at the

bottom of each strip what the name of the cardiac arrhythmia was, using a textbook because we didn't have online resources; this was 1976. Also, when we had to do an emergency procedure, like inserting a temporary pacing wire, we had a small operating room down the back of the coronary care unit. People *kind of* knew what to do but then there was no procedure, so you'd end up wearing a heavy X-ray gown and a sterile theatre gown, running backwards and forwards to get equipment that you didn't have on hand. I started an exercise book for procedures too, so every time there was a procedure, I'd write it up: What do we need? How do you get it? What do you need to do before and after?

The doctors started to notice what I was doing, and they said, "Oh, can we come to your teaching sessions?", because by this stage, we had a weekly teaching session as well. So, the doctors started to come, and then we got to a point where staff *wanted* to be there, staff were interested in learning, and everybody wanted to contribute. That stopped people leaving, and we got to a point where, at the *end* of that year, the new recruits then had an induction and training programme. We went from being a unit with regular and rapid turnover, with one staff member leaving every month; suddenly, we had a workforce where the duty roster filled up and people weren't leaving. I was then the youngest Charge Nurse appointed in the hospital. I'd only been registered as a nurse for 18 months, and they made me Acting Charge Nurse. You couldn't hold a Charge Nurse position until you'd been registered for two years, so I was Acting Charge Nurse for 12 months, and then I was made Charge Nurse at the unit.

That was all when I was a practising professional nurse. Then the Nursing School would ring me up and say, "Would you like to come over and do the session on xyz, in the Nursing classroom?", so I went in and out of the Nursing classroom, while still working as a practising nurse. Eventually, I got offered a job in the School of Nursing, teaching students who worked in the hospital-based system but were in Nursing class for a week. That was my first *formal* teaching experience.

It was the olden days, and we had a blackboard and chalk. We used to teach in study blocks, so we would have the 'Ear, Nose and Throat' study block, for example, and we team-taught. I always chose to teach something I didn't know about... something that I would have to go and *learn* before I taught *others*. I set myself challenges, and I always made it as practical as I possibly could. I enjoyed going right back to basics, getting the books out, looking at it, and learning about it, so that I could learn together with my students. When we were doing the 'Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat' week, for instance, I chose the eye. I went down to my local butchers and got a bag of bulls' eyes, and I took them along to class, and we had an afternoon session of dissection. We had newspapers and gloves and scalpels, so we could actually take the eye apart and have a look at it, and think, "What is this? What does this eye actually do? And what does it look like?". You probably can't do that anymore, with health and safety regulations, but we had the eye, the heart, and the kidneys all in classrooms. I would always try and get people who were subject area

experts, and invite them over to talk to students. I guess that was about me learning as well; I always wanted to be *learning* as well as teaching. For me, the most effective way of teaching was to say, “OK, what do I need to know? How could I learn this?”, because I’m a visual, kinaesthetic learner, and I used to be a reader writer. I still use that as a support strategy, but I realised very early on that I needed to *see* things and *do* things and *practise* things, so it was very experiential-based learning.

I don’t feel that there was a transition from professional nurse to educator for me. I always saw them as totally *connected*. You can always link content back to a *practical* nursing situation: “This is an eye. When you’re unconscious, what’s going to happen?”, or “You’re at home and someone has an eye injury. What are you going to do about it?”. There was always that connection between practice and content. I still see myself as a nurse educator. My teaching practice and my research now is about Nursing education.

I haven’t just taught in Nursing Schools though. I taught at university as well. When I was first in the School of Nursing, I worked as a teacher and as a nurse, I studied part time in a Commerce degree, and I had three small children at the same time. As a Nursing tutor, the Nursing Council required you to do some formal training, but they also said that you could have four hours of paid study time a week to go to university. After I’d done the training I needed to do, I looked at the schedule of topics and said, “OK, I can go to a class at 3 o’clock on these days, which one will I do?”, and it ended up being Economics. I thought, “Economics, I don’t know anything about that, I’ll start that”. So I used to get the paid study time to do that, and I started to work my way through a Commerce degree, through building blocks of papers that I could do, and that I became interested in. Over those years, I got a Bachelor of Commerce degree, majoring in Economics, which is still a surprise to me!

Staff at the university knew I was a nurse who was also a teacher. Our classes were reasonably small, and as an adult student, there was a little cohort of us. In one of our lectures, our lecturer died in front of the class; he had a cardiac event and died. One outcome of that was the Head of School saying to me, “Well, you teach, don’t you?”. I said, “Well, I do in the Nursing School”, and he said, “How would you like to come along and take the lecture for this paper, next week? The notes are on the desk”. I asked him what it was about, and he said, “Critical path analysis and scheduling. That’s what nurses do, isn’t it, all that stuff?”. So, I said, “OK, I’ll give it a go”, and that was my very first university lecture.

It was very different from a Nursing class. My teaching has gone into all different subject areas, and different levels: Human Resources, Management, all sorts of things. Again, a staff member left, and they said to me, “Oh Liz, would you like to teach xyz?”. First, it was Communication Skills, and I was OK with that. I had a very entrepreneurial colleague who suggested that we revamp the Communications programme, and make it available to *all* university students, so it could be in any degree. So, we sat down with a big piece of paper, and we came up with a tutorial plan, a lecture plan, and a book that went with it, which we

wrote as chapters. In its heyday, there were 550 students doing that paper! It was a very practical skills-based course with a lot of tutorials, and our book was adopted by quite a few polytechs actually, after we wrote it.

Next was Human Resources; that was another time that a staff member left, and they said to me, “Would you like this opportunity to teach Human Resources?”, and I said “Oh, what’s that? OK, I can do that”. Basically, all my teaching opportunities have been a case of a door opening, and me stepping in.

I taught at university for 20 years, as a lecturer with big classes; 350 students in one go sometimes, and *that* is a different dynamic. But I still tried to keep the same *principles* of what I was doing with my nursing teaching. For instance, I used to look at a 50-minute lecture as a ‘lecture with advert breaks’, and I’d have a little quiz or an activity in the middle of the lecture. In the very early days, we used to use video clips, so I’d make it a media and activity-based lecture, as much as I could, using, in those days, articles cut out from the newspaper and scanned and put on an overhead. Sometimes I might use a cartoon from the newspaper to put up as a talking point... My most challenging teaching assignments were here at Otago Polytechnic. This one course, I was teaching in the Business School and Management department at the university, and I was invited to come and teach on the Diploma in Management course for the New Zealand Institute of Management. It was in night school, 6 ‘til 9 on a Tuesday night. I used to finish my day job at the uni, go home, have tea, and then come to polytech. I’d have 30 people who’d just come in from work, and they weren’t very keen on coming to polytech night school for three hours! The first class was the *hardest* work I’ve ever done, because I thought, “These people aren’t getting it. They’re not interested; they just want to go home and have tea”. I realised that, for the next class, I was going to have to do something different. I worked hard to make classes enjoyable and interesting, and relevant to their work.

I remember one night, one of the staff from the Business School came to check I was there. I remember seeing their eyes in the window, and I had everyone up in the class, and we were doing a timeline. We were writing key events in New Zealand history, and looking at how the world had changed. So, people were up standing at the board, writing things, and she asked me afterwards, “What were you doing?”. I said, “Well, we were talking about how work has changed, and how society has changed, in order to understand the employment context, and I thought it was a really good idea for the students to get up and write on the board”. She said, “Oh, I hadn’t thought of that”.

We had another exercise, where I had them all lined up sitting in the classroom, like we were going on a bus trip somewhere, and someone had to be the leader, and they really enjoyed it. They loved games, role-plays, and as many creative things as you could think of, because it helped them to learn. I *really, really, really* worked my butt off in those classes! It was the hardest work I’ve ever done. I guess a lot of those people would’ve been older. One

student was the police dog handler; he used to come in sometimes with his dogs in the van outside, and he'd just say to me, "Oh, I've got to be out of here by 7 to let my dogs out of the car", and I'd say, "OK, well, would your dogs like to come up?". He'd say, "Oh, I really don't know", and I'd say, "Well if you're worried about your dogs, go and deal with that, because obviously you can't be focused on what you're doing here". They got good results though. I had 30 students that first year, and then 42 the second year. I did two runs of that.

I think I've become much more relaxed as a teacher now; I'm quite prepared to stand back and laugh at myself, and just to allow that uncomfortable gap or pause that you sometimes have in a classroom. If you're not getting a response from students, I'm quite happy to have silence or to have them in conversation. As a Nursing teacher, we used to go to Teachers College for one hundred hours of teacher training, and it was a traditional sort of teaching model. You had that sort of authoritarian model where you were the teacher and the class were the pupils, and there was that *power* relationship. I don't see my teaching as that relationship though; it's much more equal. I see it as me learning from the students, as well as helping them to learn. It's not about control; it's about facilitation.

I would say an excellent teacher is someone who cares about their students; it's someone whose students succeed, in whichever way that they can. It's not all about high marks; it's about success for the learners and belief in themselves. If you have someone who is confident that they can learn, confident they can find answers and information, and if you encourage people who are not just your typical A+ students, you can just see them grow and develop over time. So, I think excellence is about bringing out the best in your learners, in whatever way, shape, or form that you can do. I think you need to be diligent, and I think you need to care. You need to be prepared, although sometimes it's quite good *not* to be prepared, or at least not to be *over*-prepared, but to allow a bit of flexibility.

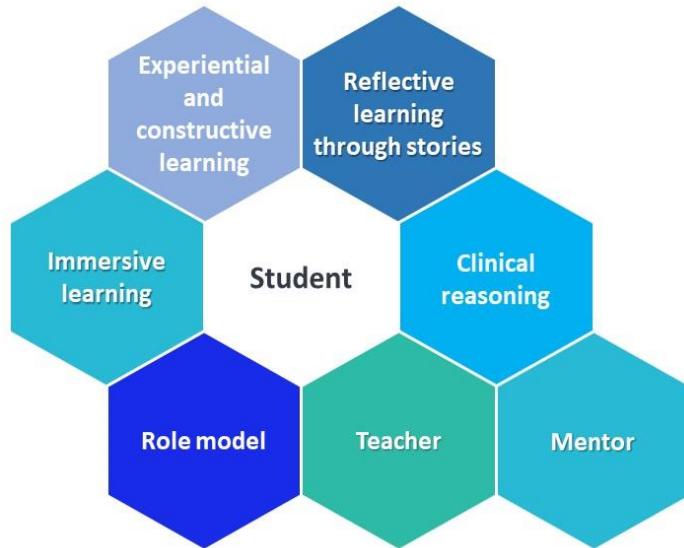
There is a difference, though, in expectation of what it is to be a good or an excellent teacher in the polytech contexts and at a university, in my experience. When I was working at the university, *nobody* was trained as a teacher; I was the only one who had any kind of teaching qualification. The emphasis at the university was very much on research. In fact, the people who could not teach very well were given teacher training help and tuition, and, if they didn't improve, they were given smaller classes to teach. It was as if you were *rewarded* with small classes for being a bad teacher! The good teachers, or the excellent teachers, were always given the big classes, because they were regarded as the *difficult* classes and the ones that nobody wanted to teach. If you looked across the university, it wasn't *always* women, but it tended to be female teachers who were there with the big classes. I don't know if there is a gender difference or not. I do remember one of my male colleagues, a senior member of staff, who was assigned to teach on the year one management programme. He did one lecture, and came out and said, "I'm not going back there again!", and he was allowed to drop that class.

At the university, if you were good at something, you got more of it, and, as a consequence of that, you had less time to do your research. The trouble is that the university model rewards and recognises research as a promotion criterion. Being an excellent teacher was a great thing, but it didn't get you a promotion; you had to be excellent at teaching *and* research. However, if people were excellent at *research* and *good* at teaching, they still got promoted, so, in my opinion, in the university model, teaching is still undervalued.

Here at the polytechnic, it's more of a team-teaching approach. There's a mix of formal classes and smaller group classes... I think the *learners* are different at a polytechnic too. They might come from different walks of life, for example. The skill-level in writing is probably, in my experience, not as academic as it is at university. At polytech, there's a lot more pastoral care, and a lot more concern for student well-being and support; at university, there are a lot more closed doors. Students really have to fend for themselves, unless they ask for pastoral care. When I was teaching at the Business School, if I found a student who was struggling, I'd say to them, "Well look, this isn't the right environment for you to be in. You're in a *large* lecture theatre, you're in quite a large tutorial group". It's very impersonal and very hierarchical; if you don't have the right *tutor*, there's not a lot of talking or communication or learning that goes on. I would recommend to some students that they think about coming to a polytechnic, which has a more applied style of learning.

Applying for the Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award was a really interesting process... I would say writing the teaching philosophy was particularly important. Having done the work at Otago Polytechnic through the teaching certificate was helpful, because I had done some thinking in the past about my philosophies of teaching, because it's not just one. Drawing a diagram of how I see the building blocks of learner success (Figure 16) helped me understand and reflect upon my teaching practice. It also helped me remember all of the things that I had done over the years to get to that point. Luckily, I keep records! I had cards and letters, and teaching evaluation reports and things like that, that I could use as evidence, so I was quite confident I had that information.

Really, the hardest thing is putting yourself forward, putting yourself out there, and actually acknowledging and *championing* the things that you have done in the past, in the context of the time that you did it. For example, a lot of the work I was doing at university, which was regarded as innovative teaching practice, was because I had a Head of School who was also a kinaesthetic learner, and he wanted to support and help me.



*Figure 16 – Liz’s teaching philosophy
(image credit: Liz Ditzel)*

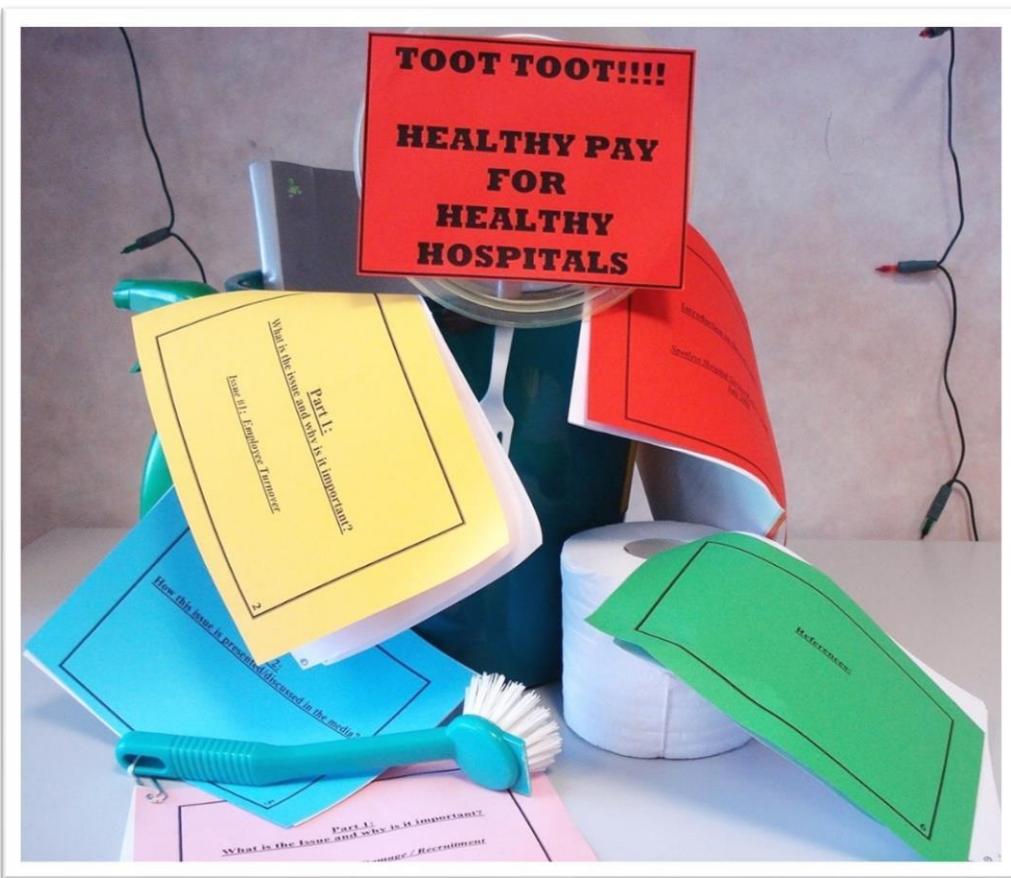
I came up with this one idea of running a business case competition. I thought, “OK I’m going to have 600 students do a business case competition. They can work in groups of four. We’ll run it through the lectures, the finals, and we’ll have a ceremony”. My Head of School said, “What can I do to help?”, and I asked him to put some prize money in, so that we could show the students that we were valuing their support and their effort. So, we had 150 teams of four students, and we had to run it over weekends to eliminate some groups and get to the finals. Now, if you’d gone with that proposal to any other Head of School, they would have said, “Don’t be daft! Why are you doing this?”, but it was great. When I meet students in the street, some of them will still say, “I remember that case competition we did”, because they said we actually had to go and learn stuff, and we had to put it together. It wasn’t compulsory, but it was part of their learning where they could compete, if they wanted to.

I had all sorts of crazy ideas and my Head of School would support me. For about five years, when I was teaching Human Resources, I had a media assignment event. The students had to find something in the news or media, like a strike. They could pick the issue, and they were invited to present it, individually or in groups, in whichever format they wanted. I had this one group of five boys who all lived in the same flat, and they were not interested in studying at all. I remember saying to them, “OK, you guys haven’t done anything. I haven’t got anything on my list, so what are you going to be doing?”, and they said, “Umm, we don’t really know”. I said, “What do you think you’d *like* to do?”, “Umm, something easy”.

So I asked them, "Well, where are your strengths?", and they said, "We don't really know", and I said, "Well, have you got any *ideas*? ", and they said, "Oh well, can we just sit round and have a chat about human resources? ". I said, "Well, you can't *just* sit round and do that. Why don't you make it into, like, a radio show? A talkback show, where someone asks questions, so, you know, you're going to be going out to work, so someone might say, 'Well, you know, what are my conditions of employment? How many holidays do I get?'; So, you have a question-and-answer quiz, sort of talkback show".

They liked the sound of this, and they went away and made this radio talkback show. They handed it in at reception. It was a cassette in an envelope, and I remember another lecturer going by and saying, "What's going on here? How can you accept that as an assignment? ". I said, "Well, I'm going to listen to it, and I'm going to mark it", and they said, "Well, how are you going to do that? ". I said, "I'm going to get a piece of paper" - we didn't have marking rubrics then - "and I'm going to write down comments, and I'm going to give an evaluation score, and they'll pass or fail it". So we had all sorts of collages and paintings and really *amazing* assignments that year, that came in the door. They used to fill up the whole reception area, so my colleagues used to cart it all down to my office on a trolley. But people would be suspicious, and ask lots of questions: "What's going on here? Why are you doing this?".

There were some people who were interested, who wanted to find out what I was doing. I wrote a paper about that, because I had all sorts of different kinds of teaching schemes that I'd write up as little case studies. Some colleagues got it. I remember one of the staff members, whose son was doing my paper, and he said, "Oh, my son handed in an assignment for you. It was a cardboard tube that was painted on the outside", and I said, "Yes". He said, "I didn't really understand what he was doing, but then he explained it to me", and I said, "Oh!". He said, "He really got stuck in, he really enjoyed it", and I said, "Well, ... that's great! ". That's how people learn, getting stuck in and enjoying it. That's my passion really, to see someone learn. Having someone just say, "Wow! I get it!" or "Wow! Thanks! That made a difference". Being able to help people succeed is great.



*Image 7 – Student assignment about Nurses' pay
(photo credit: Liz Ditzel)*

There was this one student I remember helping. He was a young man, 18 or 19 years old, and his girlfriend was pregnant. He was really, really upset because she'd chosen to have a termination, and she hadn't told him. He was looking very upset one day, and I asked him if he wanted to talk. He said, "Not really", then he started to cry, and I said, "OK, what can I do to help you?". He was really worried about his next assignment, and I said, "Well, under the flexible assessment scheme I'm running at the moment, you've actually passed the course without sitting the exam, and you don't seem to be in any shape to sit the exam. How about I guarantee that this mark you've got will be your course mark, and you don't have to worry about the exam, and you can go and spend time with your family recovering?". He was so grateful, and he said, "Oh, that's saved my life!". He came back the following year, and he'd bought me this little gift, and he said, "Thank you for helping me with my problem".



Image 8 – Student assignment for Human Resource Management
(photo credit: Liz Ditzel)

Going back to the award, it was a great thrill to win one. I think I'm quite humble, and I didn't really expect to win. I guess it made me feel more confident, and proud to be a teacher. It validated who I am. People would *tell* me I was an excellent teacher, but I was never sure. When I worked at the university, you'd do your teaching evaluations, and they'd send it back to you in a big brown envelope. If there was ever someone who'd written a whole lot of nasty comments, you got to see them. So, if I got my teaching feedback, I would always put it in the filing cabinet and wait, and leave it until the end of the year, so I wouldn't feel upset or resentful in any way; I didn't want that. I'm actually an introverted person; I was very shy as a child. It takes quite a lot out of me to project forward, so the award helped. I guess I've got self-belief now that I actually am a good teacher.

I am not sure if you can teach others to be ‘excellent’. I think it’s possible to *role* model it, and to *encourage* its development in other people. I can encourage it, but I would never want other people to do things that they’re not comfortable doing. I read a lot of different things and that can help too; it’s not all out of books, but I read a lot, I watch a lot of different documentaries, and I listen to things on the radio. I’m always thinking about the content and how I can include that in a class, or how a current issue can be related to what I’m doing, to try and make things relevant.

One of the things I think you *can* teach people is preparation and planning. In my early days of teaching, I think one of the reasons I *was* successful and admired as a teacher was that I would train tutors, to work in my papers, and every time we had a training session, I’d give them a sheet of paper, which had the lesson objective and a time-plan down the side, so 5 minutes do this, 10 minutes do this, 10 minutes do that, right down to, you know, wrap up and check, at the end. So for everyone coming into class, it was like a formal lesson plan, with the time ‘budget’ down the side. I’ve stopped doing the paperwork, but I still do that planning in my *head* for every class I have. I think about how much time for which activities, and I have a beginning, a middle, and an end. I think *those* things can be taught, and you can learn to be relaxed about content. I think a new teacher always tries to cram too much in, to the point that nothing gets retained. It’s about simplifying right down to the *core* points, and making sure that those get communicated.

I love it at OP. It’s a *vibrant* and diverse community with lots of really interesting people. I like that you can talk to a variety of colleagues, students, practitioners, and I like how it is an open environment, compared to the university environment which was very siloed. I like being here, and I like doing what I’m doing. I never want to stop teaching or being involved in the academic community. I’m 64 now, but I don’t *really* want to retire; I would be very bored!

In terms of teacher development, every now and again, I go to a workshop and I think, “Gosh, this is really interesting, there should be more people here!”. I’d like to see options around developing group work, group thinking, and different ways of teaching and learning. When I was doing my Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Learning and Teaching here at the polytechnic, the really great benefit of that programme was that it connected me with a whole range of diverse teachers from across the polytechnic, and we shared ideas and experiences, as part of our learning. I’ve already *done* that certificate, so I don’t need to do it again, but how could I get that same experience? Maybe it’s a workshop, maybe some more courses, maybe it’s more of those opportunities where you can get together. I think it needs to be in a non-time-pressured way, because if it’s seen as a workshop or a development activity, people often prioritise other things over that. I try and take opportunities to go to as many development sessions as I can, just to see what other people are doing; conferences too, to listen to people and hear new ideas about how to help my practice.



Image 9 – Liz Hall (left) and Sharon McGarry in Medical ICU (1976)
(Otago Daily Times, 8 Oct. 2016, p. 16)
Photograph courtesy of the Otago Daily Times, Dunedin, New Zealand.

One meaningful item I have is this photo that appeared in the Otago Daily Times newspaper, in the 'Living Memory' section. It's of myself and a colleague in the old medical intensive care, and we're standing there with a clipboard. That was the beginning of my teaching career, and it appeared in the paper 40 years after that one day. That photo from the paper means a lot; it's the beginning of my teaching career, and it also makes me realise I'm very much part of this community, being in the local paper.

Matt's Story

"A wise person told me, right at the start of my education career, that if you treated every student in the classroom like one of your friends' children, you'd probably go just a little bit further to ensure that they succeed".

I never wanted to be a teacher, ever; I met a school friend last week, and he asked me why I'm teaching because, like any normal bloke, I wanted to be an Air Force Pilot. But with my being so tall, the Air Force told me I was never ever going to get into an aircraft cockpit, so I had to look at other options.

Now, looking back on it, I had a good gene pool of teaching. Mum was a teacher, the people that were some of the biggest influences in my life were teachers, and the people I enjoyed being around were the ones that actually helped me learn things, and I really, really enjoyed that. But there's no way I wanted to be a teacher, because I didn't really like teachers. It wasn't until I came back from Australia, where I'd been working as a carpenter, and I was completely disillusioned with my job. I always knew that it wasn't my vocation in life, to build things, although I do really enjoy it and it's a good thing to do. I thought I could do something else. I went to Teachers College, for the open night, ready to become a primary school teacher. I was ready to sign on the dotted line, and then my partner said she wanted to enrol too, because it looked like fun, and that stopped me in my tracks. I didn't want to go into teacher training with her; she'd get A's and I'd get C's, guaranteed! So that was the end of that.

I carried on as a carpenter, but I was looking for other things. About a year later, my partner suggested that I investigate teaching carpentry at Polytech, so that I could still do the things that I enjoy. And a job came up in Invercargill. Well, I never wanted to go to Invercargill in my life, but I got the job. I'm not really sure how I even got through the interview. I remember they asked me about things I'd built before, and asked me about carpentry, rather than asking me why I wanted to work with young people. Anyway, I did that for two years and really enjoyed it. Some of the biggest influences in my life were my first class of apprentices, my first class of carpentry students. Looking back at it now, I remember a lot of their names and I often wonder what happened to them. That was a really good introduction to teaching; those successes are important, looking back. The transition did not go smoothly though, I have to say... there's a big mental transition you've got to go through. It's not just doing something you know how to do; now you've got to show people how to do it. That wasn't too bad for me, because I talk a lot, but it was a definite mental shift.

And then I came here, to Otago Polytechnic, 15 years ago now. There was something about Otago Polytech; they were more interested in developing you as a person and you as an

educator, and I suddenly became really enthusiastic about tertiary education. I had no idea it was in me, but it was there, it just had to be drawn out. I hate speaking in front of people, so it was an odd career choice, really. But I'm happy in a classroom; I'm really relaxed. I spend far more time now thinking about the people that I'm teaching, as opposed to the subject matter. So, I really, really enjoy it, the teaching side of it.

