An investigation into Aspects
of the Community Work Diploma

Christchurch Polytechnic

A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Education
in the
University of Canterbury
by Bruce Coleman

University of Canterbury
1995
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ABSTRACT

The Community Work Diploma, Christchurch Polytechnic, was the first formal qualification in Community Work in New Zealand. The two year full-time course began in February 1992 with the first graduates completing the Diploma in November 1993. Undertaken in 1994 this research project uses an action-research methodology to investigate aspects of the course. Particular attention is paid to assessment issues, the grading of student assignments, student selection processes and criteria for entry, the use of journals as a learning and assessment tool, and the need for a Programme Advisory Group to oversee the course. In-depth interviews were conducted with current students, an ex-student, tutors from similar programmes, a Diploma tutor and a member of the Course Advisory Group. From transcripts of the interviews and secondary data sources issues were identified and articulated. In each of the areas studied, suggestions are made regarding how the course could be taught, organised and overseen differently in response to the issues raised. Suggestions are also made regarding the continuation of the next stage of the action-research process. Finally some comments are made about the limitations of this study and the action-research method.
BACKGROUND

Community work as an identifiable separate field of endeavour came to New Zealand in the early 1970s via Britain and the United States. It brought with it threads from the Charitable Aid movement, the Settlement movement, urban renewal projects, third world economic development programmes and anti-poverty programmes (Routledge Course notes SOWK 606 1992). From these earliest days community work in New Zealand took on a character that, while borrowing particularly from the British tradition, was unique to these shores (see for example Dyce 1979 and Bailey 1980).

One of the earliest indigenous definitions of community work is provided by Michael Elliot.

Community work seeks to identify the needs and aspirations of those who are excluded, exploited or oppressed by the structures of society; to enable them to perceive and understand the causes of such oppression; and to empower them either to change the present structures or create counter-structures which fulfil human potential and establish justice and dignity.

(Elliot, 1978, pg 2)

In 1983 a national group of community workers got together to look at training needs. The definition of community work they arrived at is included as Appendix Five. It was this definition that was adopted by the Canterbury Community Work Training Group as the basis for the Diploma in Community Work which is the subject of this research proposal (CCWTG 1990, pg 21-22). Ten years after first being devised Derrick (1993, pg 18-19) still considered it the most applicable definition of community work in New Zealand.

A look at the definition reveals that it retains many of the features of Elliot’s earlier definition: working collectively with the powerless and the alienated to bring about structural social change in a way that enhances self determination and skills development. The Community Work Diploma Brochure for 1995 summarises it as:

Community work is working with individuals and groups to bring about social change, promote community development and learning and provide a greater sharing of resources, knowledge and power within the community.

Community Work Diploma Brochure 1995, Appendix 6
These definitions/ descriptions suggest a more unified view of community work than is the case. As Craig (1983) points out what constitutes Community Work in New Zealand tends to vary with the teller. Personal values, political philosophies, place of work and position in society all have an influence on what people see as community work; its goals, values and methods of work. In addition the influences of socialist, feminist, Maori and more latterly Pacific Island perspectives have had a profound effect on the way community work is talked about and practised.

Within this diversity, a tension has existed from the beginning between what Craig calls "state-sponsored community work" (ibid pg 23) and what is commonly called "grassroots" community work. State sponsored community work is either carried out directly by the national or local state or sponsored by it, while grassroots community work is characterised by local initiatives in response to "real" community needs. The suspicion has always existed that those funded by the State were there to do work that was less than honest, e.g. getting community services on the cheap by calling them community development or quietening emergent demands by, say, the unemployed by giving them a community worker to "help" them make submissions, use the right channels, etc. Such distinctions often did not stand up to close scrutiny. Nonetheless this perceived difference enlivened many debates around community work issues and is an important backdrop to the debates about appropriate education and training for community workers.

Since the first paid positions in community work were established in the early 1970s training has been a major issue (see for example Kilmester, 1987). Things came to a head in the mid 1980s. Largely through the mechanism of Government-sponsored employment programmes (principally the Voluntary Organisation Training Programme (VOTP)) the numbers of paid community workers rose dramatically and the consequent demands for training became quite vociferous. As mentioned earlier, in 1983 a group of community workers was brought together under the auspices of the Social Work Training Council (SWTC) to press for recognised training for community workers (see SWTC 1985, pg 17-27).

The Diploma in Community Work at Christchurch Polytechnic can trace its origins to this initiative. It is not my purpose here to go through all the machinations that led to its establishment. However a number of points need to be made as they relate directly to this research project. Community work training has never been established on a firm footing. Funding has been haphazard and unevenly applied. Debate has been intense about the ideal shape, location and content of training.
Issues have included whether there should be formal qualifications, the distribution of scarce resources, where training should be located, content, delivery style and mechanisms, who should control it, whether it should be linked to allied work areas (e.g. social work, youth work, recreation, community education) and how it should be funded (See Internal Affairs, 1992, pg 7-27).

It is worth looking at some of these issues in greater detail. Of particular relevance to the Diploma in Community Work have been the issues around the need for a formal qualification in community work and the appropriateness of locating a qualification in a mainstream tertiary institution.

In many instances (e.g. national community work hui, local Community Workers Association Canterbury meetings, Canterbury Community Work Training Group discussions and forums, feedback from the 1990 Christchurch community consultation) the debate can be seen to mirror the tension between those who see "state sponsored community work" as a legitimate way for structural change to take place and those who see community work as only legitimate when it arises from the real needs of communities and resists the social control implicit in state sponsorship. The debate often centres around whether the perceived advantages of a recognised qualification in community work from a tertiary institution outweighed the disadvantages that could accrue from this form of community work training. Some of the main issues can be seen as:

1. Access to the institution's resources for training and educating community workers where no other resources are available.

   Versus

   The institution influencing the shape, direction and purpose of the training through academic standards, assessment criteria, timetabling, limitations on resources, who is qualified to teach etc.

2. Access to credibility and legitimation for community work skills, knowledge and experience that a formal qualification would provide.

   Versus

   The dangers of credentialism; of creating an elite group of "qualified" community workers. The needs of the "profession" outweighing the needs of communities and groups. Social change being turned into a "job".
3. No academic or scholastic pre-requisites for the course, acknowledging that the skills necessary for community work are not necessarily the skills necessary for successful schooling.

Versus

Setting people up to fail if they do not have the appropriate educational capital to pass a Diploma level course at a tertiary institution.

4. Starting where people are at, acknowledging different starting points, experience, and objectives and designing a programme to suit those needs.

Versus

The need to provide protection and quality assurance for communities, groups and individuals. To provide an assurance that those with a Community Work qualification have certain skills, attributes and knowledge that ensure they will not do any harm and be able to make a positive contribution to communities, groups and individuals.

5. Working from people's everyday lived experience; from the generative themes of the course participants.

Versus

A predetermined curriculum with highly specific learning objectives, standards statements and methods of assessment.

6. Assessment of process, effort, involvement, community credibility.

Versus

Assessment of learning outcomes, that are behaviourally based, quantifiable and able to be moderated from "objective" evidence.

7. Process oriented pedagogy, i.e. problem posing, dialogue-rich, participatory, reflexive, action-reflection-action orientated.

Versus

Content orientated pedagogy, i.e. didactic, tutor generated, banking education.
8. "Ownership" of the course by the city's community workers. A collective of community workers, tutors, students, specific advisors, developing, monitoring, moderating the course.

Versus

The institution owning the course, "community workers" being consulted on the institution's terms, the institution retaining the final say on course content, form, costs, etc.

In essence these issues have been present from the beginning and formed an under current to the moves outlined here to establish a Community Work Diploma.

The Community Workers Association Canterbury (CWAC) was formed in Christchurch in 1983 by a group of city community workers. A sub-group of the Association, the Canterbury Community Work Training Group (CCWTG) was set the task by CWAC of providing training by community workers for community workers. In the early years and up to the present, the CCWTG has provided short courses, discussion forums, seminars and the like for practising community workers. Using the material from the national consultation the CCWTG began in 1989 to put together a proposal for a Community Work Diploma in Christchurch. In 1990 an extensive community consultation took place. Three workers were employed by the CCWTG to consult with the Maori, Pacific Island and the general communities. The result was a proposal for a Diploma in Community Work which was presented to the Christchurch Polytechnic in 1990 and accepted in 1991 (see CCWTG 1990). This was the first formal qualification specifically in community work in New Zealand. The first students began in February 1992 and graduated in November 1993.

The Community Work Diploma is a full-time two year programme divided into classroom learning and fieldwork practice. The classroom programme is divided into 17 modules. A modular approach was adopted to facilitate offering the programme part-time and at a distance. The fieldwork component consists of extensive supervised practice in a community organisation. Appendix Five, the 1995 Brochure, gives more information about the programme.

To conclude this background section I need to locate myself, briefly, in this process. I began work as a Community Worker in 1980 in Cromwell, developing community responses to the social consequences of an increase in population
associated with the Clyde dam project. Since then I have worked with the Christchurch City Council as a Community Worker (1982-87), and the New Zealand Council for Education and training in the Social Services (NZCETSS) as a Regional Co-ordinator (1988-1993). NZCETSS is a government QUANGO set up to advise the Minister of Social Welfare on social services training needs. Since March 1993 I have worked as a tutor on the Community Work Diploma at Christchurch Polytechnic. I was a foundation member of the CCWA and became involved in the CCWTG in 1989.

My approach to community work education owes much to the liberatory theories of Paulo Freire and others. Freire contrasts "banking education" where students are passive receivers of established knowledge with liberatory education which poses participants as active creators of knowledge, able to reflect critically on their situation and change their actions accordingly. Education then becomes a dialectical process of action-reflection built up around issues (generative themes) relevant to the participants. The resulting analysis then leads to collective social and political action. (See Freire 1972, 1972a, 1985; Freire and Shor 1987, Mayo 1993.)

