

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



The Rae Munro Award 2011

Chris Brough

Chris Brough is the recipient of the 2011 Rae Munro NZARE award for an excellent Masters-level thesis that has implications for teacher education or classroom practice. Her thesis is titled: Student-Centred Curriculum Integration in Primary Schools: Implementing Democratic Principles and Practices.

Chris Brough's thesis was outstanding work, with the quality of research and written report excellent. It was a well-conceived, indepth investigation of the research question that used participatory action research to examine the approach to curriculum integration(CI) taken by the teachers, and how reflection on their practice influenced their approach. In the three detailed case studies analysed, the teachers' understanding of the change process, as they incrementally relinquished control of the decision making in their classrooms, and how their understanding of student-centred CI evolved, was thoroughly explored and documented. The thesis makes a valuable contribution to knowledge in the area of student-negotiated curriculum. A comprehensive discussion of the appropriate literature enabled the examination of the research question through an indepth, detailed gaze. The multi-case case study gave depth to the analysis, while the critical interpretive perspective that was woven within that allowed for insights into influential power structures that may have been treated superficially otherwise.

There was a very thoughtful reflective analysis of the findings, with the five themes described and coherently referenced throughout the discussion of findings and conclusions. The implications for practice were very effectively structured around the core themes and revealed particularly useful implementation strategies. The synthesising with classroom practice was exemplary. Chris has produced a coherent well-crafted thesis that is grounded in rich data and a thorough data analysis process. A particular strength is the way she has represented the challenges and achievements of the teachers and the students that she worked with. It is not often that a thesis provides such rich insights into classroom practice. The thesis is authentic, thorough and well researched. It dealt with a number of difficult issues admirably, followed a comprehensive approach to address details of the investigation in an indepth way, and drew together the key themes coherently. It makes an original contribution to the literature in this area in terms of the integrated approach to learning, and the transitioning of decision making and power within New Zealand primary school classrooms.

As well, Chris has already presented this work to whole school staff meetings and professional and research groups and leads professional discussions with groups of teachers. She has published reviewed journal articles and been approached to write collaboratively by international leaders in this field.