I've been thinking about things like that recently, because I've just turned 50, and maybe you start looking around and thinking that you could have done a whole lot of other things. But the longer I do this job, and this goes for both my knowledge of the profession and also my knowledge of education, I realise how much I *don't* know. Then you've got two options: you can go and learn it, or you can just go, "Oh, I'll let someone else do that". If it interests me, I'll always go and learn it; I love, love, *love* learning new stuff.

When I think about my teaching now, I think it's more *considered*. It's also something that I enjoy so much. This morning, I didn't leave home in a good headspace, but on the way to work, I walked along, and I thought, "Oh, I'll think about what I'm going to teach tonight". It's almost like relaxation now, thinking about these 14 students in my night class, and thinking about how they learn, what they'll enjoy at the end of a day's work. It's all about the students... you have to put yourself in their shoes. When I first started teaching, and probably for the first 11 or 12 years, I was teaching students that had just left high school. When you're teaching those people, you teach in a particular way, but now I'm teaching a lot more apprentices. They range from age 18 through to their mid-40s. I don't really like the word 'facilitation', but you're pretty much *facilitating* some learning, because all the knowledge is in the room, and you've just got to get it. It used to be about getting information from my head into their heads, and now it's more about sharing stories, maybe directing a little bit, and sharing some knowledge. Everyone has different experiences and different levels of understanding, but you get them sharing stories and you don't have any problems with them not really engaging. They want to share their stories, because they're work stories, and they all think they have good work stories. It's so much nicer to do, and it's really, really relaxing.

The thing that has been the most successful thing for me with students is putting yourself in their shoes, and going in a direction that helps get all the information they need into them. You do this in a really, really nice way; in a way that *you* would like. You just have to try really hard to just do it for them. A wise person told me, right at the start of my education career, that if you treated every student in the classroom like one of your friends' children, you'd probably go just a little bit further to ensure that they succeed. It's not about what *I* do, it's about what I can get the *students* to do. I've never really had classes I couldn't work with. If I can create a *place* and a *space* and some things for those students to learn in a way that they really, really enjoy, that's the key. Yes, it takes lots of time. You have to be overly generous, I think, with your time, and you have to be super enthusiastic about the subject matter. If you don't enjoy it, it's going to be a struggle to make it interesting for

anyone else. One student said to me the other day, "You know, you really like wood, don't you?", and I said "Yes, I do, I do actually". I show lots and lots of photos of good examples, and the students might say they've never heard anyone so enthusiastic about wood. Well, that's fine; I do really like looking at beautifully made things that look nice. Then there is the other side of it. If someone is about to spend \$300,000 on a renovation or on a new house or something, there is that social responsibility for me to do my job well. That's important too.

My colleagues are great, fantastic. We might have differences of opinion, but everyone that I meet here is *super*, super nice. They're always there to help you, and there's always someone to talk to about whatever it is you want to know. That enthusiasm does float down from some of the people around me within the Polytech, especially some of the old timers that have been here for a long time, with good stories. Their level of enthusiasm for teaching just oozes out of them, and you can see it.

I've been talking with an apprentice that I've encouraged to apply for the 'National Women in Construction' Awards, and it has reminded me of my own experience of applying for the Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award. I've said to her that she will gain more from it if she loses and tries again, based on my experience. A couple of colleagues had been trying to talk me into applying, and I didn't really want to do it, so I just ignored them, and the problem went away! And then my Head of School at the time said that, if they nominated me for a Staff Award here at OP, and if I won, then I'd be expected to apply for the national one. I thought it might be an A4 sheet to fill in; little did I know! Not being a writer, it was *really*, really hard, and I spent *hundreds* of hours doing this thing and I really, really, *really* hated it. But I learned *so* much about myself, and I realised that at the time. It was really good to learn how to put what I've learned about teaching down on paper. I had to think about teaching and what makes a good teacher. I'd never even really considered this kind of thing before. Then, of course, I didn't get anywhere; I lost. No-one told me; there was no phone call or anything. I just knew that other people had been announced as winners. Yes, I was a bit disappointed, until a colleague told me I should try again. Initially I thought 'Ha! I'm not that stupid!', but we talked about it and she gave me some ideas.

There was also a new teaching qualification at the time, the GDTE. I didn't have to do the whole thing; I just did one project. I'd been playing around with e-portfolios for ages, and we did a research thing on mobile e-portfolios, and then I got involved with a whole lot of other like-minded people from around New Zealand. Straightaway, there was something there. I knew I wanted to do e-portfolios; I wanted to do mobile learning. There was a lot that kind of aligned with it, which I really enjoyed. It was fantastic, because I got to choose the project, and I got to focus on something that a) I was interested in, and b), more importantly, somebody would benefit in the Polytech community. I really, really enjoyed that.

It was around the same time that I decided that I'd had enough of where I was, and there was a new opportunity in teaching at the prison, and I did that. I spent a year at the prison and then another year writing the second application for the award. It was easier the second time, because the structure was there. Two colleagues felt that if I got involved more in *thinking* about teaching, *thinking* about education, thinking about learners, thinking about different types of learners, then that would take me down the right path. The best thing I ever did was go to the prison and work with those guys there, because it was *humbling*. It was so humbling working with people at a different level. It just really, really widened my horizons, and my teaching practice changed. My colleagues were right, and you need people like that around the Poly, you know, around your work to help guide you.

Winning the award made me realise that, before I walk into a class, I have to look at myself and think, "Someone gave me an award for doing this - I'd better do a *really* good job"! I feel far more accountable than before. I know how much I *changed* through the process too; it wasn't winning the award, but the preparation changed me in the way I thought about teaching and about my learners. I took ownership of it, *far* more than before.

I'm not sure how it has all come about. Maybe my life experiences have made me a nicer person than I probably could have been. I wasn't the most intelligent person, but I knew that if I worked hard, I could achieve things, because I could see that in my family... I'm also a good talker. I've always been quite keen to talk to people and sit down with people and have a yarn, and I'm sure that's a skill that I've grown up with, time spent on building sites chatting to everyone who's there. I really enjoy travelling too, because you get to talk to people, and I always think, if you can talk to people and people talk back, it means that you've engaged someone in a conversation. That's really all teaching is, and I'm sure that's helped me.

Working on building sites has also made me more aware of the massive ranges of capabilities of people. I'm always saying to my students that there is no reason that you can't do anything you want. You can actually achieve so much by putting your mind to it. No-one's special; no-one's actually that clever. I keep listening to interviews of really, really successful people, and not *one* of them is a particularly special person that was born with a calculator in their hand, and they could read Latin backwards from the age of three. They worked hard. I'm sure that if you want to be an excellent teacher, you *can* be. You can talk to any of the award winners, and you know they work hard.

There are some traits of teachers that might make them successful. I do think having the ability to talk to people quite naturally is a good trait; good conversation, good humour, nothing too serious. You need to have passion for your profession too, and you don't stop when you've achieved something; you keep going, for no particular reason. You just want to get that good. In my experience, it's about genuinely trying to succeed in life, and to

succeed in your profession. It doesn't matter what you teach. We might teach different subjects, like fire engineering or microbiology, say, and really, really different students, but if you have that same enthusiasm for creating something for your students to learn, the students see that. They might not like you personally, but they like what you do in the classroom; *always* thinking about something new, something exciting for the students to do.

Sometimes I look at two of my colleagues, one teaches Carpentry and one teaches Engineering, and I always wonder why they haven't ever been recognised as excellent teachers. Sometimes I think it's a little bit political. I love talking to people about their jobs, and what they're doing. But I always look at these people, and think that maybe they don't want to tell anyone how good they are actually at doing their job. There are some *fantastic* teachers here, within our institution, way better than me, but who've never been recognised for what they do. There are many other amazing teachers out there, so I don't feel that I'm better than anyone else. Maybe there's a *modesty* with excellent teachers.

In terms of the community around me, it is a genuine pleasure coming to work at Otago Polytechnic. I really haven't met too many people who don't think that. People actually want to succeed. I'm sure it helps, having a good workplace. There are some people, though, who just get by. They roll off the same notes year after year. That's not teaching excellence; that's teaching. It's not enough. You've got to look at your practice. I know my own practice is driven by my passion for the way I want to teach, or the way I see my learners. I'm sure that teachers are teaching at a *far* higher standard now than they were nearly 30 years ago when I was here as a student. I think we have some really, really good teachers, and the effort that teachers put into their work is *far* more than when I went to school.

You've got to work to your own abilities too. There's lots of things I can't do, so I have to teach to my own strengths. I see others around me; people teaching exactly the same subject matter and the same students as me. Sometimes I look at them and I think, "Oh, you could do that a lot better", but then you have to be aware of their own skill set, and help them develop that and encourage them to try some new things. It might be thinking about other things you could be trying in the classroom, and then things that make the students' life a bit more bearable, and thinking about them more. For example, a while ago, a colleague taught me about learning paths, and I might not have called it that, but it still made sense to me. It made me think about actually having a series of 'you're going to do *this*, then you're going to do *this*, then you're going to do *this*'. If you think about an assessment that you've been using year after year, you know what is in it, but you might not actually have the learning path for all the things that the students have to learn to be able to achieve that assessment. Those things worry me. I don't think lecturers get a really good education themselves around how learners learn. I always try and break it down for them, so if we're going to learn how to hammer in a nail, where's the start? Where's the

end? And what are all the small things along the way? Actually talking, at that level, about every single thing you do, and talking about learning paths, and talking about how students *learn* this, and going into these things; I do lots of talking with staff about that. It's a sort of mentoring role.

I do really enjoy mentoring. I've been asked to be a mentor on the GDTE. I don't know how successful I was at that the first time, but with people I *know*, I find it easier to gauge, especially the subject matter, because it's easy to teach them things because I know what they know. They might know more than I do about carpentry, but I can help them get it into a place for students to learn. I really enjoy that side of it. It's something I've noticed with a lot of the awardees having mentoring roles. In my mind, it is an ideal situation, because you have some level of influence.

I do a lot less teaching now, and I manage a carpentry apprenticeship programme. I do a little bit of teaching on site visits, but not much; it's mostly assessing. It's difficult because the more you manage, and the more you get into different parts of the organisation, the less you're teaching. So, there's a dilemma with Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award winners. You've got two options: you can help them mentor other staff to maybe help others develop, and keep them teaching, or you can move them into other roles; maybe they're really good at doing other things. Management isn't something that comes really easily to me; I can do it, but it's not something that excites me. I'd much rather be with people *doing* stuff, as opposed to sitting there on a computer. It's already taking me away from the classroom, and that's what I really, really enjoy. Sometimes I take a couple of classes for other people and lighten their workload, so I can do the teaching!

Thinking about teacher development, the original tertiary education qualification that I did was awful. It was really, really well *delivered*; I did learn from it, but it didn't really help me do my job. None of the courses, compulsory or elective, helped me as a trades teacher, teaching students with all kinds of problems, and literacy and numeracy at *such* a low level. It didn't help me with the *type* of teaching I should have been doing. I was learning about theories, but I didn't have the capacity or the support to apply those theories in the classroom.

I think that, right now, we need a different kind of teacher development. Yes, we need people that understand education, so perhaps half of the qualification would be developed and delivered by the Learning and Teaching team. If you want to be an educator, everyone needs to know these things; that's not something we can compromise on. The other half of the programme should be written by the department or the school, the subject specialists. These are the things you need to know, these are the skills that you *need* to have, and these are the skills we'd *like* you to have. Then when that person's employed, we can help them map their capabilities. They might be a great communicator, but they might not understand anything about educational theory. My map might look very different to the

one for, say, an Occupational Therapist who starts on the same day as me. We both need to know the core things, but the subject area would be a really, really different skill set. We need experts in those skill sets to be mentoring us and teaching us, so we're not jumping through unnecessary hoops. The more I see some of my workmates flailing hopelessly, the more I keep thinking they're learning the wrong skills. If they had a Programme Manager or a Head of School that would actually sit down and say, "No, no, these are the skills they need to have", then we could develop those programmes. At no stage would I expect anyone on the Learning and Teaching team to know how to teach Carpentry properly, but they *do* have the skills and the knowledge to be able to show them how to teach, and how people learn. That's what I was saying before about teaching different subjects, be it microbiology or fire engineering or whatever it is, it's about passion. It is important to learn about other types of education, and not just focus on what you know; you do need to expand your horizons a bit.

In terms of meaningful items that are important to me, I have two things. One is a photograph of a piece of timber that a student carved, and it just so happens to be a traditional Māori carving. It might have been made out of pine or mdf; it's a very, very low-level item of carving, but it was something that this student did for me at the prison. When you're in prison, you don't get crayons to make birthday cards for people, you don't have anything. So, if someone makes something for you in prison, it means they've gone to a *huge* amount of effort. I always remember the person that did this. My students had to make a box, about the size of a box of tissues, and the end of the box opens up and they put an oil stone in it. On the plan, there's a chamfer all the way around the top, like a big kind of angle on 45 degrees. This student did this, but it wasn't really their cup of tea and there wasn't any enthusiasm. They couldn't use the box afterwards, because I couldn't afford to get them all a 40-dollar oil stone to put inside, so I had a pretend one made of wood. These were grown men, and they all laughed, and they thought it was a bit lame. They asked me, though, if they could spend some time decorating the box. Some were more naturally artistic than others, but this one student did a carving and it was really, really good, and I told him it was outstanding. He asked me if I like carving, and I said, "Well, I appreciate art, and I'm not artistic. I can't carve, no-one's ever shown me how, but even if I could, I don't think I could make one that looked like what you've done". He went away and he carved this thing for me over time. I could see him doing it, but I didn't realise it was for me. It was pretty special when he gave it to me, because I knew that he was giving me a bit of artwork; he'd *made* me something. It wasn't about how beautiful the carving was, it was more about the gesture. But then this student told me that he really enjoyed the classes and he was learning a lot, and then he kind of told me a bit more about himself, which they generally didn't tell me because they were embarrassed about it, and I always thought that was really, really nice.



*Image 10 – Carved gift from a student
(photo credit: Matt Thompson)*

The second item is a hammer. It's something that I got when I was around 20, and one hammer lasts you for a lifetime. The thing with the hammer is it's a tool that everyone knows. It's a carpenter's tool, but it's like sitting at your desk and logging on to your computer. Sometimes you think, "Oh gee, I had that old computer that would take five minutes to log on in the old days", and you kind of reminisce. I've still got my first hammer and, every time I pick it up, I think, "I can't believe how many things I've built with this thing!", and it could be this very building. You think about how you just put on a few tools in the morning, and then you go and get some materials and you're trying to transform them into something else. Then over a year, voilà, there's magically a building. I always think about what a basic tool it is, but there are so many uses for it... They're just an item used every day, and, like you might not feel comfortable if someone used your laptop, for

instance, it's the same thing with your hammer; you don't leave it lying around for other people to use.



Image 11 – Carpenter's hammer

For me as a teacher, the hammer is one of the first tools students expect to use. They have to learn quite quickly how to use a hammer and a handsaw, but it's not about using the tool, it's about what you can produce with the tool. About six weeks into every course I've ever taught, students say "Hey, why can't we use the nail guns?", and I always say, "Because you can't use a hammer properly". Then they want to have a nailing competition with you, and so it goes on. Eventually you'll end up with people that can use a hammer better. It's definitely a teaching tool, and it's just a real symbol of carpentry to me.

Megan's Story

"Underpinning all of my philosophy is always that whakawhanaungatanga; understanding the relationship, enabling people to be successful, and trying to find different ways that worked for different people. There's no 'one size fits all'"

I came into teaching completely by accident. I remember at high school I was told I would be a really good teacher, and I said, "I'm not doing that!". I didn't *want* to be a teacher, because I saw how we treated teachers. When I was at school, we had great teachers; there were some phenomenal teachers, and I was a good student, and I had good class sizes and good classes, because I was highly streamed, but still, we didn't treat teachers with the respect that often they deserved. I had two outstanding teachers that I can still remember. One was my Chemistry teacher, and her daughter was in our class, so we gave her a bit more respect because her daughter was right there! She'd tell us *stories*, and she told stories about things that happened at home, which used to mortify her daughter, but gave us a sense that she was *real*. The other teacher was my Physics teacher; he was my Maths teacher in 5th form, and then my Physics teacher in 7th form. One day in 5th form, he caught me talking, and he moved me right in front of his desk, so that my desk backed onto his desk. I did really well that year, and I paid attention for the rest of that year, but it wasn't because I paid attention, it was because he then took an interest in me because he saw me *all the time*, sitting right there! So, we created a relationship, and I felt quite comfortable to go and talk to him, during class, after class, before class, about what was happening and how my learning was going. I had a different Physics teacher in 6th form, and I somehow managed to get through Physics, but I didn't learn anything. Then I got him back in 7th form, and he just looked at me and said, "What were you doing last year?"! That understanding became really key, and both of them were about the relationship that we had with the teacher, not about what they were teaching me. In general, though, my thinking was, "I can't see why I would be a teacher, because I know that *most* of the time, people aren't going to really engage". I listen to my son now, and just the things he says like, "Ugh, this teacher did this", and I think "Wow! Actually, these are the people that are supposed to be teaching you, and *enabling* you, and *allowing* you to reach your potential".

I understand now what people saw when they said I should teach, but, at the time, I had no idea. I know that I can create good relationships with people, and understand people, and support them to do things well. I do that in athletics coaching too; it's about allowing people to realise their potential, to be the best that they can be, and I really *enjoy* that. It probably came through when I was at high school, because I had leadership roles, and I was involved in lots of different activities. Then I ended up in dietetics, which is, again, it's helping people.

I didn't know what I wanted to do when I was at school. I *thought* I wanted to be a physio, but I didn't really, and my Principal wanted me to be a doctor, and I didn't really want to be a doctor. So, I kind of fumbled into my first year of university, studying PE, and by the end of that they told us the only pathway was PE teaching. Again, I said, "But I don't want to be a teacher", and actually PE teachers were even *further* down the list than a normal teacher, so that was really fun! It moved me out of PE. I'd studied Chemistry and Biology in my first year at university as well, which was lucky, so I went to Nutrition. They told me they'd put me on a Dietetics pathway, and I said, "OK", and went along and did all the courses I needed to. I wasn't very questioning when I was younger, and I didn't actually know what a Dietetics pathway was. At the end of my third year, when they said we had to apply for Dietetics, I was like, "I'd better find out what this thing is"; so I did find out, and I thought, "Actually, yeah, I could do that". At the same time, though, I also applied for Teachers College, because I had a friend that was going to Teachers College. I applied to Canterbury and Dunedin, and both of them came back and said I could be a Home Economics teacher, with a secondary in Science, and I thought, "Well, that's as low as a PE teacher", and *again* I said, "I don't want to teach". So, I ended up doing Dietetics, which effectively is just working one-on-one with people, to enable them to reach their potential or help them to better themselves. After a few years of being a dietitian, I moved to Auckland and ended up getting a job at Massey University, so I ended up teaching. I didn't look for that role; I was in private practice, and I was also working for the District Health Board. I was doing some sports nutrition work, and they had a new 'Sports Nutrition' course at Massey. They approached me and asked if I would be interested in coming along and developing their third-year content and then delivering it. It actually wasn't that bad, because I was teaching people that were interested in nutrition, and I was interested in nutrition, so it became about finding ways that I could get these people passionate about what I was passionate about. It was kind of like a *dream* job, because I was on about 0.7 FTE and I had to teach one paper a year. I was a Teaching Assistant; I wasn't even a Lecturer. Then I got a few Master's students to supervise. I mean, really, it was probably the easiest job I've ever done; I had one semester where I taught and one semester I didn't.

I really enjoyed that transition into education. You got to effectively be on stage, interact with your class, and get them to see things how you saw them, and *challenge* and question. With Nutrition, you're always challenging people's belief system, so we would start by saying that everyone's been eating since they were at least six months old. What you like and what you don't like isn't in dispute, but how do you improve your nutrition? Why is food something that has all these other boundaries around it when we talk about healthy eating? Yes, I thought it was great fun really. The hardest thing with teaching at Massey is that you had to create resources for distance learners, and that was just *horrendous*; photocopied books of readings that linked together somehow. I've always found that really challenging, that people would have to sit and read this stuff that I thought was kind of interesting, and then tie it into their work. I used to go through topics and work out what the key readings were, and what work needed to be done in each of those spaces, and then

think about what was manageable really... I probably put in what I thought they needed; I tried to use a system where I'd give them historical and seminal pieces of work, with guidelines of where it might branch out to, because I thought, at least if they had those seminal pieces, I knew they had those bits, usually the pieces that were informing most of the other research at the time.

I think, when I came to OP, I learned rapidly what I was capable of, and how we get good engagement. Initially, I obviously had Nutrition to teach, but I also had Physiology. When I first started, I was 0.3 FTE, teaching two full classes, which were the first year, of 120 students, a second year, which had 90 students, and a Graduate Diploma, which had about 15, so, in a 0.3 role, I had four papers to deliver. But I *never* actually saw that as overworked or hard or anything; it was just the fact that you could be out there working with so many people, and them moving through material, which is kind of how I saw it. At the end of that first year, it really confirmed that that's all I was doing, because a guy turned up for my exam that I'd never seen before, and he passed with a B+, and I went, "Wow! He's just been reading what I've been putting up". At that point, I actually realised I need to change this; this is the model that I was *given*, but actually it's not the model I believe in - the 'Yes, I've got an exam that says they know it on that day' doesn't mean they can apply it. Can they be personal trainers that know what basic nutrition is? Can they *understand* the physiology that's happening when someone's exercising? So, that kind of changed my philosophy a little bit, and I looked at ways that I could get people really *showing* me that they knew and could apply, and actually, if they could apply and they didn't really know, that was OK too; if they knew when it was the right time to use it, rather than the details, it was fine, because we were looking at learners at levels 4 and 5.

At that point, I moved into teaching in Midwifery as well, and we trialled Bioscience being the first online course. The rest of the degree was still taught face-to-face, so I got *slammed* that year because mine was online, and they wanted Bioscience to be face-to-face. What I learned really quickly, was that the labs became really, really important, because that was the time students saw you. Then the next year, when the whole degree went online, I was like the golden child, and they knew that I knew how to do it, so that was interesting as well. It was really just the perception of the learners that I was a little bit, year ahead, more organised; that's *all* it was, was organisation. That, again, reconfirmed with me that you didn't have to *know* stuff before you could apply it. We were able to play around with the curriculum, so students might learn how to take a blood pressure before they knew what a blood pressure was; they knew how to do it, and they knew what the normal parameters were, and then later on, we taught them what they were actually looking at. That didn't change whether they got it right or wrong at the end of the year. A couple of other institutions were teaching the same qualification, and they were quite adamant that you had to *know* things before you could do them, but there was no difference in results and things like that. Our thinking was that these people have come to be Midwives; they want *skills*, they want to feel like they can *do* something, they want to go up to a Midwife and

say, "Well actually, I *can* do the blood pressure, and I *know* what I'm listening for". So, we changed our model of what we thought was important in skill development as well.

I don't do a lot of tertiary teaching anymore, but I really *strongly* believe that every learner has the ability to succeed. And in tertiary, they've chosen to do the course of study that they are enrolled in, so you don't have to sell it to them. What you have to do is meet their expectations and keep them engaged. As a *practitioner*, I worked really hard to get to know my learners, to really understand who they were and why they were there, in order to be able to meet *their* needs and their expectations. Even now, it still stresses me when I get a student complaint that their expectations haven't been met, because no one actually bothered to find out what they wanted and why they were there. Yes, sometimes they are not in the right place, so part of your role as well is being able to understand where's a better place for them, and that it's not a loss of a student to you, it's putting them in the place that best suits them and their career aspirations. Underpinning all of my philosophy is always that whakawhanaungatanga; understanding the relationship, *enabling* people to be successful, and trying to find different ways that worked for different people. There's no 'one size fits all'; most of my classes had multiple ways that learners could engage with the same material in a way that suited them.

As far as education goes and key moments, I think there are *always* key moments. One that has stuck with me probably *forever* is the first time I went to a marae with the Sports Institute. There was a staff member that had been away on leave, had come back, but was jet-lagged and was really tired. She got through the first day and then, that night, she said, "I can't do this anymore, I need to go home, I'm too exhausted", and that was fine. But as she packed up to go, she put her pillow on the table, and she just got told off big time, which was fine. It's always stuck with me, though, that I *knew* the difference between noa and tapu, and what that meant, but actually that one moment really illustrated it. It's those sorts of things - and sometimes you can't plan for them - that have the biggest impact. I used to teach a personal training course in Auckland, as part of my private practice, and I used to teach how to take a food record, so how to record off someone what they had eaten. One day, I got this student to come to the front of the class. I'd prepped her and said, "Look, I'm going to be asking you what you've eaten over the last 24 hours. Be as honest as you can be, as long as you're comfortable with that", and she said, "OK, no worries at all". We went through it, and then we got to afternoon tea. She'd eaten a chocolate biscuit, and everyone knew that because we'd just seen her, and she said, "a chocolate biscuit". Then she said to us, "If I was talking to my trainer, though, I would have called that an orange". I kind of looked at her, thinking "Wow! This is going to be cool", and she said, "I don't *like* oranges, so I would know on my food record that I'd had chocolate, because there's no way I would have eaten an orange. And my trainer thinks I'm being good because I'm eating fruit... so we're both being satisfied". I could not have *taught* that to that group; there's no way that I could've got that message across, but the lights that went on around the room, and the honesty that came out, was unbelievable.

There is no planning, I don't think, for those magic moments in education. I think sometimes they happen by creating the environment that allows people to feel safe to *share* their experiences, because their experiences have the richness that allow those points to come out; all the planning in the world couldn't ever get you there! I think you have to create it; I don't think it just happens, and I think that's where the Tertiary Excellence Awards come in. It's about establishing relationships, creating a safe environment, allowing people to feel that they can contribute, and bringing them into the conversation, and being at that level *all the time* that allows the magic to happen. We've all been to the most boring lectures, when someone stands in front of the room, and talks in a monotone, and tells you what they think they need you to know. The most magical ones are when you're involved, and you're riveted, and you actually can't write anything down, because you don't want to miss anything. That's one kind of difference, but it has to be *made*, and you have to listen to the feedback. So, if you come out exhausted and you feel like you've had to draw everything out, then you haven't done a very good job; if you get to the end of the time period, and you've still got heaps to do, then that's fantastic. For example, I had a slide deck that I designed for a lecture, and it took us *three weeks* to get through that slide deck, and I had this student that used to get really frustrated because we didn't get to the end; they had it, but we never got to the end, and I'm like, "I don't care if we get to the end or not. It's actually about the conversation we're having. And, look, we're getting stuck on a slide, which means there's lots to contribute, so I'm just giving you a framework", and, as we got through it, he said, "Actually, this has been amazing!". I said, "Well, I don't need to give you any more content. You all know now how to find it, where to get it from, how you draw your answers together, and the conversation that goes with it". So, yes, it's about creating those different environments, and how we do that. It's about knowing your learners; you *have* to know them. It used to stress me in Occupational Therapy, as Head of School, when staff would tell me that they didn't know the names of their third-year learners yet, and I used to say, "That's just fundamental! You taught them in year one for a start off; the first thing you should do is get to know their names"; it's important!