Latterly I have also been influenced by the ideas of post-structuralism. A post-structuralist critique of this pedagogy might leave the emancipatory, transformative and empowering aspects intact but challenge other aspects of liberatory pedagogy. Instead of power being seen as a monolithic, compelling force it is seen as a productive force present in all social situations. The dualism of oppressor and oppressed is replaced by the concept of multiple positioning dependent on the historical, institutional, and personal contexts of the situation. The grand narratives of Capitalism, Economism, etc, are replaced by the multiple discourses of knowledge - power. Finally the position of facilitator/co-ordinator/educator is made problematic, i.e. positioned as part of the social and institutional relations of power that s/he is trying to change. (See Ball, 1990; Foucault, 1977, 1980; Loveridge, 1992 and Weedon, 1987.)

Thus in this research project I draw on a number of different sources. In brief they can be summarised as:

(a) Reflecting on the issues outlined earlier (pages 4-6) and relating them to how the Community Work Diploma is currently structured, developed and taught.
(b) Discussions with colleagues involved with the Community Work Diploma and Community Work in general regarding the issues outlined earlier, the current state of the Diploma and whether it is fulfilling the education and training needs of community workers in the field.

(c) Discussions with current Diploma students regarding their perceptions of the Diploma, and whether it is fulfilling their needs.

The research project as I originally conceived it was to undertake an evaluation of aspects of the Community Work Diploma using an action-research methodology. Specifically my objectives in undertaking the research were:

1. To undertake a review of aspects of the Community Work Diploma relevant to the issues outlined in this section.

2. To gain an understanding of the action-research process.

3. To arrive at practical responses to the issues raised in the review.

More information about how the research proceeded is detailed in the process section.
ACTION-RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As stated in my original research proposal action-research is the procedure used to gather and analyse the data. Action-research is cited by a number of authors as a valid means of education professionals improving their teaching practice and the general educational milieu within which they operate (Altrichter, 1993; Altrichter et al 1993; Burns, 1994; Elliot, 1992; Hopkins, 1993; McKernan, 1991; Winter, 1989 and Zuber Skerritt, 1993; ). In addition some writers place emphasis on the possibilities for emancipation from traditional ways of thinking and doing things, transformation of organisational systems and critical awareness of our own role in the educational enterprise (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; McKernon, 1991; Winter, 1989 and Zuber Skerritt, 1993).

Action-research has been defined as:

The study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it. It aims to feed practical judgement in concrete situations, and the validity of the theories generated depends not so much on "scientific" tests of truth as on their usefulness in helping people to act more intelligently and skillfully. (J. Elliot, 1992, pg 69)

Action-research is a form of self reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social and educational practices, their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out. (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, pg 162)

Thus action-research is not a method of data analysis, neither is it characterised by specific methods; rather it is a methodologically consistent strategy aimed at helping those people directly concerned with a situation to articulate, validate and develop their views and to design action in order to improve the situation they live in.

Action-research’s claims to methodological uniqueness rest on a number of factors. Action-research does not separate out theory and practice; research on teaching and teaching based on research. Educational research is notorious for having little or no effect on what actually takes place in classrooms (Prof. Graham Nuttall, course notes EDUC 695, 1992). Why this is so is not the subject to be debated here. Suffice to say the concerns of researchers for academic rigour, "scientific" validity and publishability often do not meet with practitioners’ needs for practical solutions that can be easily carried out within often quite severe constraints of time, resources and institutional requirements. With action-research the non-
separation of theory and practice means that only relevant issues are studied. The likelihood that the issues identified will be acted upon is maximised by the researcher being intimately involved in the issues and events as they take place. The research can be undertaken either by an educationalist within the social situation to be studied or by an outside researcher. In either case the research is conducted on-site thus allowing contextual issues not only to be taken into account but also to influence the actual conduct, focus and outcome of the research. In fact it is often the case that the initial focus of the research will develop and change over the course of the project, in response to emerging issues, concerns and analysis. No attempt is made to isolate or manipulate key variables or to place controls on the subjects or objects of the research. In this sense the research is naturalistic (see Lincoln and Guba, 1985 and Patton, 1991). While acknowledging that the presence of a researcher (or the changed focus and role from tutor to researcher as the case may be) will undoubtedly change the dynamics and interactions of the situation being studied attempts are made to ensure that whatever data is gathered is validated by the subjects of the research and not by "objective" measures such as sampling, research design and statistical analysis. Finally the subjects of the research are not turned into objects but rather encouraged to be active participants in the research process. Dialogue and discourse analysis are encouraged with a view to reaching a reasoned critique of some aspect of social practice and arriving at suggestions for improvement. Underlying all this is a belief that research results are not to be reified and mystified by an academic register so obtuse as to confuse all but the most diligent of readings. Instead the collaborative, participatory, grounded nature of action-research has as its aim making external and explicit the everyday practices and lived experiences of participants in order that they may be examined and acted upon.

Carr and Kemmis (1986), McKernan (1991) and Zuber-Skerritt (1993) identify three categories of action-research: technical, practical and emancipatory. Technical action-research places the emphasis on the effectiveness and efficiency of performance. Based on the foundations of empirical enquiry, behaviourism and problem-solving, early practitioners such as Levin and Taba and Noel (Levin, 1947 and Taba and Noel, 1957, quoted in McKernan, 1991) saw themselves as social problem-solvers tackling "problems" as diverse as prejudice, eating habits and curriculum "problems". In more contemporary times this methodology has been evident in systems theorists’ organisational audits and efficiency and effectiveness studies.
Practical action-research places less emphasis on measurement and control and more on interpretation, interactive communication, negotiation and description. The goal is to understand practice and solve immediate problems. "As a theory of practice, action-research attempts to make a difference to how people behave or live their lives: to how they feel and think" (McKernan, 1991, pg 31). In broad outline this version of action-research is constructivist in orientation. When deciding on actions, people make a choice based on their present constructs or interpretations of the world. These constructs are subject to revision or change dependent on how we construct models or personal theories of the world. According to this version action-research makes explicit the "practical theories" by which we interpret the world, tests their validity in a particular practical situation and then modifies them accordingly (Zuber-Skerritt, 1993, pg 52-54).

Emancipatory action-research can be seen as critical theory in action (Hopkins, 1993, pg 46). Based on the work of Habermas and the development of what he called a "critical social science" (Habermas, 1972) critical theory rejects the positivist notions of Rationality Objectivity and Truth as outmoded artifacts of the modernist/enlightenment tradition. It replaces them with the notion that rationality, objectivity and truth are socially constructed and historically embedded. The instrumental approach to educational problem solving is replaced by the idea that educational problems are value laden moral concerns. The approach is based around the techniques of reflexive critique, collaborative reflection and strategic action aimed at transforming the consciousness of participants and acting on the environment in a way that responds to perceived rational contradictions.

Thus while retaining the emphasis on arriving at practical responses to educational situations emancipatory action-research adds the imperative that these actions must be seen as intricately interwoven with the social, historical and institutional contexts within which they take place. To fully understand the implications of proposed actions one must also understand the contexts. This method, therefore, places an emphasis on equipping participants with discursive, analytical and conceptual skills so they become a self-reflective group able to arrive at their own critique of a situation (see Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988; and Winter, 1989).

One way of understanding the steps involved in the action-research process is by the use of diagrams. Elliot (1991, pg 71), Kemmis and McTaggart (1988, pg 14),
McKernan (1991, pg 29) and Zuber-Skerritt (1993, pg 47) all use this approach. The diagrams vary in their labelling depending on which of the three types of action-research the author is a proponent of. Nonetheless all four authors describe a cyclical process that is potentially never ending, where the end point is arrived at on the basis of practical considerations of time, resources, the meeting of immediate needs and the like. A composite diagram of the steps involved might look like this (with alternative labels in brackets).

```
Plan  (Define Problem, Initial Reconnaissance)
↓
Act   (Implement, Action Steps, Deliberative Action
↓
Observe (Monitor, Document, Record)
↓
Reflect (Reconnaissance, evaluate)
↓
Plan  and so on
```

In terms of methods and techniques action-research practitioners tend to be eclectic in their approach, the idea seeming to be that you adopt whatever data gathering method is most appropriate at the time. McKernan (1991) lists 47 separate data gathering methods, Zuber-Skerritt (1993) places the emphasis on group techniques such as nominal group technique and repertory grid technique, while Winter (1989) mentions diaries, documentary evidence, observation notes, questionnaires, interviews, shadow studies, tape and video recording and still photographs. Altrichter, Posch and Somekh (1993) list 40 "methods and strategies", some of which appear to be data gathering methods, some methods of validation, while still others are to do with researcher motivation and clarification of thought and reflection. Nonetheless two trends appear to emerge: a tendency towards qualitative methods that assist in the illumination of meaning, interpretation and analysis such as case studies, interviews, observation of various sorts, and discussions of various sorts and techniques that aid the reflexive and reflective elements of action-research such as diary and journal keeping, analytic memos, "critical friends" and peer collaboration.
Action-research requires a different approach to measures of validity and reliability than those methods used in the positivist-based scientific method. By definition action-research studies are not replicable, based as they are in unique, naturalistic settings. Subjects are chosen not on the basis of a representative schema, but on the basis of the richness of the information they may provide. No variables are manipulated, so a control group in the sense implied by the positivist tradition is neither possible nor appropriate. Clearly then issues of reliability and validity need to be approached in a different manner. Lather (1988) coins the phrase "trustworthy" to denote the process of reconceptualising validity within the context of what she calls "openly ideological research" (Lather, 1986a, pg 63). Based on the foundations of a critique of positivism, a particular view of feminist research and post-structuralism Lather has developed a schema for deciding on "data trustworthiness in praxis-orientated research" (Lather, 1986b, pg 258).

Lather begins from a position openly oppositional to the positivist tradition of "hard" sciences' version of the scientific method with its insistence on "objective", culture-free research in the world "out there". The "found world view" is replaced by the "constructed world view". According to this view what we research and report on is only partly dependent on what is out there. It is just as dependent on what the researcher brings to the investigation: values, theoretical stance, political orientation, prior work and research experience, institutional setting, etc. The emphasis of this sort of research should be away from prediction, control and prescription and towards disclosure, advocacy and understanding patterns and meanings (Lather, 1992, pg 1-3; 1986a, pg 63-65; 1986b, pg 258-260).

