

# BERA2009

Theoretical arguments related to societal changes in the 'knowledge society' and postmodernity and their implications for educational agendas emphasise the need for a re-conceptualisation of knowledge and learning in educational policies and practices in contemporary '21st century' societies (Richard and Usher 1994; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, 2003; Gilbert, 2005; Hargreaves, 2003; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; OECD, 2000; UNESCO, 2005; Andreotti & Souza, 2008).

Three arguments are central to this literature (Andreotti, 2008). First, that the profile of learners has changed and that teaching 21st century learners requires practitioners to perceive knowledge, learning and education in ways that are different from the ways knowledge, learning and education were perceived in 20<sup>th</sup> century (when most current practitioners were brought up and trained). Therefore practitioners are expected to provide learners with a sort of education that is different from what they will have experienced themselves (OECD, 2000; UNESCO, 2005).

Second, that for this shift of perception of knowledge, learning and education to happen it will not be enough for practitioners to shift the ways they behave or do things, or even the ways they think - they will need to shift the ways they 'know' (i.e. an 'epistemological shift') and the ways they 'see' (i.e. an ontological shift). These will also prompt a shift of perceptions and relationships which impacts all other areas, including the ways practitioners perceive their disciplines, themselves and their students (Gilbert, 2005; Gee, 2003; Richard and Usher, 1994; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

Third, that these epistemological and ontological shifts involve knowledge about knowledge construction itself and the conceptual/theoretical underpinnings of current knowledge and future possibilities. This should equip practitioners to engage with complexity, multiplicity and uncertainty, to explore their own lenses and open up to more lenses, and to engage critically with the different possibilities they will find vis a vis the needs of their students in their contexts (Gilbert, 2005; Andreotti & Souza, 2008).

Despite the contested nature of this debate and the denouncement of the complicity of the 'knowledge society' discourse with neoliberal practices, this emergent literature has started to shape educational reform world-wide, including the revised New Zealand School curriculum published in 2007.

This paper presents the outline and a case-study within a research project funded by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research on teacher education looking at the shifts in the conceptualisation of knowledge and learning in the implementation of the revised New Zealand curriculum in teacher education in 10 practitioner settings. This research project addresses the following questions:

- How are the shifts in conceptualisation of knowledge and learning interpreted within the different knowledge domains of the practitioners in this research? How do these shifts affect the way the revised New Zealand Curriculum is interpreted and implemented?
- What are the characteristics of effective initiatives for shifting student teachers' and teachers' conceptualisations of knowledge and learning?
- How do shifts in the conceptualisation of knowledge and learning affect student teachers' and teachers' interpretations of the revised New Zealand curriculum?

The research design involves data collection related to structural and systemic changes in curriculum design and pedagogical approaches for teacher education based on new conceptualisations of knowledge and learning and outcomes of interventions related to student teachers' and teachers' interpretations of the NZC (pre- and post- interventions).

The first part of the paper offers an outline of the general research project and the theoretical framework that informs its methodology and analysis. In the second part of the paper one of the practitioner case studies is presented and discussed.

Andreotti, V. & Souza, L. (2008). Global Learning in the Knowledge Society: four tools for discussion. *Journal of International Educational Research and Development Education*, 31, 7-12.

Cope, B. & Kalantzis, M. (2000). *Multiliteracies: Literacy and Learning and the Design of Social Futures*. London: Routledge.

Davies, B. (1996) *Power, Knowledge, Desire: changing school organisation and management practices*. Canberra: Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

Gee, P. (2003). *What Video Games have to Teach us about Learning and Literacy?* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gilbert, J. (2005). *Catching the Knowledge Wave?: The Knowledge Society and the future of education*. NZCER.

Hargreaves, A. (2003). *Teaching in the Knowledge Society*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Lankshear, C. & Knobel, M. (2003). *New Literacies: Changing Knowledge and Classroom Learning*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

NZ Ministry of Education (2007). *The New Zealand Curriculum* Wellington: Ministry of Education.

OECD (2000). *Knowledge Management in Information Societies: Education and Skills*. Paris: OECD.

Richard, E. & Usher, R. (1994). *Postmodernity and Education*. London: Routledge.

UNESCO (2005). *UNESCO World Report: Towards Knowledge Societies*. Paris: UNESCO.