I wouldn't say that there are particular personality traits or characteristics of excellent teachers. I think that everyone has to bring their authentic self, so, therefore, it doesn't matter who you are or what you are. If you look around the awardees at OP, there's a lot of us that are probably a lot more outgoing, but there's also a lot that are quite introverted and quite quiet. You've got to bring that authenticity to the class, so that you get trust and respect. If you bring someone else, you'll just be someone else, and the students will know that; they're not stupid... It's not about *taking*; you've got to share and participate. I used to say to my learners all the time that they knew as much about my family as I know, because I had to share those stories for them to believe, and we'd have all sorts of examples that would come out. I can remember coming to work one day with great big plasters up the front of my shins, because at the gym that morning, I'd missed the box on the box jumps,

and I'd just taken out my shin. I was wearing shorts that day, and the students just thought this was hilarious, but we did a whole session on how they would respond to that: If they were the trainer, what would that mean, what would they do? It was my stupidity, but it made a lesson as well!

In terms of applying for the award, I actually applied twice. I wasn't successful the first time, and, looking back now, I wouldn't have given my portfolio an award either. I didn't give enough of myself; I just kind of answered the questions, and *I* didn't come through in the portfolio. The second time around, though, my portfolio was much more about who *I* am, and much more of *me* came out through it. It wasn't that my practice had changed, but I reflected on it better, and I could see how I needed to be situated in it. It was really interesting as well, because the rules changed between those two or three years. It was quite nice, because the new rules allowed for a little bit more reflection; it was still a really tight reflection, because there's a word limit, but it allowed me to go, "Actually, I don't want this bit in here. This is a bit false; I need to show who *I* am, and why I'm here, and more of my journey". Probably the big thing, if you read the first portfolio compared to the second one, was that my teaching philosophy changed. It didn't change a lot; I just changed how I demonstrated it. The first time, I wrote about it in words, and the second time I drew it; the second time, I thought, "Actually, it's got these bits in it, and this is me, and this is how I am", and it made a lot more sense. It wasn't that I was going to be great at education, but actually I was allowing those that I was working with to reach *their* potential; so, that included getting to know them, understanding them, respecting them, upholding their mana, and so there was a real intermingling of Māori kaupapa alongside capabilities, that I thought was important as an educator.

I think I felt a bit false when I won the award, because I've never seen myself as an excellent teacher; I see myself as doing the best that I can for the learners, and I do that in *any* job. You're there for a reason, so you may as well try and do your best. I think it doesn't matter *what* award you get, at whatever level; yes, it's a recognition, but that's not the end point either. That's another reason why it felt false; I wasn't doing it for *me*, I was doing it to acknowledge the learners that I had worked with... I think that kind of embodied what my philosophy was; that it's about allowing other people to see what *they* can achieve.

Winning a national award didn't really have any impact on me. There were some very negative comments around the place, usually from people that taught near me, that were just kind of like, "Well, what do *you* do different?". And then things like staff would take a photo of me standing at the front of a class, saying, "This is what an excellent teacher looks like", so there was that sort of element to it, which was really interesting. I hadn't envisaged that really. I don't think they meant it in a nasty way; I just think they were kind of like, "Well, she doesn't do anything different to what we do, and we didn't get this award". I wouldn't really agree with that, because I think, over the years, there's a fair share of pastoral care that I've done that other people haven't had to do, because people

haven't had that trust and understanding, and because I like working with people. Then I think, with my *teaching* practice, it's not *winning*, but actually going through the process makes you a better reflective practitioner. It also makes you understand that narrative is really important for people, and I think we underestimate that sometimes. We have to be human. When I think of the best lecturers / know around the place, it's that they get *alongside* the learner, they're not trying to be at a different level.

I don't think you can teach 'excellence'. I think we have to work with people's capabilities, and get them more comfortable with being vulnerable, showing who they are, being authentic, being accountable for their actions, and *that's* hard if people don't naturally position themselves in that space. I don't think excellent teaching comes from *what* you teach, I think it comes from *how* you teach it. It's interesting, because the Teaching Excellence Awards are measured on your success rate, and your student feedback, and all these measures that make people go, "Well, *that's* not true", or "We always get that one grumpy one!". For excellent teachers, though, they *don't* get that one grumpy one; they have 100% the whole way. And it's not that they've taught something amazing, it's how they've done it, and how they've engaged with the class. The class isn't going to mark you down, if they really like you and they think you've done a really good job for *them*; they're just not. They don't really care if the learning outcomes align with the assessment tasks. You're going to get 100% in your feedback if you've done a really good job, by getting to know them. So, how do we teach people how to be excellent teachers? I think we have to get them to reflect on their own practice; I think that we have to make them accountable for what they do. I mean, we have this stupid system at OP where you can do a spotlight on your teaching practice that you don't have to share with anybody; you don't even have to show your manager, unless you want a promotion... That's not reflective practice; it's not continuous improvement. And you *have* to be open, so therefore you have to be vulnerable. If I think about the people that have won the teaching awards for OP, none of them are closed; even if they're quiet and introverted, they're open in their own practice, and what they do, and how they reflect on that.

What keeps me in this community is the impact that we keep having on people's lives. I think education is a business of *transforming* lives, so we have to do the absolute best we can. Our Chief Executive talks about the fact that, if you have an 85% pass rate, then you've got a 15% fail rate, and you've failed 15% of your class. What that actually means is that 15 people, if you've got a class of 100 - it might only be two or three, if you've got a smaller class - had expectations when they came in. That's the bit that keeps me here: How do we help people help their lives? And what does success look like for them? And it may not be success by completing a course, it might be success that, actually, they've turned up and they've done something regularly; it might just be one course over a semester, but they've committed to it, or it might be that we've found a job that they can go into and be successful in that space. That's the bit that keeps me going.

Having come from a university to a polytechnic, there was a difference in the *how* things are done. I think there's sometimes a lack of understanding in the narrative that happens around the institution; we talk about experiential learning, and we talk about integrating things into curriculum, but we don't talk about those that are already doing *that*, and what a great job they're already doing. We talk about places like 'Capable New Zealand' and 'EduBits' being innovative, but we don't look at what we've already got, and I think here, we have *heaps* of innovative practice, and really *exciting* ways of how we've changed teaching to maximise our learner outcomes. We talk about our Educational Performance Indicators, and about how great we are, but we don't say, "Well, why?". For me, *that's* the bit that's missing, particularly in this community... I think things are taken for granted. As a learning and teaching community, particularly within OP, we need to sell ourselves a bit better: *have* communities of best practice, talk about *how* we're doing things, *what* we're doing - things that have worked, things that *haven't* worked - and what that looks like.

I do think there's a difference between excellent teaching in a university context compared to a polytechnic. I think excellent teaching in a university context means that actually you've got your class engaged, and they're interested in what you're talking about... in a university setting, the really excellent lecturers end up getting what we get most of the time, which is engagement and understanding. In the polytech sector, I think we're much better at that, because we do it all the time. We put the experiential into the teaching, so that the students get the experience, which allows them to make the linkages.

There is potentially a risk of excellent teachers being moved out of teaching, because of their abilities and skills. It's a risk for the learners. The skills and attributes that you have also make you a good leader, so it's a benefit for the organisation. It's a bit of a hard one, because you don't want the learners to be disadvantaged, but you can influence the rest of the organisation, using your belief structure, and those powers that you have in higher roles, to get the outcomes that you want. I moved into a Head of School role, and then became a Deputy Chief Executive, and part of the Executive Leadership Team, so sometimes I think I'm a little bit further removed now, but I can still have that influence over at the Head of College level. It's then a case of relying on them to have an influence. However, I also think, as a Deputy Chief Executive, I have come through an academic pathway, so that gives a much greater academic voice to the Executive Leadership Team, as opposed to a business or service voice, so we've got more academic strength. I also work on the 'Doctor of Professional Practice' programme, and I look after some of 'Capable New Zealand', so there are still ways that I can have those conversations and influence; it's just not in front of the learner all the time.

Going forward, I have no idea what the future holds! I think the skills I have in leadership are transferable, so it doesn't worry me too much actually. I think the skills and attributes you have, working with people, are transferable. I *hope* that the reforms we're going through will *better* vocational education for the learners, so that it has more *mana* and

prestige for those coming into education, and in the wider community... we do need a big mind shift out there, and we have to create *equality* in what we do, and ensure that vocational outcomes aren't just predetermined by the brains in your head. That's my wish; that this review actually does help with some of that.

In terms of teacher development, I think it has to be the same as what we have when we deliver. It should be about having people alongside the learner, working, helping, understanding, reaching, allowing people to reach their potential, because there's no *one* model. That's what always upsets me around designing workshop-type things is that, like with teaching, you've got to be able to hit the multiple people in the room, rather than the average or the 80%, because it's actually your 20% where the magic happens. So it has to be *individualised*, and it has to be in work, as and when needed, so that the benefits can be seen quickly, and so that the development continues. Again, we've all been to lots of courses where we've sat there and gone, "This is a really good idea", and then, when you think you might need it, you can't actually remember what you did or why it was important at that time. It's not just Learning and Teaching either; it could be any of our service partners supporting teacher development. It should be about working alongside, and supporting, and building capability *when* it's needed and *where* it's needed.

If I think of meaningful objects for me, I might say running spikes, because that is probably the *only* thing that has continually shaped my thinking.



Image 12 – Running shoe with spikes¹²

¹² Defeder. (2011). *Spikes shoes*. [Illustration]. Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Spikes_shoes.jpg

I coach athletics, and I try and get out of it regularly. Each year, I go, "This is the last year I'm going to do this", and then each year, I get to nationals and my athletes perform or do something that I go, "Wow! I didn't think they were capable of that!". It's really quite exciting when you can work with people that know *why* they're there, and that *want* to be there. And you see the switch flip when they realise that, actually, the work you put in is reflected in the performance. So yes, that's kind of been the one constant over the years... again, it's that transformation.

Mereana's Story

"I think that excellence is a reflection of many things. I think it's a reflection of people who do it as a habit; it's something they do all the time... where it's second nature to want to do things to the absolute best of their ability. And it's not just ability; it's something they're absolutely committed to. It's all about the learner and not themselves".

Essentially, I ground myself first as an educator with where I've come from, and how I was nurtured. I see my dual heritage and bi-cultural upbringing as being fundamental to my pathway in nursing and education. I'm someone that's come from a nurturing environment, where learning and being encouraged to explore were normalised within our family; speaking, asking, talking were very much encouraged by both our parents. Looking back now, if you consider where children were placed in society, probably in the communities that my sisters and I grew up in, that was really quite unique. It was the mid-'60s, in a pretty strongly blue-collar working-class suburb in the South Island, in Dunedin. Our parents weren't *formally* educated through tertiary education, though they both finished their secondary education well. I guess I came from an environment where learning and acquiring new knowledge was encouraged, so that's a base of who I am and what I grew up with. We were encouraged to think and talk, and teaching was probably role-modelled by both my parents, in that they were very hands-on parents, showing us how things worked, letting us do things, and letting us make mistakes and adjust. There are a number of formal educators within my immediate family, who I guess I saw more as aunts and uncles. At the time, I didn't know what they did really, but I knew who they were as individuals and how they also reinforced learning and teaching. A lot of it was always talking, always asking, and allowing us to talk. I'm one of three girls, and I'm the youngest in the family, so that also gives a context of both who I am and maybe the roles that we had within the family structure. I think that's also informed how I am as an educator, and how I nurse too. I certainly have a strong sense of my identity being based on that bi-cultural, Māori Pākehā context of what I draw on in my *everyday* life, and then my professional career is very much blending what I've learned and experienced there. I guess that's who I am as an individual; what has shaped me, and what I have brought to whatever I've done in the work setting.

I guess when I came into tertiary education, it was formalising what I'd done in a number of previous stages of my life, right through from secondary school, to nursing, clinical nursing, and then formally as an educator. I do think educating, and teaching, and learning were very much part of my growing up. It wasn't *called* that, but when I look back and reflect, it was *exactly* how I knew what I needed to do once I got to somewhere like this. I drew on that quite strongly. I think that base of knowing and being, informed by my cultural context - how I was nurtured as a child - certainly gave me the opportunity to just extend on that. I wasn't starting from the beginning and trying to figure it out. I knew exactly what good teachers looked like. Equally, having been formally educated in a Roman Catholic single-sex

girls' school, I also knew what was perhaps *not* advantageous for a learner. At school, we were often placed in situations where it was quite didactic; not always though, I must say. Many of the nuns that taught us were quite forward-thinking for their time, particularly around educating and ensuring that young women had an opportunity to extend themselves, so I think there was sort of a real blend going on. It was interesting.

Like I said, I grew up in the mid-'60s in New Zealand. If you look at the socio-cultural context of New Zealand at the time, it was before there was any formal recognition by the Crown or the Government about the Treaty or Māori. The Renaissance was happening, but hadn't met its full potential, and Māori were still very much an invisible part of New Zealand society. While my father was a first language speaker, right up until his death last year, he'd had that urbanisation experience, so, when we were born, it was still very much a Pākehā-dominated community that we grew up in. However, as I said, we had a Roman Catholic education, so there was a sense of protection around what we were exposed to, particularly with regards to our ethnic cultural identity. We were clearly Māori, we had Māori names; whether or not you *looked* Māori, I think we looked very Māori for Dunedin, probably still do, but if you took us into a context of perhaps other parts of New Zealand at that time, they wouldn't stereotype us as Māori. People knew that we identified as Māori, our father looked Māori, and they knew he spoke Māori. I certainly don't remember education being *harrowing* from the perspective of my identity; I just remember it being harrowing for *all* of us. There were these unwritten rules around religion and how they expected us to practise and what we did. Essentially, though, I enjoyed the learning, and I quickly learned that, because it was safe to go home and talk about it, my parents helped me understand what it was then. I remember one example really vividly. In about year 8 or 9 Science, we were asked to draw a female reproductive system. I remember thinking this was a *fantastic* thing to do, so I drew it in huge florid neon felt pens, with massive ovaries and fimbriae. I took it to the teacher, the paper was quickly turned over, and I was given another bit of blank paper and told, "Go and do it with an HB thin-nib pencil, in a delicate way", and I remember thinking, "But... it's this big, *powerful* organ in the body, and it makes babies, so why can't we...?". When I reflect on it, I think it could've gone really wrong, if I hadn't gone home and talked about it with my parents. My mother said, 'Well, you know, it's actually about learning the rules that the teacher has. I know that you may not agree with them, but that's how these things work', and my father was, "Well, you know, I agree with the nun. It is actually very delicate, and you should represent it like that". In his mind's eye, he was actually more in favour of it; for my mother, it was more about 'learn the rules of engagement, and you'll be fine'. I think if I hadn't had that, I could have felt really resentful.

Our parents were so good. I think there were a number of things where all my sisters and I had to do was just check in: What was that about? Why do they do it that way? What's the unwritten agenda here? But I enjoyed learning, no matter what, and it was encouraged.

When we got home, we were often asked about what we'd learned for the day. My father would always say, "How many questions did you ask? What did you ask?", and I remember thinking, "That's a really weird thing to say", and I'd say, "I didn't ask any today", and he'd say, "Well, you can't have learned much!". I'd think about it, and, at some point, I realised he was probably right, because if you're not asking questions, you're not checking in, and you'll just accept *anything* they say. If you ask questions, you'll find out if they really know what they're talking about. So, although my parents didn't have a formal education in some ways, they seemed to understand a lot about learning - I thought that was quite amazing. They actually learned it intuitively or they learned it probably, as many of our ancestors did, from what they'd seen around them, and how their parents and grandparents had taught them. It was all about *experiential* learning, it was about *validating*, it was about *checking in*, it was all those things.

I liked school and I excelled at school; it was a good place for me. I think many young Māori women at that time probably wouldn't have felt that. I do know from our wider whānau that my cousins who were schooling mainly in the North Island at that time didn't succeed in school as well as my sisters and I did here. That was interesting from our whānau's perspective; here we were in the deep south, far away from probably all cultural references except for our father, but we still excelled in the academic environment. I often wonder whether it was because we had that sheltering of the religious nuns around us to act as a buffer, and what we had at home allowed us to be able to go into that, survive, and come out the other side.

I didn't know what I wanted to do as a career. My mother is a retired registered nurse, but I didn't have a pathway in mind. My criteria for a career when I left high school was applying for any course that was located outside Dunedin! Originally, I was going to go and do Law, and I wanted to do that at Canterbury University. Then my parents pointed out that there was a Law School here, so that was *that* plan gone, because I really just wanted to escape Dunedin. So, I applied for Teaching, Physiotherapy, Nursing... at every stage and in every centre: Christchurch, Wellington, Auckland. The first reply that came back was for the Diploma of Nursing at Christchurch Polytechnic, so I accepted it. I remember thinking that I didn't really know a lot about the programme. My mother was still working in neo-natal intensive care at that time, back in 1980, and her circle talked about these polytech nurses, and how they weren't sure about them. I thought, "Well that's perfect, I'll go and do that course". It was like a little way of saying "If Mum doesn't like it, and it's not where she wants me, why not go?", so I fell into nursing probably not with the most solid intentions! In saying that, though, once I got there, I knew it was me. It met the learning I wanted, and it had more theory than what I'd seen from the other nurses that had gone through the apprenticeship model. I'd had friends who left school in year 12 and had gone nursing. They'd talk about this chaos of being on a ward, for example, and not really having much link between what they were doing, and the *fear* of being somewhere when they hadn't actually had any theory around it, but they were on a ward on night duty in charge.

When I graduated, it was still with a Diploma of Nursing, but then Massey University started the very first postgraduate Nursing papers, around 1984-5. I was at Dunedin hospital, and there were a number of key players from the then New Zealand Nurses Organisation in Dunedin too. The School of Nursing had developed here at Otago Polytechnic, and they were also talking about postgrad. I was sort of in around the fringes of that, so I'd heard a little bit about it. The key thing that drew me here, though, was when I returned from overseas. I nursed in the UK and the States for a couple of years, then came back to Dunedin in 1987. I re-engaged in clinical practice, but I'd only been here about two months before I suffered a back injury, while I was working in one of the in-patient wards at Dunedin hospital. As part of my recovery plan, I had to take some time away from nursing, so I had a bit more time on my hands. By this stage, the Bachelor of Nursing programme was *starting* to be formulated here; it hadn't been quite introduced. The Head of School knew that I was back in town, and that I had time available, so she asked if I was interested in some work here at OP. They were developing a course focusing on cultural competency, safety, and Māori health, and I came in on a very, very part-time basis to support *one* course initially, while I was supposedly recovering from this back injury. That role gradually grew as the opportunities became clearer here, then, about six months later, with the back injury unresolved, it was a case of either change my lifestyle or have surgery, which I didn't want to do. So, I stepped away from all of that direct nursing, and moved more into education.

I absolutely loved that transition! Quite early on, I saw an opportunity to shape the future pathways of graduate nurses, more than what I could do on the floor. In education, I saw that being involved with undergraduate and then postgrad was a way of affecting or introducing new ways of thinking or learning or providing that base. So, I saw a great opportunity, and I *liked* the environment; again, it was back to learning. There were new things, new challenges, people talking about new information, access to this whole world of people who were also interested in how people learned, and what they learned, and that sort of thing. It was a natural transition really. By the time I became a full-time staff member here, I'd had thirteen years of clinical experience. That had not only been in in-patient settings: I'd been in community, primary health, worked in an independent nurse educator role for a community-based provider, so there was a lot of consolidation in a wide range of clinical areas over that time.

Another factor is that, during that 1980s to 1990 period, by default, I often ended up being the 'orientating nurse'; the one who did the orientation for any new staff. So, I'd be identified as the orientating nurse, but then I found myself *volunteering* to do that, as I could see, being a senior nurse on the ward, that whoever did the orientation would make or break not only that person's experience, but also how they *functioned*. Often, I'd spend a lot of time working to bring new staff on board, and giving them the base they needed. I

was never an official mentor, or ‘preceptor’ as they’re now called; that term wasn’t used. By the time I heard those words, I was on this side in academia.

Initially when I started here, I think things fitted with the way we work in clinical practice, which is checklists and making sure that everything’s very specific and done in a particular order. There’s a little bit of flexibility, but generally it’s quite ordered thinking. I probably brought that with me, so things were delivered in a very particular way, and this would happen for the first three minutes, and then five minutes, and so on. If I didn’t get through the list by the end of the class, I’d get *very* stressed that I hadn’t covered some things, rather than thinking that, actually, it was fine. Now, with many, many years of experience, I *do* still have an overall plan, but the premise of what I’m facilitating is about facilitating, and using the time to uncover and to draw on the learning that’s present in the room, rather than transferring it from my head to theirs. That takes however long it takes, and whatever’s left over at the end becomes the students’ challenge to take away and continue working on. It’s about that exchange of ideas. It certainly took me a while though, and it only probably came as I took the opportunity to observe other skilled facilitators; I don’t think I would have got there on my own. The more I put myself in the position to talk to other people doing similar work, the more it helped. I looked quite wide to do that; I sought out other colleagues from across the polytech who weren’t nurses, so people who were working in Engineering, or in other areas, and just looking at what they did and their facilitation methods, and seeing how that worked. It did mean I had to step out and be a little bit vulnerable though, and say “Actually, I don’t know how to do it”, which is quite hard for many people... I had to allow myself to be peer-observed too, in the classroom, and to take that sort of feedback.

Do I still see myself predominantly as a nurse and then as an educator? I guess, for me, the word ‘nurse’ has so many connotations. I don’t really like the word ‘nurse’; I do love being a nurse, but I don’t like that word. When I think of that word in my mind, I really interchange it with the Māori word for ‘nurse’, or the closest equivalent, which is ‘tapuhi’. The word ‘tapuhi’ is someone who *shapes* and *cares*, and I think that an excellent teacher or facilitator also shapes and cares for people, so, for me, I sort of see them being one and the same. I think an excellent teacher, or an excellent facilitator of learning, is also someone who cares for people. To really want the best for your students, you have to want to shape it around them, and give them *all* the information, rather than holding a bit of it back and saying, “Well, I’m the expert over here, and you can have that little bit”. If I really care, I’m going to tell you a lot, and I’m not going to worry about it, because it’s good that you know everything about this. I don’t see my primary role as being a nurse; I *do* see my primary role as being a facilitator of information and learning, about nursing and about other things, including things Māori. I think probably in my teaching, while I focus on nursing, and being Māori, I try and pull in whatever’s going to make my students think. If I have to find an analogy that links to something that they’re interested in, I’ll do it. And I’ve done that a lot, as I’ve moved through time; once I hear what they’re interested in, I can generally think

"Well, I'm going to have to give you a scenario that's based around something you're interested in". I've done some pretty wacko scenarios, but it works!

I think that excellence is a reflection of many things. I think it's a reflection of people who do it as a habit; it's something they do all the time. It's not something that you achieve and say "Ha! I've knocked it off... now I can relax!". I think it's someone that's reached a level where it's second nature to want to do things to the *absolute best* of their ability. And it's not just ability; it's something they're absolutely committed to. It's all about the learner and not themselves. Excellent teachers are the people who can introduce others to new learning, and that's at their core. They're just the way they are, whether they're teaching someone how to ride a bike or to understand a really complex theory, but they really want the person to understand. So, excellent teachers are people who want excellence in the people that they're sharing their knowledge with. I think, for many people, it's something that's quite *innate*. I've thought about that a lot. You can create and shape a *little* bit, but I do think that you've actually got something naturally within you that allows you to be part of this sort of profession.

I would say that excellent teachers are quite selfless, and I think they're quite brave people; often they step out and away from the collective of their peers, from what I've observed. They're prepared to take risks. I can think of my own sense of when I have perhaps utilised particular learning tools or strategies within some of the courses that I've taught, and people have said, "Oooh, I don't know if you can *do* that. Not sure if you should". For example, and this is *way* back, I think I was the first person to use self-assessment in one of my theory courses. Why not? These students have spent five minutes or five hours or five days writing an assignment, and it should be OK for them to sit with a rubric and give themselves a mark. I remember it caused quite a bit of discussion at the time, because it wasn't on the checklist of things that we'd agreed on. So I think, often, excellent teachers are prepared to look wide, they're prepared to make themselves quite vulnerable, and they're committed to not just accepting the status quo and rolling out the same course all the time. They're constantly thinking about how things could be improved. I have always gone and read the student feedback and evaluations to the n^{th} degree, looking at the data behind it, and seeing where the cracks are. Excellent teachers are always prepared to critique themselves and what they're doing, and to see how effective that is. They clearly have to be people who are keen to search for new information about teaching and learning, and not accept that they're at the top and that's it. That's one thing I've noticed with many of the awardees, the Ako Academy colleagues that I've met; they're all prepared to just throw it out there and say, "Well, thought it was good, but maybe it's not... thought this worked, but it didn't". They're usually quite generous people too; they're giving to other people, and quite happy to not hold back.

I'm using the word 'they' here to say that I'm part of a collective; maybe I should say 'we'. I do see myself as an excellent teacher now. I find it quite hard, though. That could maybe be

a hangover from Catholicism and not wanting to make yourself bigger or better than anyone else, staying in your place. I think it comes more from my father and my cultural perspective of always being mindful that you are no greater than the sum of everyone that's around you, so keeping yourself in check. I found it *extremely* hard, in the Ako portfolio process, to say "I am this, I am that, I have done this"; that was very, very difficult.

When I think back to applying for the award, the process was really interesting. I had a mentor to support me, and we decided we were going to use quite a different approach. We *spoke* a lot, we *talked* a lot; we'd record and then transcribe things, certainly for the first couple of sessions that we had together. Once we'd had those conversations, and I relistened to them, and I'd heard what I was saying, then I just wrote and wrote. From start to finish, it was probably six Fridays, I think. For me, the key was the fact that we'd done that speaking process first. I'd heard the words, I'd gone back over the words, I'd listened to the words, and then they were set in my mind and I could write. It's interesting, because it's similar to the way in which I facilitate teaching and learning. It's about grounding and talking with the learners *first*, hearing their voice constantly, and then figuring out and shaping lessons to suit them. I guess that comes with the expert teacher having that ability to draw information together quickly, to suit the group you're with; to be able to pull on the expert knowledge, and then facilitate learning for others.

Winning an award was a bit overwhelming initially. It's a very *public* thing, and I found that a bit much. What it has done, though, is that it's probably allowed me to give myself permission to think of things differently for the future. It's given me an opportunity and a platform, and a wider range of like-minded people, more than I ever thought I'd have access to. There's a whole range of great opportunities, which are very stimulating..., but I see it as being just another element of my pathway, and that's really exciting.

