

NEW ZEALAND ASSOCIATION FOR RESEARCH IN EDUCATION
TE HUNGA RANGAHAU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

The Rae Munro Award 2010

Rose Yukich



Rose Yukich is the recipient of the 2010 Rae Munro Award for excellent Masters level thesis which has implications for teacher education or classroom practice.

Rose graduated with an MA in Education with first class honours from The University of Auckland in 2010. The title of Rose's thesis is *Grasping the nettle: A narrative inquiry into three Pākehā secondary school principals' cross-cultural engagement with Māori*

As a former secondary school teacher, Rose chose the secondary school context to examine how it was that three Pākehā school principals had come to value cross-cultural relationships with Māori; and how their openness to an engagement with Māori affected their leadership practice. A narrative inquiry strategy informed the research process. Rose used semi-structured interviews to explore each research participant's life story as it pertained to the research focus. Unique features of her work include the re-storying of the participants' words, and the eloquent theorising and arguments evident throughout.

Her thesis foregrounds how an important facet of the participants' own education - as teachers, principals and Pākehā - occurred through their relationships with Māori, and through their interaction with entangled Māori-Pākehā histories and bicultural politics. In the process of coming to know these histories, and themselves as Pākehā, the participants' desire and commitment to fight for equitable outcomes for Māori students was forged. Rose's thesis also explores how the participants, as members of the dominant cultural group in the principal's role, cultivated certain ethical "practices of the self" that helped them manage the feelings of cultural vulnerability that their engagement with Māori gave rise to. The thesis highlights their abilities to "stand in their own shoes" but stay in relationship by maintaining a stance of humility, of not knowing, of respectful boundaries with regard to Māori. Suspending the imperative to know opens dominant group educators to learning from others, rather than assuming knowledge about others. It is however knowledge of one's own cultural location, the thesis argues, that is essential for opening up possibilities for productive, non-dominating educational relationships across difference.

The findings demonstrate that teachers' cross cultural experiences, values, philosophical approaches, and abilities to form relationships are central to effective pedagogy and leadership. Rose's work reminds us of the need to keep providing opportunities for pre-service teachers - amongst whom will be the principals of the future - to have their cultural assumptions disrupted and unsettled if we are serious about the ideals of culturally responsive teaching and leadership. As the narratives of the participants in her study reveal, it is in moments of discomfort, of being literally off-centre, that the possibilities for personal and thus professional growth lie.

It is undoubtedly a finely-crafted, innovative thesis which makes a valuable contribution to education in New Zealand. It brings to the fore matters of inquiry, concern for others, and desire for self respect. These are all central to the philosophy of the late Rae Munro. Rose has already presented her findings to various groups, she has publications in progress and planned, and her work is likely to be cited in many contexts. Rose's thesis is undoubtedly a well deserving recipient of the Rae Munro award, 2010.