Lather is equally critical of those who seem to believe that a rejection of the positivist tradition is an excuse for substandard research. In particular she recognises that in adopting an openly ideological basis for enquiry two clear dangers emerge. Firstly research may become theory driven rather than grounded in theory. The researcher may be inclined to impose (albeit unconsciously) her or his own interpretation on the data. In this sense research can become a self-fulfilling prophesy and rather than being emancipatory for the participants lead only to the imposition of the researchers' perspective onto the situation. Secondly research of this type is in danger of descending into relativism: a string of interesting case studies that are so particular they have no impact on either theory testing or theory development. In addition Lather is aware of the danger of imposing yet another set of experimental conditions that become a "successor regime" (Lather, 1992, pg 2) just as restrictive as the one it replaces. Instead
Lather proposes a number of principles to ensure that data may be trustworthy while still capturing the richness of human interaction. She describes these as:

Self Reflexivity: Lather advocates the creation of "suspicious readings". That is, the researcher gets down off the throne of universal interpreter of meaning and concentrates on creating space for those directly affected to speak for themselves. Having said that, she does not advocate an uncritical acceptance of participants' views of the world. Rather the research process should be a constant interrogation of self, theory, observation and participants' interpretations of the world.

Triangulation: In many ways this is a re-interpretation of a familiar concept. Lather advocates the use of multiple data sources, multiple methods of data collection and a willingness to seek to interpret data using alternative theoretical schemes.

Construct Validity requires two things. Firstly the researcher's interpretations should be constantly related to the ordinary experiences of people in their everyday lives to ensure the two are congruent. Secondly there should be evidence that the researcher's perspective has changed due to the logic of the data rather than data being used to legitimate predetermined theoretical positions. A priori theoretical positions are important to give initial shape to an investigation but conceptual over-determinism must be guarded against by checking that interpretations actually help to explain everyday experiences.

Face Validity relies on what Lather (1986a, pg 67) calls "member checks", i.e. recycling findings, analysis and interpretations back through participants. Tentative results are thus refined in the light of the subjects' reactions. This is not a chance for respondents to "take back" or "unsay" certain things nor is it an abdication of the researcher's responsibility to place some meaning on the data. Rather it is a process of negotiation of meaning, description and interpretation.

Catalytic Validity is related to Freire's concept of "conscientization". To what extent does the research process re-orientate, re-focus or energise participants. Rather than being the passive objects of research there should be some evidence that participants are the active subjects of the research, that the research has helped them understand some aspect of their lives, encouraged self-reflection or a change in behaviour or attitude.
These have been my primary means of ensuring the validity of the research findings. I will relate them to this research project in the section on methods. However since I have chosen to use an action-research method I should, perhaps, refer more directly to issues of quality control in action-research, and draw out the parallels between the two schema.

Altrichter (1993) also starts from a position oppositional to "the traditional-empirical, vaguely falsificationalist methodology" and the institutionalised, one best method of doing social research. He argues that for action-research to be "ethical" and have "valid" results it must involve all those concerned with a practical problem in a collaborative effort to change situations. Data must be confronted from the different perspectives of all the relevant social actors and any "discrepancies" accounted for by either changes in theory or action. Collaboration must extend through the interpretation of situations to the development of actions. Altrichter emphasises the "iterativity" of action-research. By this he means action-research must progress through several cycles of action-reflection before it can be said to be rigourous. This is similar to Lather's insistence that research interpretations should be constantly interrogated against people's everyday experience. Control of the research should be with those directly affected by the research and research reports should not be published without participants being given the opportunity to comment. This mirrors Lather's insistence on "member checks". While action-research cannot be replicated Altrichter advocates publishing, workshopping and otherwise publicising action-research projects in order that case studies can be critically discussed and contribute to theory building and theory testing. This mirrors Lather's views on theoretical triangulation and catalytic validity.

Thus we can see that although the two authors come from different perspectives on "trustworthiness" or "ethical quality", in practice they provide enough parallels to be a guide to quality in action-research.

In summary then within the chosen methodology of action-research the sub category of emancipatory action-research is seen as the most appropriate for this project. Its twin aims of finding practical solutions to practical problems and assisting with the transformation of participants thinking about their social situation are most congruent with the aims and philosophies of Community Work and the objectives of this research project. As a relatively new programme the Diploma in Community Work has encountered a number of practical difficulties in
establishing an integrated, coherent programme that reflects the principles and practice of community work. The debates outlined in the Background section have continued and been intensified by the reality of the Diploma. The background to this research project has therefore been dominated by two motivations: the desire for practical responses to some quite pressing practical problems and the desire to illuminate some of the issues outlined in the Background section from the point of view of some of the participants.

Having said that a word of caution needs to be added about the scope of the research project. The research reported on here is one cycle of the action-research process. As outlined earlier the full validity and usefulness of action-research only becomes apparent after a number of cycles of the action-research process. This is particularly true in regards to the consciousness transformation aspect of emancipatory action-research. The first cycle represents the initial probings of the meanings, interpretations and understandings of participants. It is also the time when participants, including the researcher, are getting used to the process and their part in it. Almost inevitably then this first cycle is dominated by the practical aspects of emancipatory action-research. From this first cycle will emerge some underlying themes, issues and discourses that can be picked up in the second and subsequent cycles and interrogated and explored by the participants. It is only after a number of cycles of the action-research process that a common understanding can be built up and strategic action based on a transformed consciousness can be planned.
PROCESS

The action-research methodology requires a different approach to reporting the research than research based on the positivist scientific method. Two characteristics are involved that mean the format of the action-research report differs from the positivist scientific report. Firstly the initial focus of the research is often modified in response to the data gathered and the ensuing discussions. Organising principles, interpretations of data, lines of enquiry, theoretical constructs and methods of data gathering can all develop in response to the findings. Secondly the action-research approach involves an inevitable narrowing of focus as the research progresses. You begin with a broad topic for investigation and gradually narrow the focus to particular issues which shed light on the broader question. This section describes both of these processes in relation to the research question and explains some of the reasons why the particular path taken was chosen.

Given the dual purpose of the research to investigate some of the dilemmas outlined in the Background section and to formulate some practical actions in response to the issues raised an initial theoretical stance was necessary as a starting point for the research. It was decided to concentrate the initial interviews on the issue of assessment and to investigate the hypothesis that "cultural capital" would be significant in predicting how successful students would be in passing the assessment instruments.

Bourdieu (1973) argues that education not only transmits culture but also transmits a particular relationship to culture which serves to legitimate the interests of the dominant groups in our society. Working class students do not fail because they are "disadvantaged", rather middle class students succeed because they are better resourced with appropriate "cultural capital". Cultural capital is knowledge transmitted within the family through socialisation and invested in the schooling system to produce academic capital and thus access to better paid jobs, social status, etc. Some forms of cultural capital have a higher exchange rate than others. Educational institutions make familiarity with the dominant culture a pre-requisite for success. Education contributes to the reproduction of the existing power structures by making the status quo seem legitimate and appropriate.

This conception seemed to embody two of the dilemmas outlined earlier. First, how could community work training, based as it is on social change towards a more
equitable distribution of resources be located in an institution central to the reproduction of the status quo, second was having open entry setting up those without the requisite cultural capital to fail the formal assessments.

My own observations after a year's tutoring on the Diploma suggested that those whose cultural capital was most congruent with the course requirements were achieving the best grades in the assessment instruments. These observations were supported by a research exercise undertaken by the other main course tutor Joanne Thomson. Joanne had investigated the destinations and perceptions of the course, of the first graduates six months after completing the course. One of the conclusions of that study was that those with the most appropriate cultural capital for the course requirements achieved the highest marks and were most likely to get paid employment on completion of the course (Thomson, 1994).

A chance meeting with a colleague from a similar institution running a similar course at the time I was compiling my first questionnaire suggested this was also a dilemma they were facing. This is how she described the dilemma:

Do you choose students with little formal educational experience/success who are good grassroots workers and perhaps set them up to fail if you are rigorous about standards of achievement OR are you flexible about standards to take account of people's different starting positions OR do you take on students with sufficient formal education skills to pass but who may not have the grassroots/community credibility?

The initial sampling for the interviews was designed to test the cultural capital hypothesis amongst the current Diploma students. Purposeful sampling was chosen as the method to select which students to interview. Patton (1990, pg 169) describes purposeful sampling as selecting "information rich" cases for study in depth. Information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research. He goes on to describe fifteen distinctive forms of purposeful sampling (ibid, pg 169-183). In this initial stage a combination of what Patton calls "stratified purposeful sampling" and "intensity sampling" was used to select the interviewees. Stratified purposeful sampling was used to obtain a list of student interviewees with high, medium and low cultural capital in relation to the course requirements and to reflect the spread of ages and gender balance within the course participants. Intensity sampling was used to choose interviewees who were likely to have definite thoughts, opinions and feelings about assessment issues.
Given that the students were all adults (23-43 years old) criteria had to be arrived at in deciding what was high, medium, and low cultural capital in relation to the course requirements. The following factors were identified. In each case a high rating equals high cultural capital:

- a family background that reflected the values, attitudes and skills inherent in formal education, e.g. parents or siblings with professional qualifications and/or jobs
- a positive experience of school
- regular paid work and the type of discipline that goes with it (as opposed to say the discipline that goes with bringing up a family on a benefit)
- the kind of work experience that required writing reports, understanding ideas and concepts and working in a self-directed manner
- a household living arrangement free of young children (or alternative arrangements for their care), interpersonal crises or other factors unconducive to "concentrated aloneness".

(Note: I already knew none had formal tertiary qualifications from information contained in the application forms.)

Thus the initial interview list had five students chosen on the basis outlined above and two tutors included to explore their perspectives on assessment.