I don't know that you can teach 'excellence'. I think there's always going to be a certain amount of theorising and presenting and providing people with foundation skills, but I do think excellence has to be part of what you see, and feel, and experience. We have to validate that a lot more, and I don't believe just in tertiary; I mean we have to validate it *right* from birth really, through to death. From early childhood in New Zealand through to tertiary, we have to be able to talk about what we're learning and how we're learning, and we have to create that environment where teachers want to give up a bit of power and actually just critique the hell out of what they're doing, and not hold it back all the time, and say things like, "Well, we're doing it because it's on the list, we're doing it because it's good for this, and we're doing it because the minister tells us to". We have to actually *feel* it, I think; you have to actually create it and actually allow people to feel.

You can *feel* excellence. You can tell when people are in a room, where you're with somebody and you go, "Wow! I don't know what they're talking about, but they *really* want to make me listen". An excellent teacher could teach me about anything; I'll go with Maths,

because I don't understand it, but I've seen excellent teachers teaching Maths and I think "Oh yeah, I get this", and if I don't, I'll listen anyway. And I think it's *that* ability; it's creating that space, and I don't know whether you can learn how to do that. I think to develop excellence, you need to *experience* it; you have to be given a chance to experience that, and to then let people talk through "Well, what made that excellent? Let's critique it, what was excellent about it?". Often, it's about the feeling people create; it's about the fact that *everyone* in that room feels like that person's talking to them, not just the back wall. I do think it's a lot about creating the experience of, or letting people feel excellence, to know how to *really* truly apply it.

It's about the feeling, I keep coming back to that. There's that saying, 'People forget what you say, and people forget what you do, but they never forget how you made them feel', and I absolutely believe that. I believe excellent teachers create the feeling where the people that are listening or sharing the learning experience *feel* that they are valued enough that they'll listen. If they don't feel valued, it just shuts down. I think, now more than ever, it's time that we really value creating a safe space for learners, particularly young learners in our country. It is so, so critical. We know how much many of them are struggling, just with being themselves or being who they are in this world, and I think we've really got to get it right in tertiary, and at all levels, to make sure they feel like they are *someone*, at every point of their learning. It's not about wrapping them up, and being over-protective. It's about making our young people feel that it's OK to be here, and that they've got something to share. We've *all* got something to share!

The wider community is so important. All the communities that I stay in, I feel safe in, and that's really important to me. I feel like I'm valued in them, and that my contribution is important enough that I can see it effecting change; those are the things that keep me in communities. I think, again, it's about feeling. I want to call it 'wairua'¹³; it's the feeling, which I have within all of those groups, that I'm acknowledged, and I have a sense of purpose within them. That's very much what keeps me there. It's not about having accolades or monetary gain; it's more about having a sense of purpose. I feel like I'm a change agent. I think both my parents were quite strong with that; they involved themselves in lots of things, or they facilitated change, so I think that's probably something that I hold quite important within each of the groups that I work with, whether it's nursing, OP, the Māori community, professional nursing organisations, national bodies, whatever... It's really important to have something I can contribute, to have a purpose.

Things certainly change over time. If I think about in-service development, as it was called back then, there was always a lot of talking about *what* to do in the classroom, but not actually *how* to do it. Then it moved more into workshops where we might take something

¹³ Mereana explains this (in a follow-up conversation) as being the values and beliefs that determine the way a person lives; the search for meaning and purpose in life, and personal identity and self-awareness.

along to talk about, and now, it seems to have moved into a phase where it's very much part and parcel of that expectation of engaging at tertiary level; that you continue to learn, and continue to develop your practice. Financial support for that kind of development, though, hasn't really increased at all; that seems to have been consistent, from zero to not much more. That's hugely frustrating, I think, because, again, if you really want to go to that excellence level, to do what I've described, you need to be able to get out and about, and be in the 'Teaching Excellence' community. To have access to other excellent facilitators of learning requires you to have some resource, to do that often. Fortunately, because of some of the other communities I belong to, I've been able to do that on the back of those, but I think it's very difficult if you're sitting in a role, and you're wanting to *experience* excellence, but you've only really got your organisation to experience. You have to have those opportunities to go elsewhere.

Looking ahead, I would like to contribute on a national level, particularly to support Māori educators... I think, at the moment, I have a real passion for making sure that Māori nurse education is not lost in the silver tsunami that is taking over nursing and Nursing education, as it is in many sectors. Excellence and attaining excellence is great, but I think it's not much use if you don't do anything with it.

In terms of teacher development in tertiary education, I'd like to see it start from when we employ staff, before they have to ask for it, before they even have their first day in their new role. There should be a conversation about preparedness to come into the environment, whether that's discussed with the person or it appears in the job description, and that, as *soon* as they are employed, their development starts. They could have a period of time where they work with a skilled mentor, not just for an orientation or for two or three weeks. They need the opportunity to work with someone who has that ability to imbue some confidence, more than anything. Generally, they have the knowledge base, or they wouldn't have got the job, but they need the confidence to be in the classroom environment. That doesn't necessarily need to be a formal teaching qualification to start, but I do think there's an *embedding* that needs to happen, where we create the environment where that person's comfortable enough in their role: they know the expectations, and they can look at the delivery and other parts of the courses or programmes that they're delivering, and get a sense of where they're to be placed in it. There should be a real opportunity for their voice to be heard; for them to be able to say, "I don't feel confident in big rooms yet. I'm not really sure that I'm going to be able to do it". I think often, we take people in and they're expected to run before they can walk, and we just hope for the best! All that happens there is that the learners can really be disadvantaged, and that's what worries me most. We put up with the fact that we could lose a whole group of students, by not having people facilitating learning the way it *should* be... These students will walk away, and then they're left with that experience. That's bad for us, but it's also bad for them and for their esteem; they walk away often feeling like they've failed yet another course, "Because I couldn't do it". So, I think my dream for

tertiary education is, firstly, that we become more connected to secondary, so that we know what we're getting. There has to be a dialogue somewhere... What school-leavers are exiting with and what we're putting on the table is still pretty far apart, and the second-chance learners or the mature learners are even further back. I think that's one big grey area that we are starting to miss the ball on. Then, secondly, I'd like to see us preparing our staff and our educators a lot better than what we do at present.

When I think of particular items that hold meaning for me, there are a few. The first one is a little card. It's a photo image of a kete¹⁴ with words on it, and it's something that students created for me about ten years ago. It talks about all the knowledge that they received during their course. I remember receiving it and thinking "That's not got a lot to do with the course", but when I looked at it, it was about how they *felt*: about what they'd learned, and how *empowered* they felt about being in the classroom setting that I was in. There are words to do with cultural safety, about being in a safe space, about feeling empowered, and about feeling valued. I remember thinking that was a really huge point in my teaching career, where I thought "I've cracked it! I've cracked it!". I hadn't expected to see students generate something as *beautiful* as that, and say, "This is our gift back to you, and we can't weave, and we can't do a beautiful Māori kete, but we've taken a photo, and we've put all these words on it". That sat on my wall for a long time, and it's been part of whatever office I've been in; I've always taken that with me. Next to that is another picture, and it's a picture of my parents. It's a picture of my parents, their wedding photo, it's a photo of my dad's cap and his glasses, and a bunch of flowers, taken when he passed away. That was the cap he always wore, and his reading glasses, and that photo sits on my desk as well, because I think that is the *embodiment* of what I really believe has made me the educator and the facilitator of learning that I am. It's because of what they gave, and how they were, and I think that's wonderful. So that picture is certainly there. The third photo is a photo of my daughter and my husband, who I really see as being my touchstone for safety. When I go home at the end of the day, they're the people that keep me focused on what's real. Yes, academia and processes and meetings and national this and that are really there, but in fact, this is my other life that keeps me grounded, and keeps me in the real world of young learners, and of what the world is ahead of us. So, those are my three touchstones: it's my students, my partner and daughter, and my parents.

¹⁴ A traditional Māori basket, typically woven from the leaves of New Zealand flax.

Richard's Story

"It's all about the learning that happens, and all about the learners; if learners are moving, if learners are growing and changing, and getting something that's of value, then you're looking at a teacher that's worth their salt".

To tell the story about who I am as a teacher, I'll begin by saying it's my dad's fault, and my mum's, and my grandmother's. My grandma was the first woman to win a scholarship to Oxford, way back when. She never took it up, because she had to earn a crust for the family, which she did by teaching. Dad's probably the critical person, though. He was born in Holland in 1928, quite close to the German border, so in 1939 at the start of the Second World War, he was 11. When the war ended, he was 18. Between 11 and 18, he never went to school, *but* he was completely self-educated. He read every single book in the local village library, to the extent that he stole his older brother's library card, so that he could get access to the adults' books, because he'd read all the children's ones. After that, he was in a position where he could go and complete an engineering qualification, completely self-taught. He came to New Zealand in 1951 or '52, on the Dutch immigration scheme. His fare was covered as long as he would do whatever job they gave him, which was shovelling sand at the brickworks. That lasted about a week, before people realised that he could do all the other calculations and things, and he ended up working for Farra Brothers as a design engineer. Then he started teaching, at what was King Edward Technical College at the time, so he was a foundation staff member of Otago Polytechnic when it opened the doors in 1966. While he was doing that and running his engineering business, he also went to university and just enrolled in courses that interested him. He ended up doing a PhD in Philosophy; Otago University changed their rules so that he could do it part time. That's a summary of his trajectory through learning and knowledge, and he just had a lifelong love of learning and teaching.

When I came along, I think that my dad's most exciting thing was, "Ooohh, here's a brain I can play with!". From very young, I learned to think and question, and to *think* about thinking. I can *vividly* remember, for example, as a 6- or 7-year-old, crying for a whole car trip from Dunedin to Mosgiel because I couldn't convince my dad that I wasn't dreaming; you can't do it, I mean, what do you say? "Oh, that's an interesting dream, why would you dream that I was asking you that?". So, that sort of meta-thinking became a *really* critical part of how I was in my thinking, and I learned to think about how to unpack things at a young age.

At intermediate school, our teacher died on the second day of the school year. The Principal came to see us the next day and introduced our replacement teacher. She was great at many things, but could not do maths. To her credit, she very quickly realised that I *could* do Maths, so, for my whole year 7, the whole Maths class was always "Richard is going to do

the maths on the board” and everybody else could ask questions, so I basically taught my cohort of Maths at intermediate for a whole year! I very quickly learned that knowing the subject is different from being able to teach it, and helping other people understand it is a really different process, so that was sort of my first semi-formal exposure to teaching.

Another thing I get from my parents is the belief that the world is a better place if everybody helps everybody to make it a better place. My whole mode of thinking around anything is, if I can do something that makes things better for the collective, then that's where I get my real value. My being able to do something is great, but my being able to do something that makes things better for the team, that's even better. In this case, being the one in a class of 25 that could do maths, I could help the others do maths, and I got real value out of that.

When I went to university, my dad was teaching at the Polytech at the time, and they were looking for someone that could teach a Maths class. They couldn't find anyone, so my dad asked me if I was interested. Being a student at the time, I was happy to be earning a bit of money, so I went along to teach something called 'Lab Maths'. I was 18 or 19, and the next youngest person in the class would have been 25 or 26. I can still remember the first class I taught. I was so nervous that I was sweating. If you're sweating really hard and trying to make chalk work on a chalkboard, it won't do it, because the friction between the chalk and the chalkboard is more than between the chalk and your fingers. Every time I tried to write on the board, the chalk would fly away. I had to think on my feet, and I got the students to take turns to draw on the board while I sort of asked everybody else "How do you think it's going?", and gave them some feedback. It turned into this interactive 'let the student drive it'-type teaching experience, purely because I couldn't do the traditional thing. After class, the students went to talk to the Head of School and said that they liked what I'd been doing, so basically, from then on, I intentionally kept doing it. My plan had never been to go into teaching; I didn't really have a plan, other than knowing, since I was 12 or 13, that I would finish at the end of 1987 with a Maths Honours degree and a Physics Honours degree. I always knew that, but I had no idea what I was going to do with it. By the time I was halfway through those studies, I was already teaching here and enjoying it.

There have been a couple of other key turning points for me. One was putting together my portfolio for the national teaching award, and the other was being involved in the D4LS process. These two things were going on at the same time, and they both basically forced me to stop and ask myself, "How does this work? What is it I'm doing?". Up until then, I'd steadfastly refused to do any educational theory. I knew I could teach, and, frankly, I was terrified that if I pulled it apart, I wouldn't be able to put it all back together.

I still honestly believe that there's an element of magic, an indescribable element, that makes teaching an art as much as it is a science. There's something that is undefinable, and I was always quite scared that, if I pulled it apart, I wouldn't be able to put it back together

again. Being nominated for a national teaching award, *and* doing D4LS, made me have to take that step. And yes, I did a Graduate Diploma or something in Education at one stage, but I stand by what I said. I still think there's a lot of the intangible. You can't make a recipe; it's not a pinch of this, and a bit of that. I couldn't even say if it's a nature nurture thing. I think probably everything is a combination of both of those things. I know I've already talked about my dad, and his background, so there's that. My Mum's a teacher, my cousin's a teacher, so, whether that's nature or nurture or whatever, I think there's a sum total of all the various parts that make it work.

I would say that excellent teachers are a kind of vehicle. They have a *passion* for their subject, and whatever it is that they are communicating, there's a passion for that. Having said that, I think you can be passionate about something and still not be able to teach it, so that's not enough. You need to understand the thing that you're teaching at a level which can be broken down. C.S. Lewis said that if you can't explain something in the vernacular, you don't understand it. Good educators have that ability to talk about the thing that they're passionate about, without using lots of jargon; you have to be able to do that. You also need to be able to listen. You *absolutely* have to be able to figure out where someone else is at, be able to talk to them about the thing, understand what they understand, and what they *don't* understand, and then help to move them along. For me, those are the critical components of excellent teaching.

An excellent teacher is someone that learning happens around. It's not about how many qualifications you have, or how much theory you know; an excellent teacher is someone that learning happens around, that people learn from. It's all about the learning that happens, and all about the learners; if learners are moving, if learners are growing and changing, and getting something that's of value, then you're looking at a teacher that's worth their salt.

I'm not sure how we define 'excellence' in teaching. I think everybody can improve on everything, and then it becomes a matter of, well, how far do you have to get to be excellent? I think that some people can develop their skills a lot faster than others, and I think that life experience can just *shape* you to be in a better space to learn in any area. Through your life experiences and through your passions and interests, you naturally get to a point where it's going well. There's the desire to learn too; to be reflective, and to actually say, "I want to get better at this", and to *craft* it. In those spaces, absolutely, there are people that can help teach you, and there are people that can help you to move into those spaces, but without a lot of those other things, it's not going to happen.

I think there's also a kind of confidence thing. I remember one example, when I'd been teaching for four or five years. I'd been teaching in the Science Department, Chemistry and graduate Maths, and all sorts of weird things, and then the Construction area wanted someone to come and teach some Construction Maths. I must have been around 24 or 25

by then. As usual, I managed to get into a massive philosophical conversation with the students, rather than just teaching them Maths, and I'd started talking to them about the concept of falsifiability, so the fact that you can't disprove a negative. I basically said to the students, "Oh, there's a pink elephant that lives out on Logan Park across the road", and they were saying, "It's not true! That's not true!". I said, "OK, prove it's not there!", and they'd say, "Well, look out the window, you can't see it". I told them it was hiding behind a tree, and the conversation went on. After about 10 minutes, the *whole* class are looking out the window, and I'm saying, "Just wait, just wait", then, for some unknown reason, the Head of Department walked in. We were meant to be learning about stress or strain or something, some engineering concept, and the *whole* class is lined up looking out the window. The Head of Department arrives and says, "Ummm, what's going on here?", and some of the students turn round and say, "Oh, we're just waiting for the pink elephant, that Richard says is behind that tree, to come out". The Head of Department had the good grace to say, "Well, that's quite interesting" and closed the door as he walked out. Of course, by the time I got back to my desk, there was a note from him, "Could you come and see me, please?". I went up to see him, knowing that he was only really borrowing me for a bit of part-time work. He asked me "What's going on?", so I explained the situation, and said that I was trying to help the students ask deeper-level questions and do some thinking, and I was challenging them on this one thing. At this stage, he asked me if I wanted a full-time job! So, he was someone that valued *thinking*; not just delivering a curriculum, but actually helping people to think and stretching their minds. I guess, for me, the intangible thing was that I actually had the confidence to do that, and I didn't feel constrained by expectations. Letting those *other* passions in, that give spice to life, and having the confidence to go to the odd places, I think, is a big part of the intangible. You have to be able to step off the boat and not sink, and step back on again when you need to. That's a really important part of it.

I've experienced excellent teaching in the polytech environment, and at university. I had a couple of *excellent* teachers when I did my Masters. In my undergraduate degrees, it was still very lecture-based, very *non-engaging*. I could understand why students don't go to lectures and just download the stuff. I do think there's a difference between the two cultures, and the expectations of what teaching is. I think that some of that is curriculum based; universities and polytechs are at different places on the knowledge and skills continuum...I still think, though, that excellent *teaching* has those same fundamental elements. It's about *passion* for your subject, engaging people, finding out where people are, and moving them on. That is hellishly hard to do in a classroom of a hundred, in a lecture theatre for example, so I think that sometimes the educational model makes it very hard to do what I would call excellent teaching.

Do I see myself as excellent? I think I do *now*. I think now I know that the thing that I do best in the whole world is teach, and I've done it long enough to know that other people find real value in it. Like I said before, how do you define an excellent teacher? It's someone that gets students on board and works for the students' good. For me to say I don't know if I do

that or not would be false modesty. I do it, and however it works, it works. I'm now at a point where I'm prepared to say, whatever that 'excellence' threshold is, whether that's maybe 70% excellent, that I'm as good at it as anyone else teaching Maths in the New Zealand vocational context.

I don't think the award really impacted on my teaching at all. It *validated* the way that I teach, but it didn't change it. My teaching had got to the stage where I did very few things orthodoxy. I had very few formal lesson plans or anything like that. My teaching plan is very much thinking about what learning outcome and content we are focusing on today. So, we're talking about quadratic equations or whatever it is. I know what's kind of involved, and I know what the assessment sort of looks like. I wander into class and start engaging in conversation with the students on something that heads to that topic. If it's quadratic equations, I'll throw something in the air so that you can see the parabola, because that's what quadratic equations are about, and we start a conversation. Eventually, I make sure that I cover all the things that students are supposed to know, and that's pretty much how *any* of my teaching works.

My role changed three or four years ago now, and I stopped teaching... I'm Head of College now, of Engineering Trades and Engineering Technology, so all the welding and fabrication, Automotive, and then Civil, Mechanical, Electrical Engineering, then Construction, which is Carpentry, and Construction Management, Quantity Surveying. It's also Living Sciences, that's Vet Nursing, Horticulture, Arboriculture, and IT. Being Head of College of all that... on the surface, I have academic responsibility and I'm meant to read everything that goes to Academic Board, and make sure that moderation processes are happening, and all that sort of thing, but most of it is firefighting. I very, very, very seldom get time to actually *talk* to people about education.

I do miss teaching. I still do a little bit when I can; I look for an excuse to do it. I've said to everybody in my teams, "If you want some Maths, if you get a bit stuck..." , because everyone's a bit terrified of teaching Maths! I'm happy to do it. I miss it; I miss the actual act of *teaching*. I don't miss the marking, and I don't miss the compliance stuff that I'm seeing... like national consistency meetings that we never had before. I've asked the people that do them, and it's about 100 hours work to prepare for and go to a national consistency meeting, and we just put that back on academic staff. Do I miss teaching? Yes, *absolutely*, *desperately* miss the act of being in the class. Do I miss all the stuff that goes around the outside of it? No, I don't.

I've seen a tendency for awardees to move into leadership positions. In the year that I won, for example, there were two other winners from OP. I'm now a Head of College, one person is now on the Executive Leadership Team, and the other is running the Managed Apprenticeships programme for Carpentry. When we were first approached to apply, we would have been three FTEs of teaching; now, we would be maybe 0.4 FTE of teaching

between the three of us. Likewise, soon after another colleague won an award, they were moved into a programme management role. I don't know whether this is a good thing or not. If we think about excellence in teaching, then I think that leaving good teachers in teaching roles is probably better for the students. In my case, by moving into this Head of College role, I can help some other people a little, whether it's with structures or systems or mentoring or whatever, not that I have any time to do that. However, I do think there are other people that could do those things. I suspect that leaving me teaching would have had a bigger influence on the student experience; that's my gut feeling.

I would love to be able to do some mentoring, but there simply is not enough time for it. The job I'm doing is already not do-able; if I put mentoring into it as well, it becomes even less do-able, so I have to look at where the pressure points are. What happens if, for example, I don't get my monthly finances done? Is that a bigger problem than not having helped someone that's struggling with their teaching?

In terms of the community around me, it's whānau. I'm from Dunedin; it's home, always has been. I love Dunedin. I have applied for jobs in a couple of other places at different points, but I was not very serious. They would have taken me away from Dunedin. Dunedin is family. At the Polytech, like I said before, my personal value comes from making things better for the team, so whichever team I'm part of, I'm very loyal to them. My colleagues are really important to me; other people that are passionate about teaching. I *really* love working with the Maths team. I loved it when I used to lead the Maths team. I love the people, and I love talking Maths and Education, that combination, sitting around and having a yarn to people about Maths and Education. I *love* that! That really rings my bells.

I want to make it a better place, so I find it very hard to look outside and think "Oh, there's something else I want to do instead of this". I have no concept of 'career'; I've never had any ambition to get to a particular point or a particular role. How does someone like that get to be Head of College? Because I've never, ever applied for anything; I've only ever responded to someone else saying, "Hey, I think you're the person that would make this better". If I think I could genuinely make it better, then I don't have a choice; I'll do it. The only time I stepped away from OP for a while was when I worked part-time for eight years. Between 2000 and 2008, I was Pastor in a local church. That came about because my *church* family was at the place where they all looked at me and said, "This would be a better place if you were the Pastor". It was the same thing; I felt that's where I could make the biggest contribution at the time, and make the community I was part of as good as possible. I could contribute, so I did. When I'd done the job I needed to do, then it was appropriate for someone else to step in. I came back here to OP and carried on.

I have seen a lot of changes over time. When I first started at Otago Polytechnic, there was a Chief Executive, and one other person who did all of the HR and payroll and finances, everything. There was one person who looked after the facilities, the garden, and that sort

of thing, and there was someone that ran the library and made morning tea. *Every* other person taught. Some staff didn't teach full time, so a Head of College or School might have taught only 80% of the time. That all changed when computers became the thing. You suddenly had this ability to have everything on computer, but then you had to support the computers, and so on. Then there was all the compliance, all the moderation. We had to be able to document this and that, and moderate this and that. To be honest, it was *very*, *very* minimal when I started. Personally, I think it's become a bit stupid now; it's gone overboard. We now have a compliance industry that just strangles a whole lot of things... When I first started, my Programme Manager would check in with me to see how everything was going, have a look over what I was doing, give me some guidance, and so on. There weren't the formal piles of moderation that you'd send off and keep in triplicate, but there was definitely a process to ensure that there was some quality. That was all built on relationship and trust, and that's definitely changed.

Looking ahead, who knows what the future holds? My hopes are that education is the best thing it can possibly be for the students, and I hope I can do whatever I can to help bring that about. Who knows, with the Review of Vocational Education, I don't think my job will exist in a couple of years. Colleges won't look like mine does; I don't think they'll be that eclectic. It makes perfect sense in an OP context, so I think it's a great group, but, once things get bigger, that will change. There might be a Head of Engineering, but why would that be me? I'm not an Engineer. There might be a Head of Vet Nursing, but again why would that be me? I'm not a Vet Nurse. I'm not *anything*; I'm an Educationalist.

If there were a national role in Maths education, that's something I could potentially see myself doing, especially if it were in Dunedin. That would be a good opportunity, and again, if my being involved would make Maths education better, I would absolutely be up for it. That's my being driven by getting value out of what's best for the whole team again. If it were just up to me, and I could do what makes *me* happy, I would teach more and manage less. If there were a role in national Maths teaching, I'd like it to be around actually doing some teaching, seeing if I could help other people teach well, and looking at how Maths works across various curricula. Some of those sorts of things would be quite interesting really.

In terms of teacher development, we need to look at dual practitioners. Like I said before, you've got to be *passionate* about something, and then you've got to be able to communicate it. I think in the tertiary context, especially in the *vocational* tertiary context, it's about finding those people that are passionate about the thing, and that have enough life experience and natural communication skills that you know it's not a futile task trying to get them to teach. After that, it's about helping them to learn how to teach really well. I think sometimes we overdo the *theory*, and we underdo the actual just *doing*, and helping them to do. For me, I would probably have more classroom observation and reflection on those, and listening to stories and just sitting around talking about teaching: "How's it

going? What did you do today? How did that work?". It is a bit more time intensive but, as Head of College, I've seen everybody enrol in teacher training and what a struggle it is, and how much workload it puts on people. It's just bloody-minded, pig-headed stubbornness that's required to get through the thing, and *most* of the people say, "Well, I got some really good stuff out of it, but most of it was a waste". Some of the people that have done plenty of education before that, they're good to go, but other than that it's a real challenge.

I do think it's *really*, really valuable, everyone doing teaching training or doing some education. When I first started, there was a thing called teacher training that was in Christchurch. I got three weeks, three times maybe, when I would go up to Christchurch and I would sit around with all the other starting teachers and we basically looked at this is how you teach, so how to survive in a class, what not to throw at the students, how to write a lesson plan, what moderation was required at the time, and things like that. It was all really, really practical stuff, and some cultural things, and diversity things too, so those sorts of basic issues that we deal with. We'd get three weeks and then I'd come back here for three months. As part of my teaching here, I had to do a bit of reflective practice, and then I'd go back for the next three weeks and take some of my reflections along with me. We did classes with the class too. There were maybe 20 other people in there, doing everything from Law through to Nursing. I got to teach them Maths, and they got to teach me some Law or whatever, and then we critiqued each other. We'd talk about it: what was good, what wasn't good, what stuck in our mind, and what stuck in our craw. It was really good. *That* was quite formative; that's how I learned to formalise my teaching a bit, so *that*, I think, was really, really, really useful. I think teacher training and development needs to look a bit more like that, rather than the formal qualification as it's currently structured. It needs to be more applied. It's the way that we talk about teaching everything else here. Like I said, I did a Graduate Diploma in Education once upon a time. It was at university, and they stood at the whiteboards and wrote on the whiteboard "Don't write on the whiteboard", and they showed us PowerPoints about not giving PowerPoints!

In most areas, the Polytechnic is 100% an institution that has workplace-based experience. I mean we try and teach IT by having computers set up a lot like they would be in industry. We have students doing development, and actually developing the type of software they'd be developing if they were out there. We build a *house* in Carpentry. We get students to cook food and dish it up, and then we reflect on those things. But, at most, we reflect a bit, and there's *some* theory. My gut feeling is that in the 'teaching people how to teach' space, we've got those three elements, but the proportions are not the same as what we advocate for. We have much more theory, and then we have quite a lot of reflection, and a little bit of doing. They're actually *doing* a hell of a lot, because they're teaching full time, but that's not what we actually use to inform the programme. That's my gut feeling, that the balance could be better.

