The knowledge building community project: a grounded theory of an alternative teacher education model

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The Knowledge Building Community Project: A Grounded Theory of an Alternative Teacher Education Model

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

from

University of Wollongong

Julie Maree Kiggins
(B.Ed Hons)

Faculty of Education

2002
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An undertaking such as a Doctoral study, whilst it often appears to be a lonely journey, is really the culmination of many peoples’ combined efforts and support.

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Thank you to the 1999 KBC students who trusted me to tell their story. Thank you for all your efforts and your patience with me as I am sure you must have felt at times that the questions were never going to stop.

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Julie Kiggins
University of Wollongong
April 2002
Abstract

This research explores the experiences of a group of preservice teachers in the first two years of their experiences in an alternative model of teacher education known as the Knowledge Building Community Project (KBC) at the University of Wollongong in 1999. The KBC Project was initiated as a response to research that suggested preservice teachers needed more experience with the day-to-day operation of schools, and how the daily work of teachers related to the culture of schools and classrooms. The KBC model was based upon the intersection of three sources for learning; (i) Community Learning, (ii) School-based Learning and (iii) Problem-based Learning.

The research project uses qualitative methodologies encompassing formal and informal interviews, participant observation and the use of e-mail correspondence over a period of three semesters with the 22 pioneer students of the 1999 KBC Project. The thesis proposes a constructivist grounded theory that emerged as a result of seeking meaning from the students' experiences.

It was found that implementing an alternative model for teacher education based on Problem-based Learning was difficult but the data showed that the students involved benefited from the support of the community triad (the KBC facilitators, school-based teachers and each other). The data showed that being members of the community triad enabled students to develop friendship and trust which made working in collaborative school groups advantageous. The students said that the community triad supported their learning.

The thesis concludes with a chapter arising from this study that shows that there are key components needed in order to implement a KBC in teacher education. The key feature of the grounded theory highlights the importance of a structure to promote social interaction among the main participants. When students are given the opportunity and support of the community triad, they can develop an ownership and responsibility for their learning. A key trait is the ability of the students to link theory to practice as well as developing an increased understanding about the culture of schools and the way that they operate.
Declaration

I, Julie Maree Kiggins, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Julie M. Kiggins

25th April 2002
Abbreviations used in this Thesis:

BTE  Behaviouristic Teacher Education
C&PII Curriculum and Pedagogy II
CAPA Creative and Practical Arts
CBTE Competency-based Teacher Education
CL Community Learning
CMC Computer Mediated Communication
DET Department of Education and Training
ESDF Educational Strategic Development Fund
HSIE Human Society in its Environment
ICQ I Seek You
IMSA The Illinios Mathematics and Science Academy
IOTE Inquiry-Orientated Teacher Education
ISU Iowa State University
KBC Knowledge Building Community
MACQT Ministerial Advisory Council on the Quality of Teaching
NSW New South Wales
NSWTF New South Wales Teachers’ Federation
PBL Problem-based Learning
PD/H/PE Personal Development, Health and Physical Education
PE Physical Education
PST Preservice teacher
PTE Personalistic Teacher Education
SBL School-based Learning
SCNTP Santa Cruz New Teacher Project
TA Teacher Associate
TCTE Traditional-Craft Teacher Education
UCSC University of California – Santa Cruz
UOL University of Louisville
UOW University of Wollongong
UTEP University of Texas at El Paso
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So long and thanks for the fish...

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