After the first two student interviews it became clear that cultural capital was not going to be as useful at predicting assessment success as first thought. These first two students were chosen because they were perceived as having high cultural capital as defined above. In fact they both had low cultural capital as defined above and on further investigation it was established that all the students in the class had low cultural capital as defined here. Clearly the focus of the interviews had to change to take into account this new information. Clearly also this finding does not disprove the cultural capital hypothesis. It is too small a sample in too specific a set of circumstances for that. What it does do is indicate that an investigation into a set of background factors that may have predicted assessment success was unproductive at this time and was abandoned.

A new focus for the investigation now had to be found. The research proposal had as its central theme the contradictions inherent in offering a Diploma in Community Work and offering it within a mainstream tertiary education institution. Contradictions were identified in the areas of curriculum, assessment, teaching methods, student selection, ownership of the course and directions for
development. By this stage four interviews had taken place; two students and two tutors. These original themes were returned to and considered in light of the interviews already completed. From the resultant discussions five specific topics were chosen to report on in detail and arrive at some actions in response to the issues identified.

The five issues were chosen for the following reasons:

(a) they constituted microcosms or examples which embedded the dilemmas outlined previously;
(b) actions would be possible in response to the issues within the existing institutional frameworks;
(c) they were of a manageable size.

The issues chosen were:

i) general views on assessment;
ii) the grading of student assignments;
iii) the selection of students for the course
iv) the use of journals as a learning and assessment tool
v) the role of the Diploma Advisory Group.

To get as many different perspectives on these issues as possible and still remain within the original scope of 7-8 in-depth interviews the interview schedule was adjusted. Eight interviews were undertaken as follows:

Ann Diploma student 1993-94 (i.e. current)
Kate Diploma student 1993-94 (i.e. current)
Beth Rumney Head of Department, Health and Community Studies, Wanganui Polytechnic
Joanne Thomson Tutor, Community Studies Department, Christchurch Polytechnic
Mike Diploma student 1992-93 (i.e. graduated)
Ruth Evans Community Activities Officer, Christchurch City Council, Member of the Diploma Advisory Group
Joanne Thomson Second interview

(Note: Students’ names have been changed to protect their anonymity.)
In terms of objective 2 of this study, to learn more about the action-research method of enquiry, a note needs to be made about the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewees. I was not in the position of an outside researcher coming in to evaluate the programme. I had a prior relationship with all of the respondents. For the current students I was their primary tutor. I had tutored the ex-student on occasion and been involved in joint class activities with him. I had prior collegial relationships with all the other respondents. The existence of a prior relationship was both an advantage and a disadvantage. Establishing rapport was relatively easy and I was able to use my prior knowledge to probe in areas I knew were likely to be significant. On the other hand the existence of a prior relationship led to some blind spots and assumptions being made about what was meant by a particular phrase or expression without checking it out. This was particularly true with my first interview with Joanne Thomson. We had had so many conversations, arguments and discussions about the issues involved in the interview I often assumed I knew what she meant without actually checking it out. Some significant issues in the first interview were thus glossed over. The second interview with Joanne was a chance to further discuss some of these issues. As outlined previously the focus of the research changed significantly after the first interview with Joanne. The issues chosen for detailed reporting were all issues Joanne had had significant experience with; she was therefore likely to have some useful insights and perspectives to add to the discussions. The second interview with Joanne fulfilled the dual purpose of further exploring issues already raised and obtaining feedback on the new issues identified.

The existence of a prior relationship made it harder than I imagined to change from my previously existing role to the new role of researcher/interviewer. I found myself "correcting" students or "explaining" the reasons for something, and discussing and debating issues with colleagues rather than focussing on being clear about what they thought or felt. It was a skill I had achieved by the eighth interview but this role confusion certainly interfered with the quality of the early interviews, especially around topics I felt strongly about (see Elliot, 1992, pg 62-65).

The proposal submitted to the University Human Ethics Committee included an "action-enquiry seminar" (McKernan, 1991, pg 165) as the final part of the data gathering phase of the research. This was intended as both a "member check" (Lather, 1986a, pg 67) and as a means of discussing the issues with students who had not been part of the interview process. It was included when the research
process was conceived of as largely student-centred. As the research focus changed the logic of the action enquiry seminar was called into question. It was decided the member checking function could be carried out with interviewees individually. An action-enquiry seminar with all local participants could then become part of a second stage in the action-research process to feedback the initial results of the interviews to participants and plan the second phase of the process.

In summary the focus of the research changed in a major way over the duration of the research process. The initial focus was to explore the hypothesis that cultural capital was a significant predictor of students’ ability to pass the assessment instruments of the Diploma in Community Work. After the first four interviews it was clear that cultural capital as defined for the purposes of the research was not a significant predictive factor of assessment success for the students interviewed. The focus of the research process had to change. On reviewing the content of the first four interviews and considering the original purpose of the research the five topics outlined were chosen as the new focus for the research.
METHODS

As outlined in the Methodology section action-research methods can be divided into data gathering techniques and techniques that aid the research process, particularly the reflexive and reflective elements of action-research.

The main data gathering method employed was semi-structured, focused interviews constructed around a series of open ended questions and topic headings. These were supported by participant observation, document analysis and feeding back perceptions and interpretations to participants. The reflective elements of the research were assisted by the keeping of a research journal (Elliot, 1992, pg 76-77; McKernan, 1991, pg 84-94), the use of analytic memos (Elliot, 1992, pg 83; McKernan, 1991, pg 72-74) and the use of critical friends (Altrichter, 1993; Winter, 1989).

In all, eight in-depth interviews were carried out as outlined in the process section. Each interviewee was given a written information form and a written consent form as approved by the University Human Ethics Committee. All those approached for interview gave their permission. Additional information was given verbally at the time of seeking formal permission and the introduction to the interviews reiterated some of the main points of the research project. Interviewees were assured they could withdraw their consent at any time even if they had originally agreed to take part. None did so.

All interviews, with the exception of one, took place in my office. My desk is against the wall with a window to one side and a chair by the side of the desk. I sat at the desk, the interviewee in the chair to the side and the tape recorder in between us. Interviews took between one hour and one hour forty minutes to complete. All interviews were fully transcribed. The other interview took place in a colleague’s outer office with the two of us sitting either side of a coffee table with the tape recorder on the coffee table. Interviews took place at a variety of times, weather conditions and circumstances, etc, but all were within work hours. The circumstances of each interview are detailed in my research journal. It is difficult to state whether the circumstances of the interview affected the content or conduct of the interviews in any way. No holding back or reluctance on the part of interviewees was detected by the interviewer. One issue that was specifically alluded to in the interviews with students was the issue of power. Since the interviewer was the primary tutor, with the power of assessment, and because the
interviews took place half way through the course it was felt this could affect the students' comfort in being completely honest and frank. At the end of each student interview this issue was raised and an open question asked about how the interviewee felt about it. Both students reported it had no effect on their responses.

For each interview, topics, sub-topics and some possible prompts were written onto 6" x 4" file cards, one card per topic. These identified areas to be covered with the actual wording of the questions being left to the interview. The amount of time spent on each topic was also left open depending on the flow of the interview. All introductions to new topics and sub-topics took the form of open ended questions. Subsequent questions were aimed at following up the initial themes (see Patton, 1993, pg 278-337, for a discussion of questioning techniques).

For the first four interviews the interviewees were not informed in advance of the specific issues or questions to be covered. This was done because of the belief that spontaneous responses would be more "honest" than considered responses. On reflection and following discussion this reasoning seemed contrary to the experience of the author and supervisors. When considering complex issues a considered response is often a more complete reflection of an individual's thoughts and feelings than an immediate response affected as it is by the vagaries of mood, recent events, weather, etc. Thus it was decided that for the remaining four interviews the interviewees should be given a list of topics/questions a few days before the interview. In two cases (Ruth and Mike) this was done by phone and in two (John and Joanne(2)) they saw the actual interview schedule and the specific documents I wanted comments on.

It was difficult to detect any difference between the two methods in the quality of the answers, their extensiveness, or how the interviewees felt about the process. On balance, in the interests of respondents getting the maximum possible benefit from the experience I would tell interviewees the questions before the interview and leave them to decide how much prior consideration they gave to the questions. In the interests of catalytic validity this would give interviewees a greater feeling of being active subjects in the research rather than passive objects of the research.

The pattern of interview questions and topics reflects the progress of the research. The first four interviews were conducted when assessment was the main focus of the interviews. The remaining four interviews were conducted with the five topics
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Course pedagogy.
Accreditation.
NZQA framework.

Ruth:
Professional background.
Involvement in diploma.
Role of advisory group.
Student selection.
Course assessment.
NZQA framework/Unit standards for social services.

Mike:
(ex student)
School and work background.
Work since diploma completion.
General comments on diploma.
Student selection.
Diploma assessment general and specific.
Journals (including draft handout feedback).
Grading of student assessments.

John:
Professional background.
Student selection.
Student assessment.
NZQA framework/Unit standards for social services.
Role of advisory group.
Journals.
Grading of student assessments.

Joanne (2):
Student selection.
Grading of student assessments.
Role of advisory group.
Journals.

A research journal was kept during the data gathering phase of the research process. The purpose of the journal was to provide a running record of events as they happened; a personal account of observations, reactions, interpretations, reflections and explanations related to the research; a record of possible avenues for further enquiry; and a means to explore themes, commonalities and discrepancies as they emerged from the interviews. This provided the raw material
for a series of analytic memos. These were undertaken to explore concepts and analytic frameworks that might help to explain data contained in the interviews. All journal entries and analytic memos were read by my supervisors and formed the basis for ongoing discussions. This supervisory group performed the function of critical friends in helping with the development of the research, challenging my assumptions, and developing my critical analysis.