I have two items with me that are about my passion for Maths, and about things that I don't really understand but I love having conversations with people about... So, the first item is a Klein bottle, and the second is a Möbius strip. They're both about Maths concepts.



Image 13 – Klein bottle and Möbius strip

A Möbius strip is made by a two-dimensional shape. It's just a strip of paper, which you need to twist through a third dimension to make it a single surface. It's just this idea of being able to *play* with things. If I cut this whole thing in half, right through the middle down the length, what happens? There's still one strip. The real fun is, if we cut it *again*, what happens? It doubles in length; it's half the thickness but it's twice the length. It's still only one thing, and it's still got a twist in it. This is a branch of Maths called 'Topology', which is all to do with shapes and how things hang together. We don't teach it here at all, but it doesn't stop me from talking to people about it, because it's interesting. If I cut it a third time, it becomes two loops that are intertwined; one whole loop and a second, completely independent loop, but they're looped inside of each other. And you can ask questions like, "If I gave it two twists at the start, what would happen?". It's just that ability to *play* with things; to me, that's what Maths is really about, it's just playing with numbers.

The Klein bottle is a three-dimensional thing, but you can't actually make it, because you have to take it through a fourth dimension. With the Möbius strip, I started with two

dimensions and I twisted it through a third dimension; the Klein bottle, you start with three and you twist it through a fourth, which you can't do. It's a three-dimensional projection of a four-dimensional concept. It's supposed to only have one surface, so if you put something in the middle, it should come back on itself. Again, it represents *playing* with Maths concepts and having conversation starters about Maths, and that's why it's always been really important to me.

Another meaningful item for me is the 'Abramowitz and Stegun Handbook of Mathematical Functions'. I started learning Maths and playing with Maths when I was a child, and my dad had this big book. It's just got everything in it: all different maths functions, and logs, and things like that. There's a small section about three quarters of the way through which is just *black*. The rest of the book is fine and then you've just got this black section, which is where I, as a child, used to thumb it.

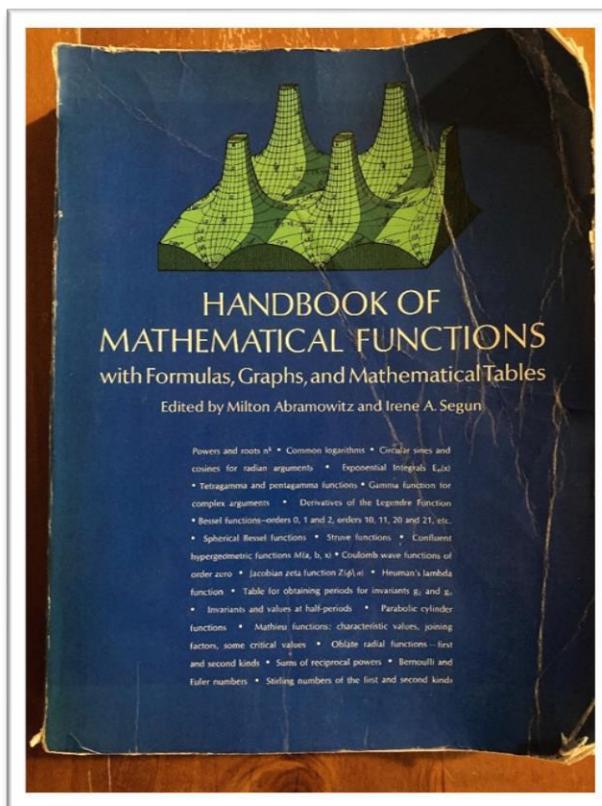


Image 14 – Abramowitz and Stegun Handbook of Mathematical Functions
(photo credit: Richard Nyhof)

That section is the prime factorisations of all the numbers up to 10,000, so if you look at any number, you can figure out if it's a prime number, and what numbers make it up. It's basically the building blocks of playing with numbers and, as a child, I was always at that bit of the book. I might see a taxi go past and it was number 1428, and I'd think let's have a look at that number! So, this represents, from my dad, my love of playing with numbers. It's something from my childhood.

Adrian's Story

"I think excellence is when teachers can read a classroom and kind of work out, 'Right, so what are your aspirations? What do you want?', and work around that."

I worked in kitchens from when I was 16. I was very good at school academically, but I just had a drive to work in kitchens, so I entered as soon as I could. I trained as a chef, and worked as a chef for a number of years, then I sort of fell into education when I was 27. When I first came into education, it was a foreign landscape for me. I was quite obedient in that landscape initially, because it was quite a comfortable lifestyle compared to what I had as a practising chef; it was just completely different. So, I sort of conformed and didn't really ask any questions about why we were doing what we were doing.

A couple of years into my teaching, I just kind of realised that there was an *organic* nature to learning in practice, unlike formalised education, which is organised and fragmented and siloed. In my early teaching career, I taught in a trade area, and there was this concept (and there still is this concept to an extent) that theory and practice are separated in teaching trades. So, we'd go and sit down and do theory, and then we'd go do the practical stuff we wanted to do. There's no real issue getting young people involved in the practical aspect of the trade, but the theoretical part of that is switched off, and it was very much a case of the master-apprentice pedagogy, which is dominant in culinary arts. That was prolific in teaching theory, so it was just "copy down what I say", and move on. For me, though, I was just desperately trying to figure out how to engage kids for two hours, literally "how do we make this fun?". In that desperation of trying to make things engaging, I came up with different approaches to teaching and learning. One of the initial tasks I set myself was a totally applied course. It was a unit standard back in those days, but it did have some theory attached to it. I thought, well, technically speaking, we don't really need to fill in any paperwork; we've just got to answer a couple of questions about the practical elements... I thought that maybe we'd try not writing anything the whole time, and just try engaging the students differently for the whole session. I looked at everything that students were expected to write, and thought about how to turn that into an *active* activity, rather than a passive one. Then, at the end, I just said, "Well, here's all the notes of what we've covered today". I asked the students how they felt about it, and they responded well to it. Then I just moved through each little session and tried to change it; over a period of time, I changed the whole course. My thinking was *not* informed by theory, but informed by just observing human behaviour, just looking at how people were reacting to things. The theoretical understanding of how teaching and learning works only happened much later in life.

When I look back on when I was at school, it was not like that! And sadly, I've got a young daughter and it's still similar in many respects. When I was studying Culinary Arts, I instantly

just thought this is, excuse the French, but bollocks... it just was. The curriculum was based on a 110-year-old curriculum that hasn't changed. The actual dishes within it are primarily from that period too, developed by a French chef called Escoffier, who codified things. Cooking is organic, and cooking is based upon cultures, and all kinds of things. How can we take something holistic and organic, and subjective to culture, and say, "No, we'll just make it French, and we'll codify it this way so that it's easy"? I was working in kitchens in Dunedin, and learning all this French stuff and whatever, and I was like, "What's this got ---? And why, why are you doing this?". Then I had an exam on cuts of animals, and I had to learn the cuts in French. I'd think, "Well, if I was at work, I'd just open the book and say, that's the cut; why do I have to rote learn it?". All of that stuff was just *safe*... So, I kind of already had an inkling that things were not right at a young stage; that way of learning that was "Well, we've got to do the theory, sit down, suck it up, fill in the book, and then there's a test".

Interestingly, I didn't finish my qualifications the traditional way. In the past, you had to do one year of full-time study, then you had a compulsory gap year to get industry experience, then you'd come back for part-time or full-time study. When I came back for my second part of study, towards the end of that, I had to go on work experience and I got offered a job at a really good restaurant, in a really good position. I was torn between my studies and this job, so I went and spoke to my lecturers. They said, "Take the job, finish your quals later!", so I did. Five years later, I went up to Cromwell and did a couple of practical exams. They'd said, "Here's the books, study them", but what was really interesting is that I didn't go to Tech; I didn't engage in any of the theory that they did, yet I still got the top mark in the country for the theory exam. It was basically because you just had to rote learn it. And it was *totally* disconnected to what I was doing in industry. I remember turning up to my final practical examination, and I had to cook cervena, a venison product, even though I was working in this restaurant where we had just won the national competition for cervena cookery. They still said, "No, you have to come and cook it in front of us on this date". I arrived, they gave me the piece of meat, and I said, "Sorry, you've butchered this incorrectly, I can't cook that piece of meat", and I realised they didn't even know what they were doing! So, from a relatively young age, I was thinking what is this thing called education? What are the powers behind it? What are the drivers? Why are these people here? Why are they allowed to legitimise this knowledge that is organic within the practice? And who are they to say that they are *better*, and they are the authority, when I can see flaws in even a simple practice level. I kind of always knew that I was asking those questions.

That's not what drew me to education though. I fell into it... I literally just walked into Polytech to say "G'day" to my ex-lecturers, and they said, "We have a job", so I just started. I sat in on a lecturer's class. He said, "This is how we teach soup", and then I had to repeat what he did, and he watched me and gave me feedback on it, and that was my education. Later in that first year, I went to Teachers College. It was *amazing* because I did a one-week intensive course and learned about motivation: student motivation, basic concepts of

motivation... Up until that point, I'd thought everyone was in the class to be like me, and of course they weren't! So, all of a sudden, I learned about affiliative motivation, and intrinsic, extrinsic; all those reasons why someone's there in class, and I was like, "Oh! They don't want to be like me? OK, maybe they want to be like them!". The deeper understanding comes much later in my career, but that was a real moment for me.

We have a saying in our school about when you transition from a cook who teaches to a teacher who cooks. Some people never transition, but that's the identity transition that you have to go through. I've seen myself as a 'teacher who cooks' for a *long* time now... You have a responsibility at least to redevelop your profession in that sense. One of the challenges we have in our profession, and it's probably the same in others, I suspect, is that, traditionally, there's a persona that they recruit, because the curriculum is so French, and is so dominated by fine dining and all that stuff. So, they recruit males who work in fine dining, and then the system perpetuates itself. Those people are very successful as professionals, and come in saying, "Naturally, I'm a leader". But, as a lecturer, you've got a lot to learn, and that's a hard blow for somebody. It's like, I *know* you're really good at your craft, you're just terrible at engaging with students. Some people can't deal with that, and they have to move on; some people get it, some people muddle their way through it...

For me, I think, initially, I came in from industry and was more of a gatekeeper. I was very functionalist in my role; it was very much "the *purpose* of this education is for you to enter into this industry. I will help navigate who enters, so that those people don't have to worry about it". That was maybe my first year or two. Then you start realising that, actually, you're dealing with people, with humans and emotions and all of that. You can continue to put up the big brave façade or you can be, "OK, yes, I can add emotion in there and I can connect with you". With me, as I was experimenting with different things, I was lucky because I was working with somebody senior to me in a programme, and he was a disobedient thinker too. Because I'd been successful as a chef in industry, I got away with challenging things a bit... I was kind of playing with things, because I knew I could get away with it. Sometimes, I was doing it behind closed doors; I would literally shut the door and do some crazy stuff. You're kind of doing it in secrecy, because it's not the norm. Everyone else is there with their overheads and stuff, asking "How fast can you write that is legible enough that I can read it and tick it?". That is the game, and there's no learning happening. It's what I call 'the performance of education'; you're just performing, you're not really educating!

My skills, my teaching skills, and my awareness, have definitely changed over time. I think in the early days, my approach was very much informed by observations and things like that, where *now*, I tend to be informed by that, *and* by an understanding of the theory which is going on too, which can help explain things at times and make sense of it. That aspect has definitely changed. It's interesting; we get some people who come to our school, other polytech lecturers, who need to upskill to teach on diplomas, and they're very interested in

the pedagogy of what we do and how we do it. For me, I think it's not really *skills* that I've developed, it's actually a philosophy. It's your philosophy that's the driver; once you unlock that part of things, then you can make change. It's a whole mind-shift between, say, structure and agency: Who is in control of education? Is it you and all your structures, or are you truly giving students some *agency* within a structure? *That's* the stuff, *that's* the skills you need. To some extent, as a team and as a school, that is our philosophy. Within our team, there are people who are very pragmatic, and there are structuralists and functionalists as well, but we all know each other's strengths. There are some things that we teach, for which there are definitive answers, like food costing, so you need people who teach like that. It's black and white, there's no grey (unless it's how you interpret the figures). You've got the real pragmatists too, who are all "Great! How do we make it happen?", and then you've got your structuralists as well, so that keeps the balance in check. I think it works really well... Those tensions do exist, but, I think, as a team, as a group, we've got a good mix and we know it.

Thinking about 'excellence', it's a funny word. What does it mean? It's so woolly and fluffy; it's totally subjective! But I think, for me, an excellent practitioner is somebody who can facilitate some form of transformation in a learner. That happens at different levels, for different people, you know; for some people, transformation is just getting a job. It's about breaking a cycle, and that's huge! I think excellence is when teachers can read a classroom and kind of work out, 'Right, so what are your aspirations? What do you want?', and work around that. So, I think excellence is really that ability to see, and understand, and develop strategies around that. My lens is always clouded, or however you want to view it, through humanistic principles, which again come back to agency. Of course, in the early part of my career, excellence was about getting my students a job, and seeing so many students working at reputable places, and all that kind of thing. That would be how my first portfolio read; I got that first award when I'd been teaching for six years, which was the minimum time before you could apply. I still thought that my role was more about *training* than true education, so yes, I'd trained these people and they're doing well, and they're enjoying their education... I think great teachers are ones who can do that, but who also make the student feel like they're becoming part of the profession, and that professional identity is developed within their learning.

The first time I got nominated to apply for the Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award was after a student nomination for an internal OP award. At the time, I was experimenting with videos. It seems so weird now, but it was a big thing at the time! I was filming our demonstrations in the kitchens, and I was putting them on YouTube, making them freely available... But it was innovative at the time, and we managed to then get them onto an iPod which had just come out, so there was a bit of 'whizz-bang and wow' stuff. We were doing good things with industry too, and had good relationships and all that, but I think when I first applied, there was a whole thing of "Oh, you're the techno guy". I really *hated* that for a long time. When I first started here six years before, I didn't even know how to

turn on a computer, so a) I couldn't believe I got an award for this, and b) I really hated that, "Ahhh, you're the guy with the technology". For me, it wasn't about technology at all. I got paired with a mentor to help me think through my application; we'd talk about things, then I'd go away and write about them. Then yes, I won; I just got lucky or whatever it is, I don't know. I felt quite strange for a long time. You'd get invited to go and talk to people, but there are not many males in the trades who are recognised for good practice, which I didn't realise. It's weird; they'd say, "Oh no, we've got heaps of *females* that can go out and talk about this, but we need a bloke who can go and talk to plumbers, and talk about doing things differently". I'd go and talk to these plumber guys, but they'd just attack you; it was *horrific*. I mean, I was doing things like, instead of writing down how a process worked, I'd get students physically acting it out. So, I got these trades guys doing, well, this is bread, and this is how we make bread, so physically, you act out the parts of the process. They thought it was complete and utter nonsense...

The experience of applying for the award as a team was very different. It was much more difficult to present a collective voice, having to get all five voices, and get them to weave in a way that sounded connected. Our mentor was really good in that situation; we had lots of conversations, and then she helped us to create the shared voice. We'd worked as a group for a long time, and the weight behind our application was this whole new pedagogical approach to our degree programme. I think that's where they were like "Wow! This is quite fresh and innovative, and student-centric". We'd designed the programme, and had got it approved. We wrote about our understanding of what we were doing, and had a bit of theory behind it. I think that was useful, that we were saying "Here's why we did it, and here's how it links" and so on. There are not many teams that have won a national award, but most of the ones that *have* won have come out of Hospitality, which is interesting. We've recently completed some research with industry, looking at capabilities. What's the number one thing they want? It's teamwork.

In terms of whether the award has had any impact on me, I would say the immediate impact, the simple impact, is that I felt comfortable to open the door, and say, "I'm not a weirdo anymore!". I'd say the award gives you 'cultural capital', that little thing that means people can say, "It's not wrong, what they're doing. It must be right". So, there's a sense of self-empowerment that comes from that. Academy members are always asked what they are giving back: What's the impact? What's the change? But the actual impact is more personal, its internal; it's hard to measure but there's a sense of self-confidence and self-belief. On top of that, when we say "Well, we're going to break new ground and do a single degree. There's never been one in the southern hemisphere, let's just go for it", it gives you that confidence to believe "We can do this!". I think that's very internal.

I'm not sure that excellence can be taught. I believe it's a philosophy. I think you can tinker around with helping people come up with new teaching, but, ultimately, teaching has to come from a philosophy. I've looked at teachers who are maybe not the best, and I've seen

processes come in and help refresh them, and they try doing some new stuff, but it doesn't tend to last. I think it *has* to come from within, personally. Because I'm so humanist in my approach, I believe there are people who look at things more through that lens, and their philosophy is what drives them. For me, the people who I think are great teachers are people who genuinely come from a position of care. One of the great downfalls of what I think are good teachers is that they care too much, and they self-sacrifice at the expense of themselves. I think people who come from a position of genuine care, and are doing things in the best interests of their learners, tend to make great teachers. It's interesting with the Review of Vocational Education on at the moment; some people are like, "Oh well, we'll just let that unfold and what will be will be", whereas I'll say, "But we can influence it to an extent. We can have some say". I think you can see that carried through into a classroom; you can see how there are some people who think, "Well, this is what I need to do, and this is my function". Have you not seen that things are changing, and that you should be reacting and trying to move with them? But they think it's not part of their role.

I've been at OP for 17 years now. Without doubt, it's the students that keep me here. There *has* been a tension in my teaching career; that point when you go from serving the industry to serving the student. That's actually something that the Minister of Education has noted about the Polytechnic sector is that, deep down, the ideology is to focus on the student, whereas ITOs focus on the industry. We need to balance that; I have this dual identity which I talk about all the time. It's about still having authenticity and a sense of mana really within the industry and those relationships, and having to honour their needs, and then having to then work with the student and help with *their* aspirations. So, I act in different ways in those different environments; when I'm with industry, I will talk and act in a certain way, and then, with my students, I will talk and act in a different way. It comes back to the cook who teaches or the teacher who cooks, and almost maintaining those two identities. You *have* to.

Things do change over time, of course. For example, when I got into this, I didn't know what it was called at the time, but I knew it felt good; I looked at the unit standard, and it said, "Must make a broth soup and a cream soup and a purée soup", so students had to make these things, and they had to make it *twice*. Then the judgment criteria said, "as per industry requirements". I looked at that and thought, "I'm the establishment, so I can say what it could be". So, my early experiments with the practical nature of things were, "If I teach you this concept of what a purée soup is, and I show you it and you make it once, we can tick that. The second time, I'll allow you to interpret that concept any way you want and create your own, for your own inspiration, maybe there's a chef that inspires you or whatever". The students got into that, and we started videoing them, because it was really amazing; there were so many different interpretations of what they were doing, and we'd invite industry people in to see what the students were doing. Then someone said to me, "That's called project-based learning", and I thought "Wow! Is that what it's called? It's a thing? They just like it!". What I'm getting at here is that we were doing this back then,

before it became popular. Now we see a *lot* of project-based learning in my discipline. We were maybe five years ahead of anyone, at the time, and we just trickled it right through our whole programme. We prototyped the degree in our certificate programme, before we designed the degree... the Bachelor of Culinary Arts, would allow us to have project-based learning right through it. So that was a really big development for us. Recently, we've been working on holistic marking schedules. We look at the learning outcomes, and what As, Bs, and Cs look like in the learning outcomes, then we'll have an in-class activity for students to do. We also allow them to do *post*-class activities to reflect and demonstrate their learning. There are other forms of evidence they might have too, maybe from a workplace, so we're making this really open with as many opportunities as possible for students to demonstrate learning outcomes. Our plan is that this can easily transition into a work-based model as well. It's still simulated, it's not truly organic and it's not truly authentic, but we're trying to get into that space.

There are challenges everywhere. At a school or department level, it might be philosophical barriers in terms of what the educator believes and sees their role as. At an institutional level, your challenges are more structural. You have a CEO who's saying, "This is brilliant, this is the future, go do this", and then you get into it, and find that there are technical or structural challenges. So, then you have to find the people in the system who know the grey areas or know ways around things. Those networks are important to figure out.

My motivation has changed over time too. Once upon a time, like I said, I wanted people to grow up and have the great career that I did, and it's been very fortuitous for me. I've been very critical of the fine dining world, and its narrow lens on things, its behaviours, and all that kind of thing. *However*, I worked in that world, and that world opened doors for me, so I have to acknowledge that. I think now, though, for me, it's that whole thing about human development, and human growth. I've seen people who've been in gangs and been working as prostitutes, and they come and study, eventually getting their degree after five years. It changes their life, just by *breaking* the cycle of getting a job. They might be a B or C grade student, but how can you compare that to somebody who's an A+ student, who's cruised through education, and it's all been for mum and dad? That's how I view it. My younger self would probably say, "Oh, you big softie!", but eventually, with time, you really realise that it's this 'catch and release' thing. You've only got these people for a short period of time, you know, but the reality is the content and practice they're going to have for out there in the world. You can maybe teach them some concepts, maybe teach them some professional skills - survival skills, the soft skills - and the *confidence* in themselves to succeed, and that's pretty much all you can do.

I don't know what the future holds. It's interesting because I've asked myself this a bit recently. I'm probably getting to a point where I will maybe move away from operational things. Technically, I'm an academic leader, which just means I get a whole lot of headaches; it's nothing glamorous, but it comes with a title! I'm more in the postgraduate

space now, so I'm probably wanting to spend more time with mature learners who are looking at doing different things. Transformation is a big thing for me; you tend to see more of that in a mature student, and I'm a bit more inspired by that these days. The school kid who's doing it because mum and dad want him to get a degree, I call it playing 'little shops', and I can see its limitations, so I'll probably be moving more into the postgraduate space.

In terms of teacher development in tertiary education, at a basic level, it would be good to just have some! It doesn't happen in every institute, so I know that Otago Polytechnic is blessed by that. I went through Teachers College and did a Certificate in Adult Teaching. It took me five years; it was *painfully* slow. I think I would like to see teacher development that is more reflective of the philosophy and culture of the school and of the programme. I feel that there's a disconnect at the moment; the development is very theoretical, it's still heavily text-based, and still performing to certain expectations, as opposed to being student-centric. Teacher education should *embody* those principles. If you are a new teacher, what are the issues in your classroom? What are the theories that can explain that? We don't need to know about these other theories that you may put away somewhere in your knowledge bank or not. You learn all this stuff, but what's the problem in *your* world? It's very Freire-ian, but I believe in that; that way, the teachers become interested in what is going on in their world, and explaining it, and that can create more intrinsic motivation to become curious later. The role of teacher education is not to say, "I've taught you this, and you've got these basic skills now"; it should be to make teachers curious for the future, and to *ignite* curiosity. Once I started seeing, "Oh, there's a theory that explains that", and "There *is*? ", it changed for me. So, its role should be to ignite, not to box tick.

I have a couple of things that are reflective of my journey. They're not very technical, but they're basically personal stories. The first is a recipe book from students, but they're quite different recipes: For example, one is a recipe for a market, "Take 10 kgs of stress, 42 hours of no sleep, 2 cups of ... ", that kind of thing. Others acknowledge that there has been a transformation; there's some quite personal stuff in there too. There's one that says, "I think it's a great opportunity for young people who have no ambition or goals in their current lifestyle to step into a challenge and enter the world of possibility". Some students included personal family recipes, like 'my grandmother's secret recipe'. So, for me, it encapsulates a little bit of their stories, and that's just really personal. There's a letter from a student, which is basically a 'thank you': "you have given me confidence that I didn't always know I had in me". You feel very touched, you know, when students give you this sort of thing... it's really quite nice.

The other thing is my most favourite and treasured item, without question. This has an *amazing* story behind it. It was created by a patisserie chef at a place in Auckland. He was 64 at the time. I first met him when he came down to our conference in 2016, and he did a workshop with us. In that workshop, they were talking about design and how it works, and

this guy said, "Oh my god, I've just met my people; I've just met people who understand how I think, I can't believe this!". Because he worked at this institution in Auckland, they'd pressured him to do his degree for ever and ever and ever. After that workshop, he said "I want to come and do my degree with you guys". And he did his degree with us through accreditation of prior learning. But what's most powerful about this is his story; the story of him, and his upbringing, and his experiences in education, and the people who believed in him. We showed him some of Welby Ings' thinking, and he went and approached Welby, and had some conversations with him. Then he developed this beautiful book, which is the story of his life, and it's *all* about humanist education.

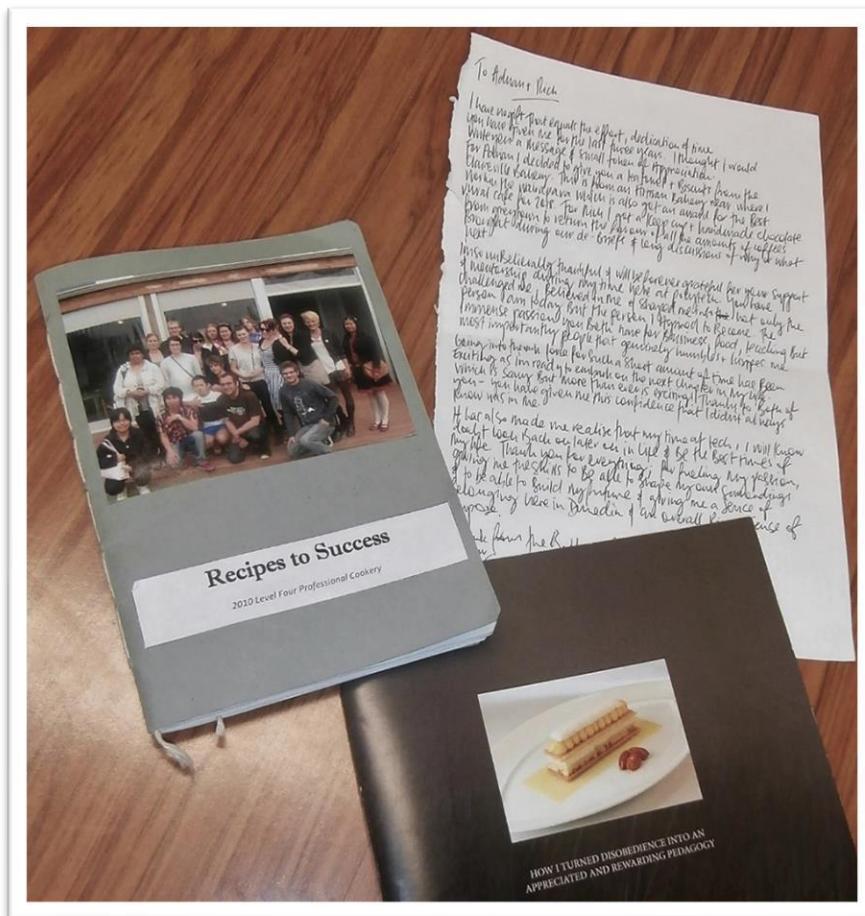


Image 15 – Treasured stories

It's basically a lot of the things I believe in: "Can a disobedient teacher positively influence a disobedient learner?". He writes about things like 'assignment disobedience', which "concludes with a word count slightly larger than was specified... Some (assignments) are required tasks, one completes them to obtain a grade that serves to increase one's ability to pass a subject, but occasionally we enter into an assignment with something deeper than a desire to score; we see the inherent value of a question and exploring it, and we forsake limitations that might constrain the richness of our commitment". And basically, it goes

through telling the story about him, and it's beautiful, and it's poetically written. There's this beautiful picture of him "forced to hold a pencil the wrong way round, I am left-handed", and then you see the humanistic principles that are coming through, and role modelling from people, and where he learned these things. He's a *remarkable* individual, a remarkable, remarkable person. But the thing that is amazing about it is that he thought education had failed him his whole life, and then he finally felt like, "Wow, there is a place for me in education. There is a way that I can express myself". He created this book when he was 64; he had no need to really do this, he did it because he *wanted* to do it, and it's just a *remarkable*, remarkable story.

