



Editorial

## Developments in learning online in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Andrew Gibbons  
*New Zealand Tertiary College*

Welcome to the second volume of *He Kupu*, a journal published by New Zealand Tertiary College. The College provides early childhood teacher education programmes in field-based, distance, and college-based modes. Recently the nature of the distance mode has expanded, with the development of a web-enhanced pilot. In this issue a key figure in this development, Radha Nathan, discusses the paths that have led her to her current role leading the design of a Learning Management System for early childhood teacher education students. In the *Interview with Radha Nathan* Radha emphasises the important contribution of her own personal experiences to her aspirations for effective teacher education online.

In addition this issue features analysis of initial results from a comprehensive study of the pilot programme. Lisa Walker and Karin du Plessis track the experiences of students during the pilot programme, noting the positive outcomes in student perceptions through the provision of an online learning orientation course. In *Preparing Early Childhood Student Teachers for Web-enhanced Distance Learning: Student Perceptions* the authors highlight a link between the literature on best practice and the experiences of students as they developed skills in learning online.

The topic of science education online connects the contributions from Lone Jorgensen, and Robert Shaw and Dan Love. In *Sailing in Uncharted Waters: A Journey into E-learning in a Science Education Paper* Jorgensen reports on developments of an online course at Massey University, in New Zealand. This article highlights the potential of online technologies to both provide greater access to tertiary education, and to promote fundamental shifts in thinking about how one constructs a positive and dynamic learning environment. In *A Heideggerian Analysis in the Teaching of Science to Māori Students* Shaw and Love present a philosophical turn to questions of access and experience, exploring the experiences of learning astronomy online for a cohort of Māori secondary school students. Drawing upon a Heideggerian questioning of being and education, Shaw and Love explore the normalising effects of the online programme. They present significant challenges to the development of eLearning opportunities that are sensitive to a complexity of multicultural contexts.

This issue's student reflection provides Chris Naughton's thoughts on the role of online technologies in supporting his doctoral research. The significance of web-based search engines is highlighted as a rich source of research to maintain the momentum of a thesis, and to enhance the interrogation of the key research texts. Chris also recounts the benefits of electronic editing of his manuscript in the days leading up to final submission.

At this time I would also like to extend a warm welcome to Chris as co-editor of *He Kupu*. Chris brings with him a wealth of publishing experience, particularly in the field of music education, and a strong interest in research of the role of new technologies for teacher education. In particular the scope



for researching the role of web-based technologies in the development of student teacher knowledge of the creative arts has immense potential. Research of this potential will support critical and informed developments in practice.

Finally, in *Colloquia*, Kathryn White, Academic Manager at New Zealand Tertiary College, analyses discourse on the role of teacher education in the development of practices of critical reflection. White acknowledges the ironic lack of critique in the understanding of what it means to be critically reflective. She outlines the contemporary expectations in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and contrasts these with the perspectives of a cohort of 17 educators. White's reflections encourage careful consideration of how online technologies might enhance the relationships essential to a student teacher's development.

In sum these articles and reflections represent the journal's commitment to providing a forum for research of the wider social and political interest in online/distance teacher education. *He Kupu* encourages research of a breadth of issues that impact upon the institutional philosophies and practices in this field. Such research underpins the importance of keeping educational questions in play, or to borrow from Michel Foucault (1989, p. 201) keeping discussions about educational purposes and practices "permanently open".

### **References**

- Foucault, M. (1989). The masked philosopher. (J. Johnston, Trans.). In M. Foucault, *Foucault live, interviews 1966-84* (pp. 193-202). New York: Semiotext(e).