To conclude this section I will return to Lather's guides for trustworthiness and relate them to this study. Self reflexivity is provided for through the use of a research journal, analytic memos and critical friends. Triangulation is seen in terms of multiple data sources, multiple data collection methods and alternative schemes for interpretation. The use of multiple data sources was achieved by interviewing people whose positioning could reasonably be expected to give different perspectives on the Diploma and the issues identified. Data collection was mostly via in-depth interviews though some triangulation is provided by participant observation and document analysis (especially for the section on advisory groups). The project was not really extensive enough to bring into play alternative theoretical schemes but the abandoning of cultural capital as a predictive factor for assessment success demonstrates the potential in this area.

Construct validity is relatively easy to achieve with action research methods in that if the method is used as outlined earlier it will be very closely related to the "ordinary experiences of people in their everyday lives". In the case of this project it started from my ordinary experiences and was modified and grew as others' experiences were added to the melting pot. As these other perspectives were added my perceptions both in a general sense and as relates to the specific five topics changed markedly and resulted in some new ideas to be tried out in "reality".

Member checks have been mentioned already. At the end of each interview, interviewees were given the chance to review what they had said and modify it if they felt it necessary. More significantly once I had analysed the interview transcripts and identified those themes which seemed most significant to me these were fed back to the respondents to ensure the interpretations were accurate.

Catalytic validity is a bit more difficult to gauge for anyone but myself. Certainly the research process has refocused, re-energised and re-orientated me both in terms of general questions such as the nature of education, realistic roles for educators, issues of assessment methods, difficulties with the NZQA Framework
philosophy, the relationship of education to social change and more specific questions around the five topics chosen. For other participants conversations have suggested the process of taking part in the interviews has given a focus to their thinking about particular issues that would not have normally occurred in their everyday lives. The potential in this area has not been exploited to the fullest. If the project were to continue a more collaborative approach could be developed with benefits all round.

Given that this is the first cycle in an action-research process, and the size of the project the "truthfulness" criteria as set out have been reasonably well fulfilled. Some clear directions for the continuation of the project have been identified. For example implementing the outcomes and getting feedback, an action-enquiry seminar for participants, broadening the scope of participants, and sharing the results with other educators on similar courses. If these were implemented it would not only provide more valuable learning but increase the trustworthiness of this data.
RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

For each of the five issues chosen for further study I will outline the main points made by the interviewees and then outline the responses that have or will be made as a result.

1) Student Assessment

Results
To set the scene it is worth reiterating briefly the context of the interviews. The first four interviews were conducted when assessment was seen as the focus for the project but before the five specific issues had been defined. The first two student interviews with Ann and Kate, were conducted as if they were to be the first of five student interviews and at a time when "cultural capital" was seen as a possible predictive factor for assessment success. The remaining four interviews were conducted once the five specific issues were decided on. This had an effect on both the types of questions asked (see list in Methods section) and on my emphasis in probing and asking for elaborations. The emphasis in the first four interviews was to ascertain interviewees’ thoughts, feelings and understandings in relation to assessment. In the second four interviews the emphasis was on interviewees’ experience, thoughts, and reflections on the five topics outlined.

All three students interviewed saw the recognition of individual effort, the acknowledgement of individual attributes and talents, and the fact that people had different starting points as being important factors for assessment that were currently not being taken into account, to a sufficient degree.

Recognition of Individual Effort
Ann on the acknowledgement of individual effort:

I know that I’ve worked my guts out, I give it my best shot ... while others’ attitude is to slack around and they still achieve a pass.

and

At the other end of the scale there are probably other people who find it harder than me. I mean how do you assess that?

On the other hand Mike sees that those who do not put in the effort should also be dealt with:
If you are going to have a person bunking off for 20-30 percent of the time, that interferes with the group process. It is robbing me of my learning.

In a similar vein Kate wanted assessment to acknowledge the individual talents and attributes people have and not become too standardised.

... one of the things I found difficult to understand is that it [assessment] is standardised rather than individual ... if you look at our class there are all sorts of personalities and each of those personalities has skills of equal value in different spheres.

This was a theme developed at some length both in terms of education generally and in terms of the Diploma course in particular. When thinking of her own attributes Kate states:

... because I am more experienced with talking about things than writing them down, the standard of my work being gauged by my written work I don't think is a true indication of what I am capable of doing in the community.

**Different Starting Points**

In a similar vein, from a tutor's point of view, Joanne acknowledged that the current assessment instruments do not acknowledge people's different starting points.

... people are not starting from the same place. When you get the difference between someone like [name of student] who has been involved in community work for 15-20 years and a relative beginner then you really go back to the question of what are you grading a person on ...

Joanne goes on to discuss this dilemma in relation to students who speak English as a second language. The dilemma then becomes, do you write separate learning objectives and/or have separate assessment instruments to take account of this and if you do what are the implications when the student seeks employment?

Joanne also talks about different starting points in relation to course content areas and wonders whether this means we should introduce pre-requisites in this area or have extra tuition sessions for those "not up to speed". This will be discussed in more detail in the student selection section.
Purpose of Assessment
Mike sees the purpose of assessment as primarily for student development.

... to let them know where they are going, whether they're meeting the expectations ... I think this is the sole reason because it [assessment] is there to meet the students' needs and to let them know where they're going and where they need to improve.

Alongside this, most respondents believed that the recognition of a certain standard of achievement was also important. Let's start again with Ann, who acknowledges the community wants results.

... the community at large is really not going to give two shits about processes. They are going to be wanting results.

The message is repeated in other parts of the interview. Kate too is clear that the purpose of the Diploma is to get a job and in order for that to happen performance is the bottom line.

When talking of standards John raises the question of whose standards: employers' or the professions', and he suggests that each has its own often contradictory requirements. Looking back on 12 years of experience in this area John believes:

... we were too developmentally focused, too unwilling to take the hard decisions, to say you are not able to do this job to the standard that is expected of you by the employers.

and again that training providers have a duty to provide assessment that ensures:

... there is a standard that people have achieved before we will certify to employers and the community that this person is safe to practice.

John goes on to talk about the "conflict between equity goals and practice standards". This is a theme that comes through from all the tutors interviewed (Beth, Joanne, John) in relation to both assessment and student selection. Like Joanne, John talks about this issue in terms of students who have English as a second language. We will return to this again in considering student selection.

So in summary the central theme in the general discussions about assessment was the twin requirement to recognise individuality in terms of effort, starting points, different attributes and different cultural backgrounds and at the same time maintain standards so graduates will be employable. John and Joanne were asked for their solution to this dilemma and responded by restating the problem from a
different perspective. Further on John went on to say he thought the issue might be taken out of training providers' hands. The NZQA Qualifications Framework development of unit standards is purposefully employer driven. Employer interests, with some input from professional bodies and unions, are charged with writing the unit standards through the mechanism of National Standards Bodies (NSBs). Education and training providers will then become accountable to deliver the Unit Standards. John believes this will:

... promote greater competence, and if that is at the expense of individuality I would be prepared to go down that track to some extent. I prefer a more uniformly competent work force than some really good individual flare here and some abysmal practice there.

In terms of the conflict between the recognition of individuality and the maintenance of standards this will have the effect of shifting the emphasis more towards the maintenance of standards.

Timing of Assessment
The Diploma is based on a modular system of learning. By and large major assignments for particular modules are due at the end of the term that module is taught in. The point was made by Ann, Mike and Joanne that in subjects that require a lot of new learning, processing of information and reflection this is unfair in that students do not have enough time to fully understand a subject before having to do an assignment on it. Similarly their understanding at the end of the course may be far greater than at the end of the particular module. Clearly not all assessment can take place at the end of a two year course. On further analysis the interviewees seemed to be talking about modules with a lot of new information, requiring confrontation with personal values or new concepts to grasp. Thus, modules like Bicultural Development, Community Work theory and practice and Social Policy would benefit from longer processing time while more practical modules like Group Work Skills and Communication Skills need to be assessed as they are being taught. The institution of a summative assessment at the end of the two years goes some way to respond to this issue but clearly some thought about timing of assessments would be beneficial.

Outcomes
The importance of acknowledging and formally recognising individual effort, different starting points, and individual talents and attributes has been responded
to by the introduction, for the 1994 graduates, of individual student profiles. The provisions of the Privacy Act (1993) prevent me from including an example, so I will outline the format and content. Each student profile consists of four pages. The first page is a fairly conventional description of the course, module titles and hours of study, and a record of their marks for each of the formal assessments. The rest is divided into sections titled: Fieldwork Placements, Theoretical Understanding, Interpersonal Skills, Presentation Skills, Written Skills, Research Skills, Bicultural Understanding/Treaty of Waitangi, Recreation and General.

Comments under each heading are of two kinds. An attempt has been made to pull out some of the main points from the assessment schedules and state them in a narrative form. Comments include both strengths and abilities and areas where further work is required. Also included, where appropriate, are statements about graduates' commitment to the topic, progress made, time and energy put into the area and attitudes. It is hoped in this way to acknowledge some of the issues brought up in the interviews while still maintaining standards and being open about what those standards are. Feedback from students has been positive, though it is still too early to evaluate whether profiles will be of any use in obtaining employment.

From 1995 a 90 percent attendance at timetabled activities will be part of the course requirements. While this may at first glance seem a bit draconian for mature students a large proportion of the teaching/learning in the course requires group activities and discussions of various kinds. Students being away not only interferes with their own learning but also with the learning of others in the class.

At present all students receive with their assignment outlines a marking schedule stated in terms of learning objectives to be achieved, and where appropriate, with weightings for each learning objective. Both marks and written feedback have been based on the degree of attainment of the learning objectives. Verbal feedback has concentrated on both learning objectives and issues like effort, areas where progress has been made, and areas for further work etc. From 1995 marking schedules will be in two parts. The first part will remain as stated, an assessment of product, based on the degree of attainment of the learning objectives. The second part will be an assessment of process. Specific items or categories will be developed, as appropriate for each assignment, around areas such as:

- Comments identifying areas where significant progress has been made.
- Comments identifying parts which were of a particularly good standard.
- Comment on areas for future development separated into content and presentation.
- Comments intended to stimulate further thought.
- Comments identifying particular problems in a student's work.