It's something that I just dip into occasionally, and it's beautiful, beautiful stuff. I share it with my colleagues every now and then: "Oh, just have a read of this", and they go "Wow!". It's guided by principles but, basically, it's guided by *values*; his whole world was guided by these values, and so you don't really need to theorise around whether or not it's correct. It's about doing the right thing, and, for me, that's without question one of the most remarkable things I've ever read.

Daniel's Story

"There really haven't been many years when I haven't done any personal self-development at all. I've always had something on the go, and I think it's a good way to be in the shoes of the learner, and not only in the shoes of the facilitator or teacher. I think it's a good way to be."

I describe myself as a Swiss-born Kiwi. I came to New Zealand in 1980, at the tender age of 20 years old, and I've been here pretty much since then – I had a 10-year stint in Switzerland, Australia, Brunei, and India, but then returned to New Zealand in 1992. I think I've always been a person who looked for adventure, and different experiences, and that was the main reason why I left Switzerland. Before that, I'd been working quite a bit in hotels. I started my chef's apprenticeship when I was 15½, in a ski resort called Pontresina, just next to St. Moritz, one of the bigger ski resorts in Switzerland. It was 4½ hours away from home by train. I can still remember my dad dropping me off and leaving, and there I was in staff quarters. I didn't know anyone, and I started work the next day as an apprentice. It was in that vocational education setting, really hands-on learning; mainly workplace-based, with an eight-week block of tertiary college every year. That's how I started. I have quite extensive experience in the workplace, as a chef in the hospitality industry, working my way from apprentice all the way to Executive Chef-level with Hyatt International. I was Executive Chef to the Sultan in Brunei for more than five years, then in New Delhi at the Hyatt Regency, then returned to New Zealand, working in Christchurch and Queenstown in executive chef/manager roles in hotels.

After 24 years in the industry, I realised that I wanted a better work-life balance. I already had a connection with the Head of School here at OP; when I was Executive Chef in Queenstown, I did assessments for the apprentices on the Cromwell campus, and I also had a lot of apprentices that came either to Cromwell or to Dunedin for their block courses. For me, it was always kind of closing the loop a little bit: Having done my own apprenticeship, having had experiences in the hotel industry as a chef, then as an Executive Chef, bringing it back to having apprentices to kind of close that loop. I always believed that I had the opportunity to learn on the job, being taught by great chefs, so I wanted to support apprentices getting their qualification as a chef as well. So, in 1999, I had the opportunity to come here for a job interview, and got the position of chef lecturer.

We still had the old City and Guilds qualifications, and the New Zealand 753 series at the time. The external assessment for that used to be a three-hour exam, and if you didn't get at least 50%, you failed the whole qualification. That always made me a bit uncomfortable... for it to be totally exam-based, I think that's a bit *tough* for students; the possibility of being disappointed was pretty big. Anyway, probably a year or so after I arrived, we started looking at unit standards, and thinking about moving from an exam-based final assessment to more continuous training and learning and assessing. We used unit standards for quite a

few years. Then in 2016, we started looking at the development of our *own* qualification, moving away from the *National* Diploma in Hospitality Management, which was unit standards-based, to a New Zealand Diploma in Hospitality Management, with our own courses, and our own programme. I think that's when we changed the whole thing again, flipping everything on its head again, and starting over. So, from an educational point of view, I've now got 20 years of educational experience, along with 24 years of industry experience. That's quite a substantial amount of work, that I can now bring into this present role, and it's been a big journey with ups and downs.

Before coming into education, I would say that mentoring was important for me. I think the mentoring role is a big part of hospitality, because it's quite a tough environment. When I was doing my own apprenticeship, *my* chef was a keen cross-country skier. He always encouraged us to ski in the winter, and run in the summer, and he wanted us to be involved in the local community. I always enjoyed that, because he always reminded us that, in this industry, you have to look after your health; if you don't, you can't do that job on a 10- or 12-hour basis like we do in hospitality kitchens. So, for me, the mentoring always started from there, and I appreciated that kind of thing, that somebody actually looks after your well-being outside of work and not just in the workplace. He was a hard taskmaster, don't get me wrong! He was pretty tough to work for, but that nurturing and mentoring maybe made up for some of the toughness that you experienced, especially as a 15- or 16-year-old. So, giving that back to my apprentices and mentoring them was certainly one of those things that I took very seriously. I remember one apprentice who actually started off as a breakfast cook. I worked with him during breakfast to get the standards to the level they should be at in a hotel. He was a real rough diamond but, eventually, I was able to offer him an apprenticeship. Then, after three years, he was actually a very good practitioner in cookery, and I think that was a good example of how you can mentor somebody who *could* have gone off the rails, if there hadn't been somebody there to maybe get him on the straight and narrow, and show him the way.

It was just after my own apprenticeship that I started mentoring others. I was working in Montreux, in the Swiss-French part of Switzerland, and I was only just 18. I had a role where I had to train other people, the apprentices for one, but also the younger commis chefs. I remember one of them was 24 years old; I was 18 and his so-called supervisor, so that was a bit challenging at times. How do you mentor somebody that's older than you? What kind of leadership style do you have to be able to show to achieve that? I think that's probably where I learned that you have to work *with* people and not expect them to work *for* you - that's really not the way to achieve it; it's more about you working *with* them and you having a common goal. The common goal for us was to run that section of the kitchen as effectively as possible. I think that was quite a good little indication early on of how I wanted to lead and manage things in the future, when I think about apprentices in the workplace, *and* my staff in general, but also in education. I know when I said, 18 or 20 years ago, that "My students are my customers", people looked at me like I'd lost the plot:

"They're the students!", but I always said that, without them being here, bums on seats, I wouldn't have a job, and without them being happy and satisfied with what I do, I wouldn't keep my job. That feedback from the student was already really important to me back then. I always felt that they are my customers, and I look after them as I would do in the workplace.

In the 1980s, I worked for American companies for quite a bit: the Hiltons, the Sheratons, the Hyatts. There was a guy called Ken Blanchard who came and basically said, "Why don't you invert the pyramid? Why do you run hospitality with this hierarchy of the traditional pyramid 'Kitchen Brigade' system? There are other ways of doing this, and this is why I think it would work". That really appealed to me because, again, it says, I'm now serving my staff, and the managers or supervisors in my team, to, in turn, serve the customer. I always feel that the terminology 'serve' is misconstrued a bit, because, to me, it doesn't mean subservient, and I think that's the part which people think it *is*; but in hospitality, we are a service *provider*. Sure, we've got products with that, but overall, the product and the service side of hospitality can't really be separated; they're very often linked, so food comes with service. To me, it was always important that I was able to make sure that my staff and my supervisors really put the emphasis onto the customer, and not onto me, because now the customer is on top, and not the manager. I always kind of felt that my role was to make sure that they've got everything they need to do the job; that they got the training to do the job, that the support mechanisms are in place, that they got a work-life balance to be able to do the job. If I can do that as a manager, they in turn can look after our customers.

It's the same thing with our students here; I kind of try to bring that work-life balance in a bit, and make sure that they've got everything possible to do their learning, their tasks, their assessments. Moodle is a good example... In my view, we now have an excellent Moodle structure for the students to use as a resource to do their learning outside of class, with activities for maybe pre-reading or for revision after a session. I think that all works really well together. And when we were looking for a way of assessing the capstone project of the 'Management in Action' course, we looked at the Class Notebook option. That has been really successful as a space for the students to use as a platform to share and collaborate in, and then have the individual portfolios, which are assessed. I thought that was a good way of facilitating the learning and making a difference, and putting it in the context of what they want to do today, rather than me telling them what they *should* be doing. It's about actually facilitating their learning and *guiding* them towards the successful completion of a course or a programme. I mean, one of the photos I've got on my wall is a graduation photo of my class; to me, that's the ultimate, that's the outcome, that's what I'm striving for, seeing them on the day, graduating with their Diploma in Hospitality Management. You just feel as proud as punch! That day is one that I wouldn't want to miss. We have a little reception here, pre-graduation, then you walk the walk with your students, and you sit on the stage when they come across; it's *brilliant!* We take those special days

and those experiences with us all the time in life, don't we? And those experiences over the last 20 years of teaching will stay with me, there's no two ways about that. To me, that's sometimes worth more than, say, working internationally as an Executive Chef, earning double the money that I'm on here. That's not what I'm all about, and that's where I think you have to be honest with yourself about what motivates you.

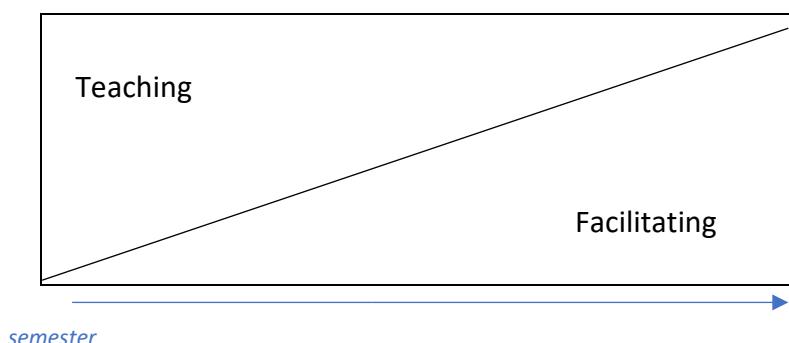
Another thing we've set up is *tracking* where our graduates go. Again, we use technology, but this time it's Facebook, where we've set up an alumni page. Each year, our graduates are invited to join the alumni, and then I can track where they're at workwise. That alumni page is a great resource for them to have as well, because of the network that exists there. Of course, Instagram has taken over a bit in that scenario recently, so for us it's a way of maybe thinking about how we do things in the future.

In terms of critical moments for me, I would say they've probably been around the *changes* in education. Moving from the City and Guilds and 753 series of Cookery qualifications to unit standards was definitely a turning point, realising how you can do things differently. Then, again, moving from unit standards to our *own* programme development was another turning point. That was probably a major one for me... It wasn't about throwing the baby out with the bathwater, but actually saying "This is how we do things at present; are there better ways of doing it?", and looking for gaps, with support from facilitators who each brought a fresh pair of eyes to things. Although they are part of Otago Polytechnic, from our *school* point of view and from my *programme* point of view, they were looking from the outside in. So, that enabled them to say, "Would you consider a different way? Here are one or two things that you *could* consider". I felt supported if I looked for a different way of doing things, and I think that was quite evident in our development. If the facilitators gave me suggestions, and I looked at different ways and said, "OK now, *this* is how I think I could do it", they were supportive of that. It may not necessarily have been the way in which *they* would do it, but it was more around how they thought it would work for me in context with my programme. Another major element of that was having the *autonomy* to make changes. I know that Phil Ker talks a lot about that with the vocational education review at the moment; the importance of having autonomy to be able to try different things.

I think the biggest turning point was making our learning project based. We always kind of *dabbled* with it in the unit standard qualification, but the nature of unit standards is that they are quite prescriptive, so it's very difficult to put them into project-based learning. There are some ways; we tried some and were quite successful. The International Dinner is one example that we still do here all these years later. I was able to think outside the box, and think about how I could make this project-based, applied, real-life scenario learning, with paying customers, 60 covers every night. That's quite a lot for the students, with the amount of experience they have. Situations change all the time too, so you get the dietary requirements, for example, which sometimes you are aware of, sometimes you're not, or I remember one occasion when students wanted to use the old pizza oven around the corner

there, but it rained on the night, so it was a case of, "What do we do now?". It's all those kinds of unexpected situations. That's what you want students to do, to be able to think on their feet and have that reflection-in-action, "What do I do now?". I think that was a great way of implementing a unit standard, but it was much more difficult than it is today, with the courses that we have developed.

When we were looking at redesigning the programme in 2016, the turning point was thinking about capabilities. I knew the *technical* knowledge and abilities that my learners had to grasp, to be able to meet the graduate profile, but we also started looking at transferable *skills*, to help students in future career choices, be it in a management role, say, in hospitality, or if they moved to a different industry. That was really the starting point, when we looked at *both* and said, "OK, we need to include collaboration, because they have to work within teams. We need to be able to put in there that they need to communicate with each other, so how do they do that in a group? What's *appropriate* communication, and what is inappropriate at times as well? What is verbal? What is written?...", trying to get students to understand that there is more than one way to communicate... and in a business scenario, there might be more *appropriate* ways of doing it. That really helped us. We could allow students to be *creative* too, so, although they had to make sure that those technical skills were part of the project that they were planning, they could also show creativity. Towards the end of a project, of course, they have to be reflective, so critical reflection had to be incorporated as well, and we always work with that as a kind of a benchmark. Then, with project-based learning, we knew that it wasn't about us anymore, showing students how to do something... It's actually more about *their* projects, and that automatically gets better buy-in from the student point of view. My role changes from purely teaching, to a mixture of teaching and facilitating, remembering it's a level-5 qualification, so I can't expect them to know it all. I do need to teach some parts, but I can facilitate others. Over the one-year full-time programme, I tend to do more teaching at the beginning of the semester, and facilitate less, and then towards the end of semester, when the capstone comes up, I facilitate more, if not all, and teach less, so it looks like this:



At every stage of that, we have pop-up experiences, so for the first pop-up experience in the training restaurant, I do a lot more teaching and less facilitating. In the middle of the year with the café, it's probably a 50:50 kind of chart, and then at the end of the year, when

we run the food truck, it's much more *them* and a lot less me. By that stage, the students *know* the management processes, and they *know* how to manage an experience for the customers. I've taught them the marketing, the finances, the communication, the management procedures, the standard operating procedures, and cookery techniques, all that kind of thing as well, so now it's actually for them to implement that. Then there's also a reflective project on the end, that I've implemented. I got a big kick out of that this year too; that's one example where the facilitation becomes such a pleasure, because the students went *way* beyond what my expectation was; that's the understanding of finances of when they run a business themselves, all the way from marketing and product development to implementation and control. I couldn't teach this in a classroom, or I would bore them to tears with pie charts! The standard is just so high! If actual hospitality managers in the industry did *half* of this, there would be more successes in hospitality, and less places would go bankrupt after two years. I mean, I mentioned before about graduation, when I get a real feeling of satisfaction with what I've done for the year, but there are these moments too. Students presented their findings to hospitality professionals that I brought in, and these practitioners were gobsmacked! "Wow! What an absolute breadth and depth of information they bring back"; they were just really, really impressed. That sort of thing feels good, when you see your students doing that. I still think it all stems from the basics, and it's applied. *That's* when they do their learning, it really is. It's their *own* project, and that's when you get the buy-in, I think. That's all down to that incredible turning point of what we were allowed to do, with the autonomy we had, and hopefully continue to have, here at Otago Polytechnic. There *are* other ways of doing it. We've got our commercial outlets here, and those let us make it happen for the students, so that they can apply their learning. There is still classroom time, absolutely, but the set-up is very much a collective environment. Students are working in pods, they're working together on their projects, and I can go from one team to the other and support them in that. It's been just great to be able to do that in education, and to see the impact that it can have.

When I think back to my transition from being a professional in hospitality to being an educator, it was really hard at the beginning. I mean, in the industry, you've got the 'train the trainer' kind of systems, so you learn how to train somebody to the standards of your hotel, whether it's a recipe or the way that something is done, say, the buffet that's set up in this way for breakfast. That's all very one-sided in some ways, because it is training your team according to international hotel standards. When you come into a classroom, there are so many different aspects to think about: students' learning styles, disciplinary issues that can arise, the different *maturity* levels of students, you know, because we've got mature students that come for a change of career, which is very different to a school-leaver of 18, but you have them in the same class and the same scenario. That was a big learning curve, thinking "How on *earth* do I manage that?". I remember when I started, and I asked someone, "Where are your training manuals and your resources?"; "There aren't any"; "*What*?! What do I do then?"; "Well, you teach towards the learning outcome at the end". OK, that sort of made sense to me. When I started, it was Cookery and students had to pass

a three-hour exam. I thought I should investigate what's in the exam, and what's involved, and work out how I could support the students to get to that, then I was told, "And then the rest you just do what you would expect in the industry", and that was my brief. I remember thinking, "My god, where do I start?". I mean, I didn't even know how to put a *lesson plan* together!

Off I went to Teacher's College. I did that over three years, I think, on a part-time basis, night classes and Saturdays usually. I thoroughly enjoyed that. Our teacher was fantastic! He was a real stickler for the idea that what has worked in the past will work in the future as well, so the lesson plan, the organisation, the classroom set-up, the temperature, the shades, or lighting. You could see he was organised, and how his set-up was always important. When you arrived, he had a cup of coffee in one hand and a cigarette in the other, and he's standing outside having a smoke, but inside the classroom everything was organised. That suited me too, because I'm that kind of organised person as well; I'd rather spend half an hour longer in the morning, setting up my class, the board and everything, and *then* have a coffee and wait for my students. I'd rather do that than being last minute, running in with my USB stick, being flustered! Another thing that I had to learn quite a lot about was probably how to deal with classroom discipline. In the workplace, it's easy: you pull them into the office, and you criticise them in private, and you kind of compliment them in public. That's always a principle I stuck to anyway. But if you do that with a student, that could majorly backfire, so you have to be quite careful of how you do things. Our teacher at Teacher's College always had a good little saying... he'd say, "If the behaviour of a particular student influences your teaching, or other students' learning, then it's lecturer or teacher-owned and you have to do something about it. If it doesn't influence you and the other students are still learning, well, it's student-owned, let it go". So, for example, if you're not getting upset about someone's behaviour, and the other students are still engaged, it's too bad for that student who isn't learning because they're on their mobile phone. I always think about something I used in the industry, called the 'circle of control', so what I've got control over, I can do something about; what I haven't got control over, I can't, and I look at education in the same kind of way.

The next step was doing my level-7 Graduate Certificate in Adult Teaching and Learning, here at the Polytechnic. Again, I had really good mentors and facilitators in that process. Then I did my Bachelor of Applied Management, in Food and Beverage Management, which was great, because with the reflective tools, we actually went back to our industry experience, and also part of our educational journey so far, and looked back and said, "OK, I did this; why did I do it?". Finding the theory that actually links with that process, procedure, management style, strategy, or whatever, and then evaluating how you linked those things, and what you learned from that, and so on, was really good. When I think back, now I'm working on my Master's project, over my 20 years in education, there really haven't been many years when I haven't done any personal self-development at all. I've

always had something on the go, and I think it's a good way to be in the shoes of the learner, and not only in the shoes of the facilitator or teacher. I think it's a good way to be.

My skills have obviously broadened over time. At the start of my career, I was purely focused on the kitchen, and the management of the kitchen, of the team, of the standards, of the recipes, of the food, of the menu. I know that's still part of what I do, teaching in Hospitality Management, but there's also the other side, the service side of things. Thinking about the *overall* experience of the customer is important, not just the narrow perspective of a chef, so I think that has definitely changed, that view that the hospitality experience is more than just the food. The other thing, I think, is realising that an old dog can learn new tricks. It's kind of, you know, looking at things and saying, "Yeah, OK, my knowledge is important, but is it actually still that *current*? And if it's not current, how can I bring it back to be? How can I update my knowledge, how can I improve my understanding of my subject?". So, for example, now when I teach Marketing, part of marketing is the information system where we get customer feedback. At the time when I was in the industry, we usually used customer feedback forms on the table, so it was a hard copy, pen, tick boxes, or it was maybe in the customer's room. Sometimes, you might get verbal feedback from the customer at the table, and/or maybe an email, or a fax then, or a phone call. But that's all very different to what's happening nowadays: customer feedback forms are very rarely hard copies, they're more digital. Feedback systems have changed, so you've got Facebook, if you have a Facebook business page, you've got TripAdvisor feedback, and so on, so it's very different than what was current when I was in the industry. That's just one example of how things change and how you have to keep yourself current. You might also think about things like the fact that it's not all good being digital either, because we're kind of over-researched, and there could be a bit of a technology *fatigue* coming in, and then that system doesn't work. At the moment in our café, there's a digital option for people to give feedback, but there's *also* the hard copy, and hard copy has had about 75% *more* uptake than digital. We think everybody wants digital nowadays; well, sometimes not!

That ability to adapt to what is in front of you is part of excellent teaching, in my opinion. You need to be able to adapt to what's in front of you every year, and with every group. I think that you need to look at different techniques all the time too, so one thing that works for me is my trusty pastry paper, as we would call it in the industry, with post-it stickers, and marker pens. Being able to listen to students is important, obviously, but a lot of the students are not always willing to share things verbally. They're quite happy and keen, though, to fill in a little post-it sticker with what they think about the topic, and put it onto the poster so that their voice is heard. I think that's important; sometimes we don't listen to the people who are quiet. Those shy ones, the quiet ones, the ones who are maybe more introvert than extrovert, the ones who are not loud and brash and whatever else, they're quite often ignored. I think that putting them into a bit more of a level playing field means that everybody can have input. We can put it onto the board, and we can discuss it

together. If I come back to project-based learning, I actually *want* students to brainstorm, I want them to collaborate, and that's a really good tool to do that.



Image 16 – Collaborative tools - paper, sticky notes, and marker pens

Another thing that I think is important is the reward. We humans, we want rewards, don't we? I mean, sometimes, I'll just buy a bag of lollies on the way in, or do a little 'market research' with students using treats they like. I remember this one day, probably about four years ago, when I brought in the little mini chocolate bars. I'd bought half of them in the Dairy Milk, which is Cadbury, and half of them in the Creamy Milk, which is Whittaker's. When I said to my students, "OK, just a little market research... You've got two baskets of chocolates here. Would you like to grab one?", 75% grabbed the Whittaker's chocolate, because it was after all the bad news about the palm oil with Cadbury Dairy Milk. Maybe three or six months earlier, before all that news hit New Zealand, the split would probably have been maybe 50:50. Anyway, it's also that reward of saying 'thank you' to the team. I used to do the same thing in industry. After a busy service, and after the kitchen is all cleaned up, I'd come in with a tray of beer and wine for the chefs to say 'thank you'; that reward, that gesture saying 'thank you very much, I do appreciate it', it's quite important.



Image 17 – The importance of rewards

We applied for the Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award as a team, so, again, it was about collaboration and team effort. That's one way in which we have a good team, because we all kind of complement each other. We've got different backgrounds: a good balance of backgrounds in restaurants, backgrounds in hotels, some in finances, like myself, and some who have a background in food and beverage roles. Then we've got some of the team who are local, or from New Zealand, one colleague from the UK, and me from Switzerland. For our portfolio, it was really good to bring all of that together, and to show our thinking through the development of the Bachelor of Culinary Arts programme, which we then subsequently rolled out and got the award for. So, it was a real collaboration, and everybody brought different skills to it. It also added to our bond within the team; I think there's that bond that you develop over something like that. I'm quite pleased that we did it as a team; for me, it's almost more satisfying that it was a team award. I'd won an Otago Polytechnic 'Excellence in Teaching' award the year before, as an individual. I really appreciated that as well. It was the students that put me forward for that, so it was nice recognition from my *learners* that they obviously appreciated what I've done, but it was an individual thing, and then the national award was more about the team. I'm proud of both, and very pleased and satisfied that we achieved this award for the team. It's pretty special.

For me, the main impact of winning is the ability to go to the Ako Aotearoa symposium every year; that's been the biggest gain, I would say, and I can draw inspiration from there. Mingling and networking with people who are excellent in teaching has been fantastic. There's what we can learn from each other's presentations during the conference, but also just through chatting over a coffee or whatever it might be, and the workshops, the dinners together at night... It's just been really, really good to get different ways or different perspectives on what people do, and see the research behind it too; the research to

support different ways of teaching or systems to put in place for student success has been really, really good. I would say one common characteristic of the award winners, or of excellent teachers in general, would be that they are familiar with research; they read research, or they go to conferences, and it informs their teaching. When I first started here, as I said, there were no resources, and there was a lot of ad hoc stuff happening, quickly trying to scramble things together before you run into the classroom. I always knew there had to be a better way of doing it, and through the D4LS process and in my Master's project, I really saw how important it is to use research to inform your teaching: how you put teaching together, and what resources you could maybe use as an example for the students. It's not about thinking there is only one way of doing things, but having a good understanding of what research is out there, how I can facilitate learning, how I can change my thinking from being the 'know-it-all' teacher at the front of the classroom, to the one that has *some* knowledge, and that can facilitate the learning of the students in many other ways. I think that's probably the main characteristic of excellent teaching; don't just do it ad hoc; *think* about it, *plan* it...

Do I think it's possible to develop others to be excellent teachers? Yes, I think I do. It probably comes back to that mentoring again. Being able to mentor somebody, and showing them the way that you're doing things is one way that you could maybe *encourage* them to look at things in different ways: Make it your own, by all means, but this is how I do it, this is where I find it best to think about facilitation rather than pure teaching. I think that can work. We also do a lot of cross-moderation of each other's work, so pre- and post-moderation, and again, there's a lot of coaching and mentoring going on in that way as well, especially when you look at assessment material. Maybe you have an idea and you can say, "Well, you know, could there be *another* way to assess this? Is this maybe too much written work? Can we do it a different way?". The Graduate Profile, if we're honest with ourselves, is what they need to achieve by the end of the programme, but they don't have to do it right from the beginning, do they? So, we can think about different delivery and techniques that suit the students *more*, and support them through their learning.

