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# Waikato Journal Of Education

## Te Hautaka Mātauranga o Waikato

Volume 18, Issue 2, 2013

### Special Section

- Editorial: Culturally responsive pedagogies as transformative praxis**  
*Mere Berryman* 3
- From responsive social learning contexts to culturally responsive pedagogy: Contributions from early New Zealand research**  
*Ted Glynn* 11
- Applying culturally responsive practices: Implications for mainstream education**  
*Therese Ford* 25
- ‘A culturally responsive pedagogy of relations’: Coming to understand**  
*Annie Siope* 37
- Discursive repositioning: The impact a group of Te Kotahitanga teachers within a mainstream secondary school had on one student**  
*Edith Painting-Davis* 51
- Culturally responsive evidence-based special education practice: Whaia ki te ara tika**  
*Sonja Macfarlane and Angus Macfarlane* 65
- Crossing borders: At the nexus of critical service learning, literacy, and social justice**  
*Fatima Pirbhai-Illich* 79
- University and school: Collaborative research as culturally responsive methodology**  
*Marilyn Blakeney-Williams and Nicola Daly* 97
- ### General Section
- Health invaders in New Zealand primary schools**  
*Lisette Burrows, Kirsten Petrie, and Marg Cosgriff* 111
- Peer coaching: A review of the literature**  
*Tracey Hooker* 129
- Developing a resource for teachers: Theory, practice, possibility**  
*Elizabeth Anderson* 141

<b>Resistance within a performativity discourse: Learning from an analytic autoethnographic perspective</b>	
<i>Jason Loh</i>	157
<b>Book review</b>	
<i>Dianne Forbes</i>	171
<b>Ph.D Abstracts</b>	
<b>Participant perspectives informing pedagogy for asynchronous online discussion in initial teacher education</b>	
<i>Dianne Forbes</i>	173
<b>The nature of conversation of primary students in technology education: Implications for teaching and learning</b>	
<i>Wendy Helen Fox-Turnbull</i>	175
<b>Problematised history pedagogy as narrative research: Self-fashioning, dismantled voices and reimaginings in history education</b>	
<i>Philippa Hunter</i>	177
<b>How is teacher evaluation policy enacted? The workings of performativity and micro-politics in Japanese schools</b>	
<i>Masaaki Katsuno</i>	179
<b>Students' mental models of chemical reactions</b>	
<i>Denis Lajium</i>	181
<b>Effective Pakeha teachers of Māori students</b>	
<i>Catherine Lang</i>	183
<b>Toward ecological literacy: A permaculture approach to junior secondary science</b>	
<i>Nelson Lebo III</i>	185
<b>Colouring in the white spaces: Reclaiming cultural identity in whitestream schools</b>	
<i>Beverley Milne</i>	187
<b>Online collaborative learning in tertiary ICT education to enhance students' learning in Malaysia</b>	
<i>Mohd Nihra Haruzuan Bin Mohamad Said</i>	189



## Participant perspectives informing pedagogy for asynchronous online discussion in initial teacher education

Unpublished Ed.D thesis, Faculty of Education, The University of Waikato

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This study looks at how students and staff experience asynchronous online discussion (AOD) within initial teacher education. The aim is to explore participant perspectives, including expectations of fellow participants, with a view to informing pedagogy, defined as the relationship between teaching and learning (Loughran, 2006).

The underpinning argument is essentially that learning and teaching can be enhanced by awareness of how participants experience the situation. Understanding the complexities of AOD entails a better understanding of participants' tacit reasoning, expectations, misunderstandings, and responses to tasks and behaviours (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005; Loughran, 2006). It is the situation as it is perceived which is central to the quality of teaching and learning, and this puts participants and their experiences at the centre of efforts to improve pedagogy and to enhance deep learning.

This study is framed by sociocultural theory and phenomenography to explore AOD through the eyes of teacher educators and teacher education students in a specific teacher education context. Participants engaged in focus groups (face-to-face and online) and a series of semi-structured interviews, generating data about experiences and perspectives of AOD.

Key findings show the need for participants in AOD to establish expectations for purposeful communication; to maintain a presence for learning premised on formative interaction; and to work together in ways conducive to community and student leadership in pursuit of deep learning.

This thesis adds to the limited research literature on teacher perceptions about online teaching (Spector, 2007), and makes a contribution to addressing the neglect of student approaches to study in higher education using eLearning technologies for discussion (Ellis et al., 2008; Jackson et al., 2010; Sharpe et al., 2010). The results contribute to knowledge in the field of online learning in initial teacher education by giving rise to specific pedagogical strategies for teachers and students in given situations, and by providing conceptual tools for participants when thinking about teaching and learning through AOD.



Participant experiences function as footprints, picking out pathways as others make their way through AOD (Salmon, 2002).