(adapted from Winter 1989, pg 93-95).

Flexibility in allowing students to play to their strengths needs to be approached with some caution. Already some assignments can be done as either presentations or written assignments. However given that both presentation skills and written skills are part of the course objectives a balance needs to be achieved in developing existing skills and developing new skills. At this stage it is doubtful whether any major changes will take place. The balance between presentation skills and written skills was discussed extensively as part of the consultations that preceded setting up the course. The situation has been monitored since then by the tutors and course advisory group. Nonetheless having the issue raised during the interviews serves to remind me that it is a real issue for students and the situation needs to be periodically monitored.

To date formative assessment has not been undertaken in any systematic way. One way of responding to the issue of different starting points would be to have regular formative assessment and use the results to inform how the topic will be presented. Another way to respond to this issue would be to institute a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) system. I have some skill and experience in this area, but bringing it into play has had to wait until the Polytechnic has finalised its policies and procedures for RPL.

One way of responding to the issue of wanting open entry to training opportunities and not wanting to set people up to fail is to ensure that there is a graduated series of qualifications designed to meet the needs of people with various levels of experience and educational achievement. At the time all current students applied for entry onto the course the Diploma in Community Work was the only social services qualification offered by Christchurch Polytechnic. Since that time two new qualifications have been developed and are now available to students: the Community Skills Certificate and the Social Services Certificate. The Community Skills Certificate is an open entry certificate intended for those with little or no experience in the social services. The Social Services Certificate is the equivalent of one year's full-time study intended as a general initial qualification in the social
services. The Diploma can now more realistically concentrate on providing specialist training in community work for those with some educational and social services experience.

Finally for this section the issue of having to complete assignments with insufficient time available to research, process and think about a topic might be responded to by allowing an extra term for some assignments to be completed as an option. This runs up against another issue, that of spreading workloads and assignments throughout the year and another of allowing some people extra time as being seen as unfair by some students. Given that the role of assessment is to fairly assess students' understanding and give time for that to develop, the way forward might be to make the later date the actual due date but give students worried about workloads the chance to hand it in "early".

2. Grading of Student Assignments

Results
Before reviewing what the interviewees said about the grading system it is worth going over some of the details of the assessment system for the Diploma. When the Diploma was being developed there was a great deal of debate about the method of assessment most in tune with community work principles. Much of the debate centred around the dilemmas outlined on pages 4-6: not wanting to penalise those without formal educational experience, not wanting to create an "elite" of community workers and at the same time recognising the need for standards and the role of qualifications in getting paid employment. The original proposal presented to the Polytechnic in 1991 opted for a criterion referenced system with extensive feedback to students (see CCWTG 1991, pg 43-44).

For the first year of the Diploma (1992) all assignments were marked pass/fail, with a right to resubmit assignments. For the second year (1993) and third year (1994) students were marked on a 5 point scale:

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<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>needs lots of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>needs some work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>excellent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The automatic right to resubmit was retained. With both marking systems students received, along with the assignment outline a list of learning objectives for the assignment and a marking schedule and where appropriate weightings for each factor. These lists of learning objectives and marking schedules grew in specificity and extensiveness as the course developed.

The grading system was introduced in order to recognise varying levels of effort and achievement. Joanne the principal tutor at the time:

At the end of the first year when I did their reports ... it was becoming clear that some people were working a lot harder and producing a lot higher quality material but being assessed as pass or fail. So there was really no way of saying: "Hey this person has done an excellent job on this case study" or "this person has put a great deal of effort into this".

Similarly, Wanganui Polytechnic introduced a complete/incomplete/merit system for much the same reason. As Beth stated:

... there seemed to be no benefit in doing the work and doing it well and doing it on time ... so we have just introduced a merit system.

For the 10 years that John taught at the Auckland College of Education (ACE) a pass/fail system remained in place but the pressure for the change was there nonetheless.

Students often grumbled and said they wanted a grading system for those reasons but there was never a strong enough voice to change that...

ACE have since adopted a university style marking system largely to provide students with incentives to do well.

So the motivation for introducing a grading system is clear enough. What of the consequences? Mike who experienced both systems said he preferred the criterion referenced system so long as the criteria were clear. Standards based assessment he argued encourages views more in tune with the status quo.

... you get students' views that align themselves to the institution's view ... and they get a 5.

After a year of using the standards based system Joanne was aware of a number of limitations. Firstly the more able students benefit most.
... it was the more able students who benefited from it and the less able students were probably getting more negative feedback from me and felt more threatened and uncomfortable...

And similarly:

I think it brought up the kind of previous educational experiences that they had, where they had not felt valued, or they felt they were failing, and so it brought up past memories of discomfort and insecurity.

In other words in achievement based tests you either pass or fail. In the standards based schema adopted in 1993 it is not only possible to pass with distinction (good for able students) but to fail by a large margin (and dent further a student's already shaky self esteem).

For Joanne standards based assessment tends to be more tutor centred, the learning objectives and marking schedules more tightly defined thus giving clear signals to students but narrowing the possibility for flexibility, creativity and originality. For Joanne standards based assessment works against peer assessment and collaborative and co-operative learning by encouraging students to concentrate on their own grades. Similarly the need for tight standards at each level makes it harder to take account of students' different starting points or take account of students’ particular circumstances, e.g. students with English as a second language or students with specific learning difficulties.

From the other side of the coin standards based assessment was not adopted by the Auckland College of Education for many of the same reasons. From John’s point of view the reasons sounded like this:

... I wanted to get away from that kind of elitist dividing up of the class into A students through to the E students. I wanted to see some kind of reflection that a student was either competent to do something or needed to work more to achieve that level of competence ... It also got people on to the bandwagon of doing the assessment for the sake of the assessment to get an A as opposed to being a part of the course.

From this we can see there was a fair amount of consensus about the positives and negatives of each system. Whatever system is used all were clear that it is imperative students received extensive comments that explained the reasons for the mark. For instance John states:
... I think that students desperately need lots and lots of feedback... you have to give lots of feedback about what they did well and where they can develop...

Other than choosing one set of factors over another based on personal values or the philosophy of the programme none of the interviewees was able to provide a solution or response to this dilemma. This could be a fruitful next step, the subject of an action-enquiry seminar or similar.

**Outcomes**
The most immediate outcome in this section is a better understanding of the issues involved and a desire to investigate the issue in greater depth.

The issue may well become one where tutors and course co-ordinators do not have much choice. At present Christchurch Polytechnic's academic monitoring procedures are designed to ensure that there is a good match between the learning objectives of the course and the chosen assessment methods and marking schemes. This leaves a fair degree of freedom for tutors and Heads of Department to choose the appropriate methods for their course. With the advent of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) Qualifications Framework and the increasing influence of Industry Training Boards (ITOs) and National Standards Bodies (NSBs) there may be less flexibility in this area. NZQA has changed its mind frequently about whether to have a standards based or achievement based system and if standards based whether to have a five point or three point system. At the time the research was undertaken they favoured a three point standards based system (incomplete/complete/merit). (As reported to a lunchtime staff forum by the NZQA Polytechnic liaison person, July 1994.)

In the meantime some of the worst effects of a grading system could be alleviated by including some process based learning objectives in the marking scheme to give recognition to participatory and group work skills as well as to achievement outcomes. This was tried in the third term of 1994 with a problem-based learning exercise in organisational management. Assessment was divided into process, product and presentation items. This seemed to work reasonably well, and will be used more often in 1995.

Also worth investigating is the Wanganui Polytechnic scheme which gives recognition to students who have achieved a high standard while not making any
distinctions between those who have not reached the required standards. Thus the incentive and recognition factors are acknowledged while the negative factors are minimised. This system will be investigated further next year.

3. **Student Selection**

**Background**
Student selection was chosen as an issue that embodied the dilemma between providing open access to the course and the possibility of setting students up to fail. The course was set up with no academic or scholastic pre-requisites. The only pre-requisite was the equivalent of one year's full time community work experience. This was done with the aim of providing open access to the course to all community workers. At the commencement of the research project, after a year's tutoring, I had reached the point of thinking that while academic pre-requisites were undesirable for the reasons stated, skill, experience and knowledge pre-requisites were necessary if the Diploma was to remain at the same educational and vocational level and we were not going to set students up to fail. The programme was already full enough so as to make optional extras such as study skills or writing skills impractical. Optional extras are primarily for those students whose educational experience means they have some catching up to do, in order to have the skills necessary to pass the course. It is these students who are already the most burdened by the core course requirements without adding any extras.

The first two student interviews did not directly address issue of student selection, the emphasis at that stage being on assessment issues. The next four interviews were used to test and refine my perceptions in this area, and work towards a draft list of pre-requisites for course entry. The proposed pre-requisites (Appendix Two) were developed in August 1994 and used as part of the last two interviews (Joanne Part 2 and John) in order to obtain some specific comments regarding their appropriateness and usefulness.

The format of Appendix Two is designed to be in tune with the NZQA Assessment Framework's module descriptors. While I do not agree with the format or the philosophy behind it, it is the required format for the moderation and course approval processes. (See Willis, 1994, for a critique of the educational philosophy behind this format.)
The other factor covered in this section is the student selection process. The two key factors at the beginning of the research seemed to be the accuracy of the process, i.e. getting students on the course who were most suited to the course and community work and using a process that reflects community work principles and processes and the processes used in teaching the course.

Results
Given the foregoing, the analysis of student selection has been divided into three sub-sections: selection principles; selection criteria and pre-requisites; and the selection process.

i Selection Principles
All three tutors interviewed agreed that the selection criteria needed to give strong cognisance to what Beth called "equity principles". John expressed it this way:

... the fundamental thing [in terms of student selection] was the issue of social justice. We took the position that social welfare was all about social justice as well as individual aspirations. For too long in New Zealand we have had social welfare coming from one particular social, gender and academic background being social workers to people from other backgrounds. What we were trying to do was find ways in which we could bring people forward from the traditional "client population" to try and get a match between the people who were the social workers of the future and the people who they were going to work with. That was the guiding principle.