I take my hat off to people teaching in a university context. I don't know how they do it in a lecture theatre of 400, I really don't. I think excellent teaching is different with smaller groups. They might have that at higher levels at a university, say with postgraduate courses, but here at OP it's like that right from certificate level, and I think class size makes a big difference. We *know* our students, we know their ins and outs; sometimes we know more than we actually want to know, but that's all about that *trust* they have in us, so they can actually unload and tell us how they're feeling, and how the situation outside of Polytechnic might be affecting them. I would say, for us, the difference in excellence is that we *know* our students. We've got an intimate knowledge of their thinking, of their backgrounds, their health, their issues, outside influences that they have to deal with... I think that's a huge difference. There's also the project-based learning, and experiential learning that I talked about. Once you've built that trust and that 'team spirit' within your class, then I think the

project-based learning works, because the students also trust each other, and there's a more collaborative way of working on projects. If they understand why someone maybe can't be there *every* single time, because of work commitments or family commitments or whatever, that understanding is also there in their groups and their teams through that project-based learning, because there's that mutual respect.

In terms of the community, I definitely think that what keeps me here is the students and that yearly intake. What did Forrest Gump say? "Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're going to get", and there's always that first day with a new group of students when you think, "OK, it's a chocolate box here, what am I going to get this year?". Also, when you go into restaurants now, or you're in a hotel, and you see your students everywhere, it's just *brilliant*, it really is! Seeing that success that our students have later on, not just while they're here, is obviously part of it. You see them graduate and then you bump into them again in a restaurant, maybe three, four, five years later; it's incredible. I walked into the 'Crab Shack' up in Wellington, and heard the restaurant manager as I walked in, saying "Oh, hi Daniel!". It's really good to get that kind of buzz. We do work hard, and sometimes we may not get the recognition for it, but in the end, it's work that I enjoy and that keeps me here. I think if you're happy within yourself with what you do, and you get that really positive vibe from the students, that's the main thing. On a personal note, my family is here in Dunedin too. I also enjoy the outdoors, particularly mountain biking, and skiing. We've got such a great environment here; within five minutes you're out of town and you're riding somewhere on a hill and there's nobody around. That probably also summarises my kind of life philosophy, I guess. I've always believed that health is the most important thing, family second, and work third, because I think, without having good health - and nowadays, mental health is a big part of that as well, not just physical - you can't have a good family life, and without *that* support and good life, you actually can't perform in the workplace to an expected level either, so I think those three things are always connected, and I've always believed in that. Maybe that's where the mentoring from my chef comes through: you *need* to look after your physical health and your mental health first. It's key.

Who knows what the future holds? I think about that far too often! I'm thinking of applying for 'four for five' leave; I do like that idea of refreshing yourself, and then thinking again about what you're going to do next. That might be moving to a part-time role, for example, or might be looking at the subjects or courses you teach on. I think that would be something that I could see in my role as well, so not just mentoring and succession planning, but also looking after what I would like to do, thinking about how I can sustain myself for the next five years before I retire. That might be around my passions and motivators *outside* of education, so mountain biking comes into play straight away. I'm doing the Tour Aotearoa in February, cycling from Cape Reinga to Bluff. That's 3000 kilometres of road with my mountain bike, being self-supporting, carrying all the gear and everything, so that's quite a personal challenge. I could see myself wanting to do things like this in the future, not to try to break records or be the best at something, but more for the

experience of doing something like this, pushing yourself for 100 Ks every day, over 30 days¹⁵, and seeing how you cope with that kind of thing. I think it'll be interesting to see.

With teacher development in the tertiary context, one thing I've found lacking is teacher observation; I'd definitely like to see more of that. In our department, I think we do a lot well, for instance, with moderation, with co-teaching, and with coaching and mentoring, but I think that observation, from the outside in again, would be something quite valuable. The last external observation I had was 17 years ago! To me, it's a *must*; you need to get somebody from outside of your team to come in and actually critically evaluate how you teach, and it may have to be more than one session, because a practical is very different to a theory class, for example. For me, that is something that would really add value to our teacher development. Some departments here have two teachers, two lecturing staff in a class, but, in our area, that's not so much the case. A bit more of a uniform approach, and consistency across approaches, throughout the Polytechnic would probably be a good thing. That might be one downside of self-managing teams; allowing people to run their departments with quite a bit of autonomy is great, but sometimes the consistency can fall behind a bit. Mind you, I know that I'm more a systems person, so I feel it's a *disadvantage*; a creative person might think "No, it's good - We don't like consistency!". Finding a balance between creativity and planning, maybe that's the key.

¹⁵ Daniel actually finished in 26 days, on March 14th, 2020, having cycled 120km a day on average.

Steve's Story

"I love being able to share my practice. For me, it comes back to the food; I've always loved it, I'm always passionate to learn something new about it, and I really enjoy sharing that experience."

Before I came into teaching, I did 20 years in hospitality, like every other chef lecturer. I started a wee bit late in the kitchen side of it. When I first left school, I did an apprenticeship as a welder, then I sort of fell into hospitality by working at a local pub, in a little place called Kopu, just outside of Thames. They needed someone to wash the dishes and clean the floor, and it was a bit of extra cash... Next minute, I was there every night, either serving pints or working in the kitchen. I was around 20, and no-one could shut me up, so it was kind of a natural fit to be in a bar somewhere, talking to people and all that sort of thing. I knew almost straight away that was the field I wanted to be in, and I was lucky enough to have fallen into it. I dropped my welding and moved back to Dunedin. I decided to work at the Shoreline and the Southern Cross, and then I went into the THC chain, and it all snowballed from there. Once I'd spent a couple of weeks even in that little pub in Thames, it was pretty obvious what I was going to do for the rest of my days.

I was more on the management side initially. I started off in the kitchen, then jumped behind the bar. The bar led to reception, which led to reservations, and then to Duty Manager, and on and on it went. I always wanted to go back to the kitchen, but was never either allowed or given the opportunity, because I was the one that held the Duty Manager certificate, and the one that knew the floor-plan for the fire-exit, and so on. Eventually, when I transferred to Mount Cook in 1995, I decided that I wanted to specialise a bit more. Another reason was that, as a manager, I was dealing with a *lot* of chefs, and a lot of European chefs that had a wealth of knowledge, and I was trying to tell them what to do without me actually being qualified to do that. I thought I'd take a couple of years off and get my qualifications, but again, as soon as I went into the kitchen full-time, that was it; I knew I was going to stay there. I gave up the managerial side of it, and about \$30,000 a year at the same time! I just delved right into it. I was a real sponge; everything revolved around food, as it still does really. I did my time in some really good places; rose up the ranks and got to be Executive Chef in a couple of hotels and the Christchurch Hospital and that sort of place. It was a *fluke* coming to Polytech. One of the old lecturers asked me to fill in on a practical demonstration, and I thought "Oh yeah, just once". That was ten years ago, then a position came up, and here I am. Seeing a bit of passion from the students, seeing them not having seen something before, and knowing that I could pass that on, was really cool. Even as chefs, too, we learn something every day about the food itself, or how it's cooked, or the mechanics of it, and to see the students bring their own things in, and for me to be able to have a conversation and share my experiences, that was really appealing.

There have been a couple of critical moments for me over that time. One was up at Mount Cook, when I was thinking about going into the kitchen. We were all sitting around, and we were late for lunch, so the exec sous-chef whipped up a summer truffle pizza. That pizza would've probably been worth 60 dollars, with summer truffle just grated over the top of it. We sat round with a little glass of red wine and ate this truffle pizza, and I thought, "This is the life, this is what I want to do". I wanted to learn more about it, like why the truffle, and where's it come from? And again, being that sponge, I wanted to learn everything, so off went the manager's tie and on went the whites. Another *huge* moment for me was when a colleague in Art and Design was doing a project and wanted us to tell stories about our career path. It was when I was talking with a colleague then which really cemented it for me, when you realise that you're a teacher that cooks, rather than a cook that teaches. *That* was a huge turning point! When I heard that, that was when I realised that it's not *all* about the food; it's about communication and getting students motivated, and so on. It had taken about ten years to reach that point, but that's my real focus at the moment: self-determination theory, and Ryan and Deci's work on motivation. Those little turning points, or those little 'eureka' moments, have been markers all the way along to where I am now.

The transition from chef into education was pretty seamless for me. I've got to admit though, the attitude has changed 180 degrees since I first started. Initially, I brought the industry attitude with me, which was very behaviourist. It was "Do what I say, do it this way and that's the *only* way". It took a while but, ten years down the track, I realised that the more constructivist role you have in our line of work, the better it is. Everybody brings their own thoughts to the experience, and it becomes richer just by itself. It was a bit of a gradual shift for me, when I think about it. I went from being a welder, stuck under a welding helmet and not talking to anybody, through to serving in a pub, through to sharing lots of different experiences with people that hadn't had that opportunity before. It was a gradual progression, and one that I definitely resisted for a long, long time, because that hierarchical system in the chef's world is ingrained in you. It takes a lot to turn that around for many chefs.

I do still find that my manner changes when I'm with industry colleagues, compared to when I'm with Polytechnic colleagues or students. There's industry speak, and it's still a very blunt, harsh place to work. That's improving with time, but we know the lingo, and, with 90% of people in the industry, we know what their attitude is going to be towards things like overtime, weekend work and night work, and people not turning up, and so on. I think, because we've seen that shift, our focus as educators now isn't on *telling* people what to do anymore; it's actually about facilitating their learning and being able to inspire someone, rather than jumping on their back or trying to throw a spoon at them! Yes, there's a difference between how we act with the industry compared with colleagues and students here at Polytech, but I think we're actually the bridge or the buffer between them, and I think we can influence both sides.

There's a very ingrained, Francophile way of looking at things that comes out of working in big kitchens where the French way is the only way, and you've had that ground into you. Most kitchens, for a *long* time, were based on the French way of doing things: the mise en place, the brigade system from Escoffier, and all that sort of thing, and there wasn't any other way of doing it. Practice in New Zealand was built from that French tradition. European chefs were brought over to put that framework in place, and no-one changed it, from when we started in the mid-1800s in little cafés at whaling stations and things like that, until probably the 1980s. That was when you started to realise that the most important person in the kitchen was actually the dish-washer, and if you look after them, then the rest of the kitchen works just fine, but if you yell and scream and start chucking things, you're not going to get far at all, *especially* today where people, students, colleagues, just won't put up with that rubbish! And the more that you're involved in education, and the more people you meet and the experiences that you have, you come to realise that you know nothing; you know a little sliver of the French kitchen and that's about it!

For me, excellent teaching is about depth of knowledge, the relationships that you build at every level, and the respect that you earn, through people knowing that they can learn from you, I guess. There are a lot of excellent teachers in our department. I wouldn't describe myself as excellent yet, but I'm working on it! That might be part of my personality, and that's something that I've got to realise, and not beat myself up over. I still want to strive for the best; build patience and build up a skill set that *I'm* happy with, which I don't think I'll ever attain. Our field is so wide, and encompasses so many different cultures and everything else, that you've got to be open every day to every new idea, whether it comes from a first year, just-in-the-door student, right through to a professor visiting from another institute, and everything in between; you've got to be open to those ideas.

We're still learning from each other too. We do a lot of team teaching in our area. There might be two people on a paper, for example, because one's doing the kitchen side and one might be doing the classroom content, then we swap around, depending on our interest and proficiency in whatever part of the craft that we're trying to deliver. Each person in the team has their own specialty, and we can *draw* from that. I would say they're *all* excellent teachers, in my mind.

Applying for the Teaching Excellence Award as a team was an interesting process. We had help from a mentor and were also able to draw on the experiences of other people who had applied. It was a team effort. I don't think it was a *huge* problem having five people's voices in the portfolio; we all pretty much sing off the same song-sheet anyway. We all started with that very behaviourist way of delivery and those French foundations, and we've all seen ourselves come out of Plato's cave! We've all experienced that shift to being

open to accepting other ways of doing things, at different *times* perhaps, but we've all got there, or are nearly there, so we were all on the same wavelength.

Having said that, I was a bit reluctant to accept the award when it first came through. It was a *team* award, and, at the time, I was teaching on levels three and four, and in charge of level three, but the Bachelor of Culinary Arts guys were the ones that were moving us forward. I had a lot to do with the programme in the background, but not much direct delivery. I sort of felt that I was a bit on the outside, so I wasn't sure why I should receive the award. I brought that up with the other guys, and they insisted they wanted me in there. I am grateful for it, but, at the time, I wasn't too sure whether I should accept it or not. The reward itself was fantastic. I was able to buy some gadgets that saved my sanity, halfway through a Master's, that I enjoy very much. I've had a few health problems which have meant that I haven't been able to fly for a long time, and I haven't been able to go to a lot of the Ako Academy conferences every year. That's not ideal, but I have been able to read the material that has come out of those conferences, and that's really worthwhile if you're looking at bringing new ideas into your practice.

I don't know if it's possible to teach others how to be 'excellent'. It depends on what stage you're at personally, I think. If you're just coming into education directly from the very strict regime of a big kitchen, then nine times out of ten, you're going to be a little closed-minded to new ideas. I think it takes time to build your skill set, and to move away from thinking that there is only one way of doing things. I think it takes time and practice and patience and all those different things. I don't think you can just *become* an excellent teacher overnight, because you don't know what you don't know! It's about building up that skill set and building up that knowledge; without doing that, you're looking at a lot of things from just one perspective. I think it comes from life experience too, but until you've done those things, like setting up in front of a classroom full of 40 new students, you don't know what that's like. If you do it by yourself, and you're very insular, you're just drawing on what you know. But if, like we do down at Culinary Arts, you pull together and draw knowledge and experience and conversation from each other and from the class, then you're always learning and growing. Until you experience that, I think you're pushing a boulder uphill if you try and do it yourself.

The community here is incredibly important. I get to work with what I love every day; it's a playground for chefs here! We get to do everything from restaurant work to demonstrations to food truck to out-catering, all sorts of thing in such a safe environment. You very rarely get to do that in industry. When you're an Executive Chef in those bigger places, you're just trying to get things done and put out fires all the time. Here, we see people grow every day. It's a very privileged position to have, and one that lets you be a lot more creative than it would be in industry. We also have a very close relationship with teams in other institutions too. I think we're all in the same boat, and we're all trying to see things a little bit differently.

I've had the opportunity to sit in on a few classes at university and saw how different that context was. I was talked *at* rather than feeling I was part of the conversation. The information was there, but the onus is definitely put back on the student, just because of sheer numbers. I would much rather work in a place like we do, where we have close contact with *all* of our students, nearly one-on-one sometimes, rather than our students just being a number. I appreciate that there's a lot more to it than that, but you can't have a conversation with 600 people or so after a lecture. For me, those people are missing out on something.

We're very lucky at Otago Polytechnic; our CEO lets us have that freedom to be able to deliver at that high end, without the usual constraints such as a purely unit-standards-based curriculum, that is so ring-fenced and prescriptive. We look at things differently and can be in a lot more creative space. We have our certificate courses, which are *fantastic* at levels three and four. Even though they're not fully bound by those constraints, by unit standards, they are based on them and delivered in a much more open way. Then in the degree programme, we've got our students for three years. We can build up a skill set, around not just the *mechanics* of food but the reasons why we do things, and the people behind it, and the conversations, and we tell the stories. We have a little more time to do that project-based learning.

There are other constraints too, of course. We only have three kitchens, and every programme is rolling through there at some point, sometimes with two classes, so there are definitely time and space constraints to manage. That's something that *every* food or hospitality outlet deals with though, so modelling how to deal with those issues is probably a good thing for our students in the long run. It takes a lot of storage to be able to deliver the way we do. We have *hundreds* of props and thousands of dollars-worth of equipment that all has to be stored and cleaned, and rotated through classes, and all that sort of thing. That's a huge job, but it's nothing that can't be resolved; we find a way round it.

That shift to project-based learning is one of the main changes I've experienced in the learning and teaching community. It makes learning much more relevant to industry. In year two of the degree programme, for example, *everything* is project based. We go out to the community, like the food community around the region. We do events; that could be a table of 30, or it could be something down at 'New New New Brewery' for 200 or 300 people, it really depends on the context. Our focus has moved away from "Here's the dish, this is how you make it, you repeat it, tick a box" to "Here's a brief, interact with these people, see what they want, make it happen", so we work with real customers and real clients. We're also working with 'Provenance Lamb' at the moment, a supplier that celebrates regenerative farming and that sort of thing, and we're working not only with the growers but with their suppliers as well. We're dealing with real-world people, with real-

world problems and real-world financial constraints, which you don't *often* get at a polytech-level.

I love being able to share my practice. For me, it comes back to the food; I've *always* loved it, I'm always passionate to learn something new about it, and I really enjoy sharing that experience. We can run a class and do a bread morning, or we can bring in a pig and butcher it down to all the restaurant cuts. Then we see that knowledge walk out of the door, and see the conversations happening around what we've just done. Knowing that the students are going to benefit from this right through their careers, that's what motivates me.

I'm not sure what the future holds, especially with the polytechnic sector going through a transition. I think we have to get even closer than we are now with industry, and I think that in-house or on-the-job qualifications, if you like, and working with people *on the job* is going to be a lot more prevalent in the future. For me personally, my next goal is to integrate some of the work from my Master's back into my teaching. We're also lucky enough to have a Professor in our department who is very good at making sure that we have some research time. I'm really interested in student motivation for learning, but the more I read, the more that other things come up that are interesting, so that's evolving all the time. I love learning too, and I think it helps in your practice as well. As we go along, though, I know there'll be something else that will come up; there'll be another goal that I want to achieve. So, it's a moving goalpost all the time, rather than setting goals each year. We don't know what's going to happen in our industry from week to week, let alone year to year!

In terms of items that are particularly meaningful for me, there are a few things. One huge one is this pair of photographs. I had the opportunity to deliver a conference paper over in Graz in Austria. I left there, and went over to Denmark. While I was in Denmark, I was lucky enough to eat at Noma, which is rated the best restaurant in the world at the moment. So, I'm sitting there at Noma in Denmark, 9.30 at night, feeling pretty pleased with myself: "Right, I've done it, I'm here. I'm at the best restaurant in the world!". It has two Michelin stars, and has been voted the best restaurant in the world by every publication. I'd just finished a 14-course degustation menu that was cooked to perfection, and the service was fantastic, and I was sitting there thinking, "But the best thing I had to eat today was the *hot dog* from a stand on the way to Noma". And I couldn't stop thinking about this bloody hot dog! It had freshly chopped shallots, and the gherkins were pickled just perfectly, and the bun was perfect, and everything else... And I sat there and thought "You know, I've just spent probably 400 Euro on a meal, and I'd be *just* as happy with that hot dog!". That was another eureka moment. I realised food is *so* subjective, and it doesn't really matter if you've got two Michelin stars or not; the hot dog can be just as satisfying.



*Image 18 – At Noma in Denmark
(photo credit: Steve Ellwood)*



*Image 19 – Danish hot dog
(photo credit: Steve Ellwood)*

That's something that I've carried through into my teaching, where I can show you how to make a pâté en croûte, I can show you how to seal off lamb racks with a *fantastic* herb crust, or cook a piece of blue cod to perfection and charge \$40 for a main course, but until you know your customer, what *they* want, and what would be right in their context, a hot dog might be just as good. My students can *completely* relate to this story; it's part of their shared experience as well. Maybe we've just cooked a lamb rack or cooked a piece of blue cod or tried something on the grill, but they had a Big Mac breakfast before they came in, and that's exactly what they wanted. I've realised that it's not necessarily all the French systems and the two Michelin stars that are the important thing; it's *everything* about food and the shared experience, more than what's on the plate.

The last photo, of course, is that truffle pizza; this is where it all started for me!



*Image 20 – Summer truffle pizza
(photo credit: Steve Ellwood)*

Tony's Story

"What I didn't like about education is that someone else tells you the rules, you don't go and find it for yourselves - and I guess, for 23 years, I've been trying to push students to go and find it for themselves"

I've been here at Otago Polytechnic for a long time now; I think I'm in year 23. I don't know why this year in particular, but I've been reflecting on it and thinking "What have I done?". Let me go back a step...

I hated school, with a severe passion! I struggled with reading, and I think, because of that, I was disengaged for lots of classes. Also, at a younger age, I was really good at sport, and that's all my school was interested in, me being the professional sportsman; I was professional in a couple of sports when I was younger. So, I just wasted away probably two years of my life not really doing any studying, but *because* of that, because of not being in school, I spent a lot of time in art galleries, at museums, at the movies, at parks, learning about other things that I was interested in. I realised that there was a disconnect. I wasn't interested in school; I didn't see the point in it. I had no idea what career I wanted to do, probably be a sportsman, but I didn't think I was good enough to maintain that. I say all this because, when I eventually came into teaching, I came with all of that in the back of my head.

In terms of the hospitality industry, my parents ran pubs; they were still in hospitality virtually until the end of their life, so I grew up in pubs from the age of about seven until I left home when I was thirteen. I don't know whether it's a learned thing for me, because to me, working in hospitality is a learned thing; you can either do it or you can't do it. I think something my family has, and something I maybe picked up from my parents is empathy. That's a word I hate actually, 'empathy', but being able to empathise is something that we have. There's a need to please, and a never-decreasing ability to keep on giving or to give back.

Originally, I was going to play sport, but I had an accident on a squash court which stopped me doing anything for about six months. A friend told me her mother taught on a Hospitality course, and suggested I look into enrolling, just for something to do. So that's what I did. I hated every minute of it! For someone who couldn't write, I used to write lots and lots of complaints, about the structure of the course, about our teachers not following what was going on in the world, and things like that. When I left there, it was in the mid '80s, during the miners' strikes in the UK. There were no jobs where I was; I think the unemployment rate was around 20-something per cent, so I moved to a small seaside town, and originally got a job as a cleaner. I was employed on the same day as a new chef who, during the night, took virtually everything out of the room that they'd given him - television, bed, everything - put it in his car and drove off! And that's how I became a chef! I'd done

the hospitality course, which I'd fallen into as well, and it feels like it was all accidental, but I found that I liked it. I'd done ballet as a kid, through until I was 18, when I fell and broke my elbow, and there was something about the movement in a kitchen that had a dance thing to it, and a rhythm that I really enjoyed. It also appealed to that empathetic side of me, wanting to please people, and to my learning new skills and trying to master them. There's a Picasso quote I use a lot at the moment and it's on my wall: it's "Learn the rules like a pro, so you can break them like an artist". That's *definitely* something that I'm trying to get across in my teaching, and it's something that I really like, learning how to do something, so you can then create it.

Fairly quickly, and I don't know where this comes from, I went from being just a chef, to wanting to lead people, take charge of people, and *protect* the people I was with as well. That led to me running a multi-million-dollar business in London by the time I was 25, which gradually progressed to running big conference centres and things like that, with 20 to 30 staff reporting to me.

One of the things that I've *always* encouraged people to do is to get extra learning, and we set up a programme working with a local disability group who also ran the restaurant. They'd come to us and get more training, and we'd see if we could then staircase them into full-time professional jobs. It was setting up that sort of thing that probably gave me the confidence to want to go into teaching here. I would *never* have been given the opportunity in the UK; I don't have the right qualifications, and it's hard to get into those sorts of things over there. It was still a bit of a shock when I got the job here! I realised pretty quickly that everybody was doing things from a book, and that was not what I wanted; that's what I *didn't* like about education - someone else tells you the rules, you don't go and find it for yourselves - and I guess, for 23 years, I've been trying to push students to go and find it for themselves.

I did a lot of mentoring in London, and was happy to show people what to do and give them that responsibility. I'd be quite happy washing dishes whilst they did the ordering, bookwork, or whatever I'd delegated! There has to be more to work than just turning up and doing a job. Giving people responsibilities and that ability to develop themselves is *always* something that I'd wanted. When I was playing in teams and doing different sports, you're always trying to develop other people around you, and to not be afraid of giving people feedback. There's a saying that 'feedback is a gift', and I try to get that across to my students. They often assume feedback is something negative, but it should be seen as something that's going to be of benefit to them.

I eventually met my wife in London. I employed lots and lots of New Zealanders, and had a sort of affinity with the New Zealanders because they worked hard. My wife's a journalist, so she loved London, but I'd had enough of it and managed to drag her back to New

Zealand. After a while I fell into a job here at OP. It was another lucky accident; I was second choice for the job and the first person didn't want it, so it's like it was meant to be!

If I think about critical moments or key turning points for me, there are lots of times being told off that come to mind immediately, for doing something that I shouldn't have been doing or for standing up for other people. There was also this one teacher, probably the only one who actually saw some potential in me at school, who was prepared to *pay* me not to play sport, which I loved. He knew that I wasn't interested in money, but he wanted me to study. I remember him saying to me, "You've got a brain, you're not really using it!" and he was trying to get me to university. I was a bit overwhelmed by that, but I didn't really give up sport; I just wasn't in that mental space. I was 17 or 18, sport was potentially my career, and I just didn't enjoy the education system. Why would I give up something that I really enjoyed, to potentially go into something that was just a dead end for me?

The transition from professional chef to educator is something you see a lot of new staff struggle with. I remember a long time ago I was working with a colleague and looking at different learning styles. I gave a presentation around then, and I remember saying that it's a transition from being a chef who teaches to being a lecturer of Cookery. It is a *heck* of a transition! I guess mine was almost forced on me, in that, when I first started here, another lecturer did all the practicals and I had to do all the theory. I spent *hours* and hours and hours inventing all sorts of stupid games to try and get this theory across, and I wasn't in the kitchen for most of the first year I was here. I guess I started making that transition then, thinking about things like "What's the best way that people can learn x, y, or z?", "How are they going to remember it?", "Is it useful? Is it relevant?". I was given a copy of the textbook that I'd had at polytech, when I'd done hospitality 15 years earlier. I remember thinking, "I think the world's changed a bit since this thing was first published in the 1970s, so it must be out of date". At the time, it was *just* the beginning of the internet, and things were starting to appear on there that you could print off (that was about the only thing you could do with them then), so there was a widening of information beyond just books. But even then, it was just reading material and looking at pictures; there was no interaction with them. So, I'd think about how I could make things a lot more active. I did some stupid things with cheese, I know that much! Because a lot of the students come with no understanding of food, you have to go right back to the beginning. I think I left some milk out to curdle it, and then I strained that off and fed it to the students, saying "This is cheese, this is cheese"! It isn't really, but it's that understanding of where the flavours come from in cheese, and how, if you keep this for longer periods of time, if it's dry, or if it's just slightly different temperatures, slightly different ages, slightly different bacteria. I was basically explaining the process, even if you're probably not meant to feed sour milk to kids! One of my colleagues probably took it further than I did when he had students pretending to be puff pastry and things like that!

Any opportunity to do things differently to what the system is, I've taken. I did the first *Capable NZ* assessment in New Zealand, for example, with a Cookery student. With every qualification that I've worked on, I've always changed how we did things, trying to move it from "Right, this is your assessment" to "OK, we're going to do something and your assessment is going to fall out of it"; that's been another guiding light for me. Assessments don't have to cause stress and anxiety. I was reading someone's portfolio recently, who was doing an Accreditation of Prior Learning. The student said that she'd sat in a maths exam and, by the time she'd filled her name in and tried to do some of the questions, she realised that she couldn't, then she sat counting the tiles. I can remember doing virtually the same thing! Life *isn't* a one-off test, for the most part; it's a *longer* race than that. Moving away from that 'one off' where you need to know everything and then forget it completely as soon as you walk out the door, and sticking to something that can be built upon and will develop your skills and knowledge, that's a much better learning experience. *That's* why I want to change these things. I went through the university, too, for a couple of years, and hated every minute of it. There was enormous pressure on us in exams. I remember one Statistics exam when someone complained about something and *everything* just fell out of my head! I don't think that 'one off' thing is real, and it's always been something I've wanted to change.