This led to an emphasis on cultural differences in selection criteria and selection processes. Questions like who does the selecting, who has the ability to assess, and what process would be used all had to be asked in relation to Maori, Pacific Island and Pakeha applicants. Only then could questions of selection criteria be addressed. By doing this however:

... maybe we were setting up some of those students to fail.

in that some of the students may not have had either the skills to meet the academic requirements of the course or to meet the work requirements of employing agencies.

The institution's response was to set up a quota system whereby half the places were for Maori, a quarter for Pacific Islanders and a quarter for Pakeha.
Beth expresses a commitment to a similar principle and insists the institution has an obligation to take "risks" on the basis of equity. The risk referred to is that the student won't be able to complete the course, or that standards may be compromised if s/he does complete the course.

If you have a dilemma between maintaining standards and wanting to see equity principles reflected in student selection it sets up another dilemma namely should the skills and experience necessary to complete the course be set as pre-requisites or built into the course as "add ons" or "options" for those students who need them. Joanne, when talking about written skills and group work skills states:

... you either teach those skills in the course or they come with them and there is some means of testing whether they have got them before they come on the course.

On balance Joanne favours the use of pre-requisites in that:

Building more things into the course is problematic when it has so much content anyway.

and

... you might be practising a bit of affirmative action by selecting someone, but would you be doing them any favours if you then got them into a situation where they can't possibly succeed?

With some factors John takes a different approach in seeing that skills like written skills and study skills should be canvassed at selection time not as part of the selection criteria but in order to set up a contract with each student to assist them to complete the course (H 7). Questions in the selection process about written skills, analytic ability comprehension and general literacy skills are asked to get:

... a picture of what sort of assistance those students would require as opposed to selecting them in or out...

In summary all three tutors agreed that "equity principles" need to be considered when selecting students for social services courses. Two tutors agreed that the dilemma between the equity principle and the protection of course standards could be responded to by providing extra tuition to those who need it while one tutor felt this would be a greater burden on those already struggling with the core requirements.
Selection Criteria/Pre-requisites

In this area there was a fair amount of agreement as to the criteria necessary to enter a course at this level in the social services field but some difference about how to measure these criteria.

On reviewing the interviews it becomes apparent that there is a general lack of precision on the part of both the interviewer and the interviewees about the difference between selection criteria and pre-requisites. Most of the time they seem to be used interchangeably. This lack of precision follows through to the document "Community Work Diploma: Entry Pre-requisites" (Appendix 2). On reflection it seems some of the elements, e.g. 500 hours supervised practice, are pre-requisites and some are selection criteria, e.g. self awareness, in the sense that pre-requisites are finite requirements that must be met in order to become part of the selection pool while selection criteria are more continuaums with no definable end points along which candidates can be placed both in comparison to one another and in relation to the requirements of the course. This would be an area warranting further investigation in the next phase of the action-research spiral. For the time being it is enough to consider that these are factors that interviewees saw were important to consider when choosing applicants for a course of this nature.

Considering the number of factors involved and the degree of agreement between interviewees one way to present the information is by way of a grid with quotes to illuminate what the interviewees meant and draw attention to particular issues. It is worth noting here that many of the factors mentioned went under-defined and under-described. This was one area that was particularly susceptible to the interviewer and interviewee assuming that each knew what the other was talking about and only sometimes were clarifying statements sought by the interviewer or offered by the interviewee.
### Figure One: Student Selection Criteria/Pre-requisites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Joanne</th>
<th>John</th>
<th>Beth</th>
<th>Ruth</th>
<th>Mike</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work Experience</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work skills</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of theory</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written communication skills</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral communication skills</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervening Personal issues</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research/study skills</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to occupational area</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self awareness/ personal qualities</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural sensitivity/ NZ Society</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** * This was regarded by the Auckland College of Education not as a selection factor but as an area where information was sought in order to contract for support/tuition if necessary.

It is significant to note that all factors were seen as important by more than one person. All but one identified work experience in the area of the course as an important selection criteria. It is interesting to note that this sets social services education and training somewhat apart from other professional and occupational training programmes which are by and large pre-service training courses. The quality of this experience was seen as being more important than the length. Ruth stated:

... they could have been watering the plants in a community group for a year and that wouldn't necessarily bring them up to the standard that was required to go on the Diploma.
Equally important for Joanne was that the experience was not just in one community group doing one sort of task. Mike saw the type of experience that participants brought to the course as crucial. It needed to be specific to the area of the course. In the case of the Community Work Diploma the experience had to be of community work rather than general social services work. On the other hand Mike also saw the dangers of becoming too stringent about what constitutes community work, particularly concerning the debates between radical social change processes and more developmental approaches. The course has to cater for all shades of philosophy within the community work field.

Group work skills was left underdefined, but seemed to have two strands to it. One was to do with the pedagogy of the courses, in that all three courses placed an emphasis on group learning processes of various sorts. In order for this learning to be effective a certain basic level of group work skill was necessary. John put it this way:

... a great deal of what we did at the College required skills in functioning in group settings.

The other strand was to do with the outcomes for the courses. At the end of the course participants are expected to have a fairly high level of group work skills and if they don’t start at least some way along the track it is too much distance to cover in two years.

Joanne conceives of written communication skills as:

... the ability to express ideas in writing, to answer the question of the assignment, to write in paragraphs and summarise, to not just describe but to analyse, the ability to reference things clearly, to have a bibliography, to have a thesis, to write an argument and back it up with secondary sources ... all of those things.

Again it was thought if students don’t have these skills at the beginning of the course they have to concentrate on trying to learn the skill rather than applying it to the particular issues of community work.

Oral communication skills was similar to group work skills in that it had the two strands of course requirements and eventual employment requirements.

The category "Intervening Personal Issues" requires some explanation. The label is mine, an attempt to summarise an issue both Ruth and John thought to be of some
importance. You will recall John placed some emphasis on social service workers being drawn from the social groups they are to work with. At times this means drawing on people:

... who had experienced being clients of the social services, the health system or the justice system or whatever and had learnt something from that process and wanted to put that learning at the disposal of others like them...

The trick was identifying the difference between what John called "victims" and "survivors", i.e. those still going through the process for themselves and those to whom the experience was sufficiently distant for them to be able to help others to go through the process. In some cases, such as people with addictions, rules could be applied such as anybody wanting to train in the addictions field "had to be clean for 2-3 years". In other areas the panel’s judgement needed to be relied upon. Ruth was perhaps a little more blunt in requiring that students "had their shit together" and didn't use the group learning process to pursue their own personal issues.

In view of the provisions of the Human Rights Act it is worth noting that when Joanne and Beth identified "Health" as a selection criteria it was "in so far as it may affect their ability to complete the programme" and not as a sorting mechanism.

On presenting the list of proposed entry pre-requisites to Joanne and John for comment, Joanne’s comments were mainly around "technical" issues: the lack of clear performance criteria and standards statements particularly. Also of concern was that it is not clear what group work perspective is being talked about. Group work can be seen as located in a number of different discourses: social work, counselling, and therapeutic discourses, as well as community work, and is not seen as a generic skill transferable across disciplines. Further on Joanne makes a similar point about report writing. Because someone can write a report in one context (say City Council meeting reports) doesn’t mean they can write a report in another (e.g. Probation Court reports).

To my way of thinking all these criticisms, though valid, are criticisms of the format and its underlying philosophy, rather than the actual entry requirements. In the quest to become more specific, transparent, use observable behaviours, specify the level of skill etc, you run the danger of losing sight of the purpose of student selection without any gains in student empowerment or institutional accountability.
The goal, it seems to me, is to be able to state the requirements in such a way as to make it clear to students/applicants what is being asked for but without losing the flexibility to respond to the individuality of each person or to obscure the fact that however finely tuned the criteria decisions will in the end be based on the collective judgement of the interview panel.

Before moving on it seems pertinent to point out the parallels with the students' requirements for assessment. They wanted both clear standards and room for recognition of individual effort and ability. The parallel here is if the entry requirements become too specific they will lose any ability to respond to individual cases on their merits.

### iii Selection Processes

If there was a fair degree of agreement on selection criteria there was almost no agreement on selection processes.

Ruth favoured a pre-selection based on the written applications, selecting out those that did not have the requirements particularly in terms of community work experience. Then a panel of two community workers and one tutor would interview each short listed candidate using an interview schedule. The model used was that of a job interview with each panel member rating candidates in each factor and then comparing notes. Ruth had no misgivings about this process. It is worth noting that the information giving component that both Beth and John mentioned as part of their interview process was, for the Diploma, carried out some three weeks before the closing date for applications and was seen as part of a self selection process.

For Beth no pre-selection or short-listing took place. All candidates were invited in for a whole day. The first part of the day was information giving, by both the tutors and current students, about course content, structure and teaching style. Then applicants took part in a series of group exercises. Decisions were made by the tutors as a group, with no outside involvement, based on the written application and observations of interactions in the groups. Individual interviews were only held if there was some doubt about the suitability of a candidate. The emphasis was placed on group processes as this was felt to be the method that best mirrors the processes used on the course. Beth stated that after some initial wariness students were positive about the process.
... that [student feedback] has been very, very positive. We've had students who were initially quite wary about it as a process, who felt they couldn't sell themselves in that way, who were only used to interviews and at the end of the day telling us how they have enjoyed it.

and

... in fact we are getting a much clearer picture about each applicant than you do in an individual interview.