A few years ago, I came across Ken Robinson's work, and he supports a system called a 'Learning Record', which is almost an *agreed* conversation with a student as to *what* they're going to present and *how* they're going to present it. That's where I'm trying to get things to go, whether it's with on-the-job learning, or in the classroom, because it makes a lot more sense; it's owned by the student, not by me or whoever the teacher is. It should be about the student. Another realisation for me, a couple of years ago, was that it's not just about gender or ethnicity or whatever. It's about how you think as a person, and how introvert or extrovert you are. There's a scale, of course, and we all move up and down that scale. Where people sit on that can make a huge difference to all sorts of things: classroom discussions, presentations, how they approach activities. So, it just gets more and more complicated in what you're trying to think through when you're setting up an assessment.

My opinions about my own skills haven't really changed over time; I still think I'm rubbish! I know I'm not the worst, and I don't pull myself to pieces, but I'm always thinking things like, "Ugh, you did that half-assed!" or "You've winged it again!". I know there's a *lot* of reading and watching things that allow you to get to that stage, so there's that tacit knowledge bank in there. It's scary the number of times that students will say to me, "Why do you know so much?", because it's somewhere in there...

I'm writing a reflective piece at the moment for my Master's, and it's making me really look at how I teach. It's not the easiest thing to define, and it's not a logical way of teaching. I spend a lot of my time giving feedback, and it's quite deconstructive. I guess that one of the things that I struggle with is that I'm constantly pulling things apart, and expecting the

student to put them back together again. That, for me, does have a negative aspect to it, a negative gearing to it that I don't like. But then someone pointed out that all I'm doing is analysing things in a different way, and *allowing* students to see different aspects, so there is a positive side to it. That is one of the things that has concerned me about my teaching, though. I don't go in there to be *liked*, and I don't go in there to be people's friend. I don't tend to know a great deal about the students, because I bounce across so many courses, but people seem to like me for some reason. Either it's my sense of humour or they can't understand what I'm saying! Another thing I struggle with is that I'm very right-brained; I think in a right-brained way. I have to see the whole picture, and I struggle with the sort of linear way in which some people see things; the "If we do this, this will happen, then this will happen, then this will happen", whereas what's going on in *my* brain is "Well, there's all of *this*, but you've missed all of *this*". Giving students only one example of something is just leading them down a smaller and smaller path. I see that with students sometimes, in that they don't get a fence to work within, and so they're just out wandering in the fields; "lost in the woods" as one student described it. How do you stop students from just getting 'lost in the woods'?

For me, an excellent teacher is someone who is able to adapt their teaching, mentoring, guiding, whatever you want to call it, to meet the students' needs. I think a good teacher can also write good assessments and good outcomes, and match the two up. It can be really hard to be a good teacher on a *horrible* programme! And I think that's a skill that's sort of lacking, that ability to write a course so that you can then follow the whole process right through to assessment. Evaluating a course too is an important step, so I guess a good teacher, a good lecturer, will be someone that has that full range. I also think you have to have passion for what you're doing, and be able to convey that passion in some way, shape, or form. I think being able to relate to the audience that you're working with is vital, and to treat students as adults, not kids. That can be a big step for them, to be expected to work in that way, but it's important. I would say you need compassion, but I don't know if you can teach others to have that. You also need to be good at telling stories, and I don't know how you teach that to everybody either. Storytelling is, I think, slowly becoming appreciated as a way of getting information across, rather than relying on textbooks. It's going back to the traditional way of transferring knowledge, in a way that *works*. It's how we retain information, it's how we used to do it in the dark; you had to create the pictures in your own brain, in the caves at night, or wherever it was. And textbooks don't work for *me*, so there must be other people out there that they don't work for.

I sort of hope there's not a huge amount in common with excellent teachers; you want that broad range of people, with different ways of doing things. I think, ultimately, you've got to have the students' best interests at heart in the end. The self-centredness of some people, I think, stops them from being good teachers. You've got to question their motivation sometimes. I know everybody's got their own map of the world and how they come at things, but I can't really think of anybody within our department, for example, who is just

doing this because it's a job, or just waiting for something else to come along. A lot of us have been here for a long time and are *deeply* committed to the things that we're doing, so I guess I'm lucky in that regard. That's why it's hard to say what makes a good teacher. There are lots of examples around me, and they're *all* different. Some are very engaged with the students, some are very unengaged; some are completely unsympathetic, some are very empathetic; there are good storytellers, and bad storytellers... so, I don't know. It's hard to define 'excellence'. There's something in the back of my brain that I've read, and I would probably say I'd prefer to think about 'reflective' teachers, which we should be anyway. If you can get teachers who are reflective, and learning from that, that's key.

Applying for the Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award as a team was an interesting process... sort of cobbling together five stories into one portfolio. I felt a bit outside of it in some ways, not fully on board with the system. I'm the one that's always picking apart how we're doing things, whether it comes down to the wording of assessments or the structure of things. I know that's just my nature, and probably what one of my roles is within the school, to pick at things. Honestly, reading through it all, I can understand why the examples were chosen, and I was involved in quite a few of the ones that we used, so I'm happy to have the award. I was a bit detached from the whole thing though, as I said. I'm not big on awards, I don't do things for praise or to have a badge, I don't put initials after my name, I'm still Tony. So, it's not really my thing, but it is good for the department.

I've really enjoyed everything that Ako Aotearoa does too; it's a good organisation. I think it might have been pointed out a couple of times that the conferences are sort of talking to people who've already been recognised for their practice, though, rather than people who actually need to hear that there's other ways of doing things, but being part of that Ako community is great. Every year, going to the conference, you hear things that, maybe in the back of your mind, you're thinking of doing, or that give a whole new view of something. I think the papers at last year's conference were particularly good, and I *hope* that we are going down that storytelling, traditional way of learning, appreciating that a lot more.

Do I think of myself as 'excellent'? No, not at all. Again, it comes back to the sport. I played American football for a while in the States, and being filmed throughout a five-hour session, for example, and then having *every* single movement being picked apart, it makes you realise the level of detail you need to reach to be really good at something. What's going on mentally is important as well; having quite a lot of counselling and having all that picked apart too, so, yes, that is my nature, to pick things apart. Even if something is really good, I have to give feedback on a couple of things that weren't right. Others may see me as excellent, but I don't. And I don't think the award has changed the way that I teach. Has it made me less reflective, or more complacent? No, I don't think so.

I don't know if you can teach others to be excellent teachers. I'd be wanting to show them that there is a way for *them* to do it, rather than saying, "Well, if you do this, this is how

you're going to be excellent". It's not like that; everybody's different. I think it still comes back to that 'reflective' thing, and being able to *question*. If you're not questioning what you're doing, you're never going to advance or get closer to excellence, so I don't think it's possible to 'train' excellence. It's a bit like a perfect meal; you're never going to create the perfect meal, there's always something you could change.

I think there are probably more excellent teachers here at OP than any other place I've seen. I think we also push the boundaries as well, and I *know* that that's confronting for a lot of lecturers from other polytechnics who come and do their 'Assessment of Prior Learning' with us. They just don't really understand the process of "Go and discover it for yourself" over "Tell me what to do, and tell me which box I need to fill out, and what you want me to say". That self-created learning is probably of more benefit for our students and anybody in the long term, in the real world. We've just changed the way that students do assessments, for instance, so that the assessment is continuous, and spread throughout the whole course. I've always wanted to push the boundaries, particularly around that and how it's done. But often you need someone else with more experience. I'd not been taught how to do this, so I'm reliant on books or the internet to give me ideas. I think the balance of the team that we have works really well. We don't know where we'll be allowed to go, as a group, but we're *definitely* trying to all push the boundaries in certain ways.

The community at OP is really important to me. I've been given opportunities here that I'd never have had growing up in the UK, and coming from a lower-middle-class family with no education; I probably would've been in the hospitality industry as a Chef for the rest of my life, until I keeled over or my liver exploded or something! Polytech has been incredible to work for. Dunedin keeps me here too; I like Dunedin, I like the size of it, the scale of it. I enjoy this whole place and the opportunities that it's given me. I don't engage a *lot* with the hospitality community. I find that you go out, you have a few drinks, you start talking, and it's the same old conversation, or it tends to be a bit of a busman's holiday. And there are lots of issues with the hospitality industry at the moment, and everybody just wants to talk about their problems with staff on drugs, or staff committing suicide... I think those are the big challenges that we're facing at the moment.

When I think about the opportunities that I've had here, there are so many examples. We recently donated some meals to the neo-natal clinic, I've run a course on vegan food, I've probably been around the world three times, doing various things and various conferences. I've done a degree and I'm doing a Master's now. I'm sort of autonomous. Those are the sort of things that I've really enjoyed about the Polytech, and it almost seems that, after 23 years, I'm just getting to the start of something. I've mainly been focused on teaching and now, I guess, doing a Master's and teaching on a degree programme, you have to start doing research. I can see that being the next ten years *easily*, involved in the stuff that I'm interested in, and having *that* opportunity is amazing. It's something that scares me too, particularly with what I'm planning to do with my Master's, which is to look at marae

kitchens. I know there's a lot of learning about the culture that I need to do before I even get to marae kitchens, being the token white colonialist who says the wrong thing all the time. There are other opportunities too; we keep getting our building rebuilt, and I've been a consultant on that, on how the kitchens look and all that sort of thing. Where else would let you do that? What other job gives you anything like that?

I've seen a lot of changes too, over time. I was here when unit standards started, in 1999, and that changed quite a few people. They shifted to thinking that teaching was suddenly a tick-box thing, and I know people who still think, "So what box do I tick to make sure that they pass this assessment? Where do I take marks off?". That's something that I rebelled against, and people that worked with me also rebelled against it as well. To me, it was doing a disservice to people. I think when we started to look at learning styles and how we're making sure that we're meeting everybody's learning needs, that had an effect. It widens your view on teaching. Probably the biggest thing for me though was D4LS. That was a *real* learning curve for me, because it really did get into the nuts and bolts. How do you transfer something onto paper to start off with, that enables you to reflect the students' learning? That was probably one of the best experiences around learning that I've ever had. I know everybody else complained about it, and it must have been a horrible job to be involved in, trying to facilitate those conversations and getting that constant feedback, but I learned a lot through it.

We need to stay away from what they do at universities. I have a very close friend who teaches first-year courses at the university. In semester one, she teaches around 230 students, then maybe 150-odd in semester two. She uses a lot of the techniques that we do, and she has an Ako Aotearoa award as well for her teaching. I can see similarities in *personality*, and there are some very good teachers there. But I do think there's an issue with research fellows coming in and doing teaching. I think the worst one I had, in a half-hour lecture, said "Ummm" 142 times! I just stopped listening to what he was saying, and I was just ticking off 'umms'. I think there are a lot of discussions at the university about the fact that you have to have a teaching qualification to teach here at OP, and they see us as leading the way in teaching and in developing teaching skills, and teaching excellence as well. Even though they've won more awards, it's not really supported there. They don't hire people based on their teaching skills, but on their research skills. It's a different way around; teaching is almost seen as a hindrance to their research, but I guess that's universities.

For me, my motivation, my passion is seeing that realisation in the students, over time, that changes whatever they're doing, and seeing that transition. I think probably the *best* experience I ever had was working with a group of Trades Academy kids. Most of them weren't doing that well at school, or weren't even going to school, and that transition from the beginning of the year to the end of the year was just *immense*. At the end of the year, we were expected to come out and give a speech to their parents, because we were doing

a lunch for the parents, and I just couldn't speak! It was lots and lots of little things: most of them had jobs, or they were turning up to school, or they'd sorted out Army, Navy, whatever they were going to do... *That's* the thing; getting to the end of the journey, and realising where they've come from. They're having discussions about what they're doing in the industry or what they're doing with food, and there's an interest and a passion; they've found something that they really enjoy, they want to know more, and they want to ask questions. *That's* one of the motivations for me. Part of that reason why people get into the hospitality industry is that it's a family, it's the gang, it's the foreign legion; we don't care where you've come from, you're going to be doing this with us. So, there's a real pirate-ship mentality in kitchens, which has its downside as well, with all the issues that our students have got. It's different with degree students: Food is not their sole focus, they have to learn how to reflect, how to present, and how to do so many other things. With the certificate-level students, we're just talking about food, cooking food, and working in a kitchen; that's their real passion and drive.

I don't know what the future holds. With the current review of the sector, we're not sure what our role is going to be with people in the industry, for instance. There are 200 apprenticeship students in hospitality, I think, across Central Otago and Otago. I think that is something that is going to be the *norm*; we're not going to have as many classroom students. I think it's good that people are learning in industry, but there's a downside to that as well, because working in industry is a knowledge spiral that gets smaller and smaller; there's no new information coming in to the person who's running the place. One thing we're trying to figure out is how we can move people around, so they get more of an experience. For me, it's that blended individualised learning; for years, I've never understood why a student can't come here and pick a course from Nursing, a course from Vet Nursing, one from Art, a bit of Sport or whatever, and make that into a degree. It may not be that exact path, but I think we should be able to make a tailor-made course for what the student wants, a real sort of 'pick and mix'. For the students who've got a job, it relates to the job, and is of use to them in that job, whatever it might be, whether it's making pies at Jimmy's or working in a top-end restaurant. It's relevant to them, and they own it. I know knowledge is power but, for me, having knowledge is an *enabler*, and it gets people to where they end up, particularly nowadays. Having knowledge is a way out of grotty kitchens for a lot of people, into different jobs, different worlds, different ways of thinking; it's an *enabler*.

In terms of teacher development, it's tricky because we're all so isolated; we don't really see what everybody else does. You almost need to tag team people around, just to see what other people are doing. Staff Development Days give you a very brief insight, but you want to spend more time just to see what's going on. I know that, financially, that would be a nightmare, and time management would be a nightmare, but learning from each other is something that I don't think we do enough. For example, I was talking with a colleague from another department about online portfolios, and they have an online portfolio they

like. He would love to come and talk to us about it, so that's made a connection which is good. The more we can do that, the better. I do try to get into other departments; I do bits with Sport, Nursing, Occupational Therapy... anybody who can see a use for a kitchen. Collaborative things are usually better than individual things. If we can get them here so they can see what we do, hopefully they might ask us back, and we can learn from each other.

When I think about meaningful items, I have this board that sits behind my desk. I'm a bit of a collector of sayings, and I put them on this board; they're just a way of getting things across. It's surprising how many of them are about not believing your own thoughts, which is a real problem for lots of our students. So, 'feedback is a gift' is one of those, and 'reflect, not respond or react' is another. I guess they're a sort of reminder of the things that I use with the students a lot.

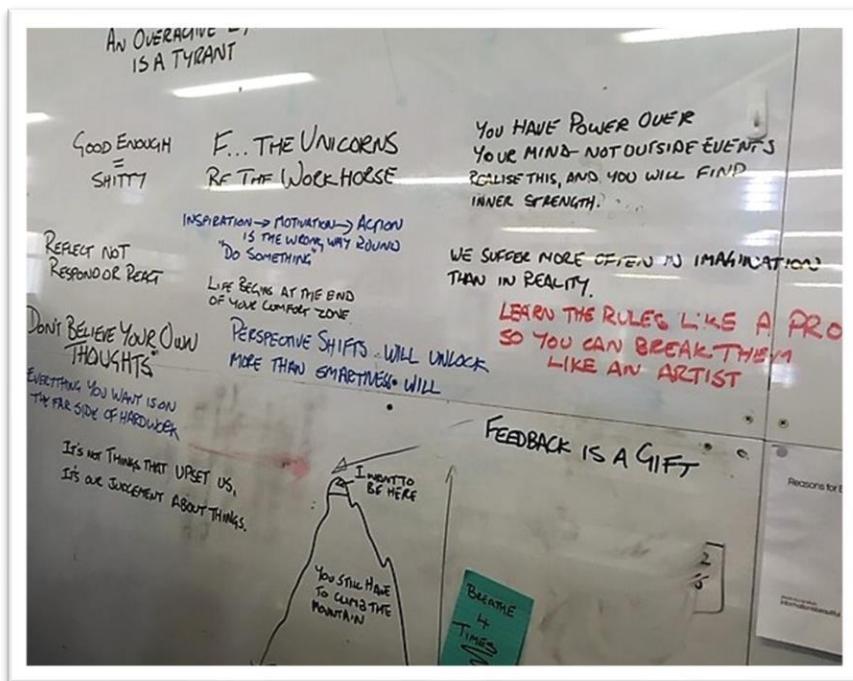


Image 21 – Whiteboard full of meaningful sayings
(photo credit: Tony Heptinstall)

My world outside of education has always been about trying to understand what and how people learn. So, for example, I haven't had any mental health problems, but I have had lots of counselling; just trying to figure out all sorts of things, like death and religion, and that sort of thing. I've always been interested in how I work and how other people work, and most of these quotes will come from people who have shown an insight in some way or another. If I can share those insights with my learners, then all the better.

Appendix L: Research outputs

Papers read

- Goode, C. (2020a, November). *Investigating the stories of Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award winners*. Paper presented at the OP-SIT-ARA Symposium, Invercargill, New Zealand. Joint 3rd place winner of 'People's Choice' presentation.
- Goode, C. (2020b, November). *Time, tools, and tenacity: Reflections on a doctoral candidate's survival kit*. Paper presented at the Professional Practice Symposium, Dunedin, New Zealand.
- Goode, C. (2020, August). *A review of the English language in Brunei: Use, policy, and status in education*. Guest presenter of seminar hosted by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Brunei Darussalam, Brunei.
- Goode, C. & Lane, D.C. (2019, December). *OERu's delivery model for changing times: An open source NGDLE*. Paper presented at the OER Symposium, Dunedin, New Zealand.
- Goode C. & Wood, S. (2019, December). *It's a small world after all: The OERu's international implementation of micro-courses and credentialing*. Paper presented at the OER Symposium, Dunedin, New Zealand.
- Goode, C. (2019, November). *The perfect bite: EduBits for digital micro-credentialing*. Poster session presented at the ICDE World Conference on Online Learning, Dublin, Ireland. Poster and abstract available at <https://wcol2019.ie/digital-posters/>
- Goode, C. & Lane, D.C. (2019, November). *OERu's delivery model for changing times: An open source NGDLE*. Paper presented at the ICDE World Conference on Online Learning, Dublin, Ireland.
- Peachey, V., Dyck, M., Looney, M., Goode, C., & Mackintosh, W. (2019, November). *The OERu rubik's cube: Fitting the pieces together for transnational micro-credentialing*. Paper presented at the ICDE World Conference on Online Learning, Dublin, Ireland.
- Goode C. (2018, December). *An excellent adventure: Investigating the stories of Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award winners*. Paper presented at the Professional Practice Symposium: Capable NZ, Dunedin, New Zealand. Abstract retrieved from <https://www.op.ac.nz/assets/research/2018-Professional-Practice-Symposiumproceedings.pdf>
- Goode, C. & Levy, C. (2017, October). *Designing for learner success and its impact on organisational culture*. Paper presented at the ICDE World Conference on Online Learning, Toronto, Canada.

Goode, C. (2011, November). *The bridge to Brunei*. Paper presented at the Vice Chancellor's Symposium: Internationalising the Curriculum. Massey University, Auckland, New Zealand.

Goode, C. (2010, September). *Towards establishing a benchmark for vocabulary difficulty level*. Paper presented at the 9th Conference of the New Zealand Association of Bridging Educators. Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

Publications

Goode, C., Ditzel, L., Ross, J. & Hogarth, K. (2021). Building undergraduate nursing knowledge and practice through video. In D. Gedera & A. Zalipour (Eds.), *Video pedagogy: Theory and practice* (pp. 21-41). Springer.

Bell, S., Goode, C., Allen, E., Cash, R., Dore, W., Harlow, H., Paterson, A., & Wood, S. (2020). Dispatches from the L&TD war room. In Lesley Gill (Ed.), *Collective voices of COVID-19: Otago Polytechnic experiences* (pp. 22-29). Dunedin Print.
https://issuu.com/opresearch/docs/collective_voices_of_covid-19_-otago_polytechnic

Goode, C. (2020). English language in Brunei: Use, policy, and status in education – A review. *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching*, 15 (1), 21-46.
<http://ojs.atmajaya.ac.id/index.php/ijelt/article/view/1584>

Goode, C. (2019). Best practice principles for professional military education: A literature review. *Journal of Defense Resources Management*, 10 (2), 5-20.
http://www.jodrm.eu/issues/Volume10_issue2/01_MILITARY%20EDUCATION_Goode_NZ.pdf

Lane, D.C. & Goode, C. (2019). *OERu's delivery model for changing times: An open source NGDLE*. Paper presented at the ICDE World Conference on Online Learning, Dublin, Ireland (full paper accepted for publication). <https://oeru.org/assets/Marcoms/OERu-NGDLE-paperFINAL-PDF-version.pdf>

Dyck, M., Goode, C., Looney, M., Mackintosh, W., & Peachey, V. (2019). *The OERu rubik's cube: Fitting the pieces together for transnational micro-credentialing*. Paper presented at the ICDE World Conference on Online Learning, Dublin, Ireland (full paper accepted for publication).

Kilsby, A. & Goode, C. (2019). Taking the college to the company. *Scope: Contemporary Research Topics (Learning and Teaching)*, 7, 16-18. <https://www.thescopes.org/learning-and-teaching7/taking-the-college-to-the-company/>

Terry, A. & Goode, C. (2019). "What the hell am I doing here?": The rewards and challenges of volunteering in Vanuatu, and working towards the sustainable development goals. *Scope: Contemporary Research Topics (Learning & Teaching)*, 8, 24-34.
<https://www.thescopes.org/learning-and-teaching-8/what-the-hell-am-i-doing-here->

[therewards-and-challenges-of-volunteering-in-vanuatu-and-working-towards-the-sdgs/](#)

Goode, C. (2018). Ready or not? Considering best practice principles for delivery of transnational higher education: A literature review. *Scope: Contemporary Research Topics (Learning & Teaching)*, 5, 8-18. <https://www.thescopes.org/learning-and-teaching-5/ready-or-notconsidering-best-practice-principles-for-delivery-of-transnational-higher-education/>

Goode, C.A., Hegarty, B, & Levy C. (2018). Collaborative curriculum design and the impact on organisational culture. *TechTrends*, 62 (4), 393-402. doi: 10.1007/s11528-018-0268-7

Goode, C. & Treefoot, L. (2010). Towards establishing a benchmark for vocabulary difficulty level. In J. Terrell (Ed.), *Making the links: Learning, teaching and high quality student outcomes: Proceedings of the 9th Conference of the New Zealand Association of Bridging Educators* (pp. 117-131). Auckland, New Zealand: Unitec Institute of Technology.

Appendix M: COREQ (COnsolidated criteria for REporting Qualitative research) checklist

A checklist of items that should be included in reports of qualitative research. You must report the page number in your manuscript where you consider each of the items listed in this checklist. If you have not included this information, either revise your manuscript accordingly before submitting or note N/A.

Topic	Item	Guide Questions/Description	Reported (page number)
Domain 1: Research team and reflexivity			
<i>Personal characteristics</i>			
Interviewer/facilitator	1	Which author/s conducted the interview or focus group?	p.52
Credentials	2	What were the researcher's credentials? (e.g. PhD, MD)	pp.11-12
Occupation	3	What was their occupation at the time of the study?	p.12
Gender	4	Was the researcher male or female?	N/A
Experience and training	5	What experience or training did the researcher have?	pp.11-12
<i>Relationship with participants</i>			
Relationship established	6	Was a relationship established prior to study commencement?	p.51
Participant knowledge of the interviewer	7	What did the participants know about the researcher? (e.g. personal goals, reasons for doing the research)	pp.50-51
Interviewer characteristics	8	What characteristics were reported about the interviewer / facilitator? (e.g. bias, assumptions, reasons, and interests in the research topic)	pp.11-12; pp.38-41; p.198

Domain 2: Study design

Theoretical framework

Methodological orientation and Theory	9	What methodological orientation was stated to underpin the study? (e.g. grounded theory, discourse analysis, ethnography, phenomenology, content analysis)	pp.38-47
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Participant selection

Sampling	10	How were participants selected? (e.g. purposive, convenience, consecutive, snowball)	p.50
Method of approach	11	How were participants approached? (e.g. face-to-face, telephone, mail, email)	p.50
Sample size	12	How many participants were in the study?	p.52
Non-participation	13	How many people refused to participate or dropped out? Reasons?	pp.50-51; p.59

Setting

Setting of data collection	14	Where was the data collected? (e.g. home, clinic, workplace)	p.51
Presence of non-participants	15	Was anyone else present besides the participants and researchers?	N/A
Description of sample	16	What are the important characteristics of the sample? (e.g. demographic data, date)	p.52; p.206

Data collection

Interview guide	17	Were questions, prompts, guides provided by the authors? Was it pilot tested?	p.52; p.205; p.53
Repeat interviews	18	Were repeat interviews carried out? If yes, how many?	N/A
Audio/visual recording	19	Did the research use audio or visual recording to collect the data?	p.52
Field notes	20	Were field notes made during and/or after the interview or focus group?	p.53
Duration	21	What was the duration of the interviews or focus group?	p.52

Data saturation	22	Was data saturation discussed?	'Thick description' and 'Crystallization' discussed p.38
Transcripts returned	23	Were transcripts returned to participants for comment and/or correction?	p.56; p.59
Domain 3: analysis and findings			
<i>Data analysis</i>			
Number of data coders	24	How many data coders coded the data?	p.61
Description of the coding tree	25	Did authors provide a description of the coding tree?	pp.207-210
Derivation of themes	26	Were themes identified in advance or derived from the data?	pp.61-62
Software	27	What software, if applicable, was used to manage the data?	p.62
Participant checking	28	Did participants provide feedback on the findings?	N/A
<i>Reporting</i>			
Quotations presented	29	Were participant quotations presented to illustrate the themes/findings? Was each quotation identified? (e.g. participant number)	p.68
Data and findings consistent	30	Was there consistency between the data presented and the findings?	Yes. Refer to Findings pp.67-107; pp.211-328
Clarity of major themes	31	Were major themes clearly presented in the findings?	pp.67-107
Clarity of minor themes	32	Is there a description of diverse cases or discussion of minor themes?	pp.207-210

Developed from:

Tong, A., Sainsbury, P., & Craig, J. (2007). Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ): A 32-item checklist for interviews and focus groups. *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*, 19(6), 349–357. <https://doi.org/10.1093/intqhc/mzm042>

Appendix N: Timeline