John’s experience of selection processes spans the years 1975-1991 in two institutions: Victoria University and Auckland College of Education (ACE). The experience drawn on here is primarily the experience at ACE. For ACE the selection process began with a detailed application form. Then three staff members and three community people read all applications and ranked them on a four point scale: yes, yes maybe, no maybe, no. From discussions a list of candidates to be interviewed was arrived at. All these candidates are invited into the College for a session of information, introductions and a tour of the campus. All candidates were then interviewed by their cultural group. John was involved in the Pakeha selection process. The panel consisted of a tutor and either a Maori member of staff or a Maori community member with social work experience. The interview time consisted of two parts, the interview as such based on the points outlined in Appendix Three and a written exercise. The purpose of the written exercise changed over time, sometimes being to do with values clarification, sometimes analytical skills, and sometimes the written skills themselves. As pointed out earlier the purpose of this exercise was not so much to select people in or out but to give tutors information to develop a support and tuition programme. Group exercises of various kinds had been tried over the years but were discarded, for two main reasons:

... it was very clear every year that there were far more student applications than there were student places, and it struck us after a couple of years it was an absurdity to ask students to be co-operative in a competitive environment.

and

... we found it inevitable that when we came to the meetings to discuss selection that the learning we got from the group exercises always took second place to the insights we got during interviews.
and

I would never rely on a Pakeha setting, on a group process alone. I think Pakeha applicants desperately need some private space to be interviewed on their own.

John, Joanne and Ruth mentioned that there was a need for people outside the institution to be involved in the selection process in order to provide for accountability, credibility and relevance. John states:

... there is one thing I would definitely not do. I would never ever undertake selection of students on a course in any form of social services relying on the staff only of the particular institution. You can’t afford to get that remote from the community, that you are the only ones to judge someone’s suitability.

For a dissenting opinion Beth stated that tutors were and should be the only ones involved in student selection.

To summarise this section then there was not a lot of agreement on the selection process: two had a short listing process, one didn’t; two had panel interviews, one didn’t; two had outside involvemen, one didn’t; two had information giving as a part of the interview process, one as part of the application process; one placed great emphasis on the cultural dimension, two didn’t; one placed emphasis on group process, one had discarded group process and one had not tried it.

Outcomes

This section was divided into three sub sections: selection principles, selection processes and selection criteria/pre-requisites. The interviews indicated almost no commonality in the interview processes used. Having experimented with various options over a period of twelve years, the Auckland College of Education School of Social Work, at the time John left, relied on short listing from application forms and individual student interviews to choose the Pakeha students for the course. In contrast Wanganui Polytechnic had no short listing process with student selection based on group processes. Those involved with the Diploma in Community Work (Joanne, and Ruth) expressed no dissatisfaction with the selection process used in 1994. In view of the lack of a perceived problem and conflict over a "solution" it was decided to maintain the status quo with regards to the selection process.

As a result of the first six interviews the entry pre-requisites outlined in Appendix Two were developed and as a result of the final two interviews, fine tuned. They
have subsequently been approved by the Head of Department and included in the course information brochure for 1995. The 1995 application form and referees' forms have been altered to include information regarding the pre-requisites. The criteria outlined will also be used as part of the selection process. The next stage of the process will be to interview those involved in the 1995 selection process to obtain their views on the selection criteria and the selection process.

4. Journals

Background
Journals were chosen as a topic for more in-depth study for a number of reasons. Once we had decided on assessment as the main topic for enquiry and had done the first two student interviews it became clear that in order to put the general assessment issues into a context, a specific assessment instrument needed to be studied in some depth. From the first four interviews three assessment measures emerged as possibilities for further study: journals, assessment of placements and the summative assessment. The first was an issue for both students and tutors while the second two were issues the tutors identified. Also we wanted to highlight an assessment instrument that had particular relevance to community work. Some of the other forms of assessment, e.g. research assignments, social policy assignments, New Zealand history presentations, could have easily had a home in other courses both in terms of content and format. Finally both main tutors on the course had misgivings about the way journals were used and assessed. Some of these concerns included:

- The written nature of journals disadvantaged those who were not comfortable with written expression.

- Some journal exercises and time was given in class to do journal work but the nature of journals meant a lot of individual time also needed to go into them. This often seemed to students a burden that interrupted the usefulness of journals as a learning tool.

- Questions remained about whether journals should be assessed and if so how, and on what criteria.

- Questions also remained about the level of confidentiality of journals. On the one hand an absolute free flow of ideas, thoughts, feelings, reactions, etc, is important for the success of journals as learning tools and on the other some students felt constrained by the fact journals would be both seen by the tutor and marked.
Taking these factors into consideration the use of journals as a learning tool seemed worthy of more in-depth examination.

A similar process was used as with the course entry requirements. That is, the first six interviews were used as a means of getting feedback on journals. A handout was then developed (Appendix One) along with ideas on how it might be applied. The last two interviews obtained some initial feedback on the proposal. Again if the action research cycle were to continue the next thing to do would be to use the new guidelines as a teaching tool and get feedback from the students and tutors about how it went.

The status quo at the beginning of the research period in regards to journals was something like this. In its ideal form community work should be based around an action-reflection-action mode of work. Although much community work is eclectic, this particular process is clearly based on the ideas of Paulo Freire. The role of the community worker is as problem poser, resource person and facilitator. For a community worker to take on the role of "conscientization" and avoid the pitfalls of imposition, theory-determination and plain big-headedness requires the development of a reflective and reflexive practitioner who is able to stand back from a situation and dispassionately analyse it, including their role in the proceedings. For community work courses two issues emerge: how do you facilitate the learning of this process and how do you reassure yourself and the community that graduates are able and habitual users of the process. Journals were introduced in as both a tool in learning the action-reflection process and a means of developing and monitoring the learning of the process and ultimately assessing it.

For year one students in 1993 journals were compulsory and worth 20 percent of the final grade for that year. In 1994 they became, for the same students, voluntary while we reassessed their use. In 1993 students were required to hand them in at the end of each term for "marking". The idea that it was the process that was "marked" and given feedback on rather than the content was often difficult to explain. Particularly when faced with actual entries the distinction was often not that clear cut. A handout was given out at the beginning of the year and a series of exercises was undertaken in class time throughout the year. At the end of the year students were marked on the same five point scale as for other assignments. Feedback was both by way of written comments and discussion with students.
Results
In discussing the interviews in relation to the journals I've opted to divide the feedback between students and tutors. Students Ann and Mike saw journals as basically a good idea but had serious reservations about aspects of how they were used and assessed. Mike put it this way:

Journals, great idea, personal reflection, excellent idea.

Ann expressed reservations about both the confidentiality of the journal and the reliance on just the tutor marking it.

... I don't think I have strong, strong objections to you reading my journal but I find the thought of you reading my journal restrictive. I found my journal a really good tool in that whole process [action-reflection] but the thought that you are going to read it inhibits.

Similarly it is a characteristic of the action-reflection process that opinions, thoughts, etc, change over time. For whatever reason by the time the student comes to discuss the topic with the tutor (or supervisor) there may be aspects of the process of working through the issues that the student does not want to share. Ann felt the student should always have that right.

One solution to this problem suggested by Ann was that the tutor should discuss the journal with the student but not actually read it. The student then could use journal entries as a reference point and reminder but in discussion would be free to edit out particular comments or statements. Ann also thought the journal should be partly self assessed as well as tutor assessed.

When asked directly about the issue of confidentiality and the issue of the tutor reading and assessing journals Mike stated he had no problem with either. However he did have some reservations about how journals were used. Journal assessment was too infrequent and relied only on the tutor's perspective. He suggested that journals could be used as a tool to facilitate and reflect on group discussions in class. Students would individually write in their journals about an issue, discuss it as a group, feedback the collective ideas to the tutor/rest of the class and then write further in their journals as a result of the collective discussions. Feedback like this would be less threatening to students and still practise the action-reflection process. Peer assessment could also be built into this process. Mike also suggested journals should not be a compulsory part of the whole course but were more suited to the early part of the course and for particular modules or aspects of the course that required personal reflection. The
bicultural development module and placements were mentioned as specific examples.

Turning now to the tutor interviews Joanne saw journals as of "dual educational benefit" in that they helped students practice action-reflection processes and increased their "language ability". For Joanne community work is characterised by periods of "frenetic" activity and periods where things are "quite slow". The slow periods can be used to reflect on what is being achieved. Journals are good for practising things like "accountability" and "strategising". However they should be regarded as just one tool amongst many and not focused on exclusively. In regards to the reliance on written skills for the success of journals, Joanne raised the possibility of using oral, tape recorded journals.

John had not used journals as such as part of his teaching but could see the sense of using journals for both "developmental processes and as an action-reflection method of learning". Journals could be particularly useful for practice learning to "relate the theoretical input of the course to their practical work in the field". Students would record events, issues etc on placement and then use the record as a basis of tutorial or supervisory discussions. Journals could also be used as a tool to develop recording and observational skills.

In contrast to Ann and John neither Kate nor Beth mentioned journals. Their interviews took place before journals were settled on as a particular focus and neither mentioned them spontaneously in response to questions about specific assessment instruments. A next step in the process could have been to go back to these two interviewees and ask them specific questions about their reactions to journals in general and the proposed journal handout and process.

In summary there was general agreement between students and tutors that journals are useful in establishing and developing skills in reflection, observation and recording with the purpose of developing more strategic action. However students had some criticism to do with the confidentiality of journal entries, how and by whom journals were assessed and when the use of journals was most beneficial. Tutors would like to see the journal given less prominence and become just one tool in developing the action-reflection-action process rather than the main tool.
A similar process was undertaken with the journals as with Selection Criteria. After the sixth interview, the journal handout (Appendix) was prepared and shown to the final two interviewees for comment. It will now be used as the basis for journal writing in 1995. It is worth noting some of the changes that are proposed. First and foremost a change in perception of the role of journals in the course has occurred as a result of the research. Previously journals were seen as one of the key methods of both developing and assessing the skills required to become a reflective worker. As such journals accounted for 20 percent of the final mark for the year 1 assessment. Our perception has changed so that journals are now seen as one tool for developing the action-reflection process. The major changes to be instituted in 1995 are:

- Journals will not be compulsory throughout the two years but form part of specific modules (Community Work Theory and Practice, Social Policy, Bicultural Development) and Fieldwork practice. At other times they will be encouraged but voluntary.
- Journals will not be assessed as a separate entity but as part of the assessment for the modules mentioned.
- Journals will be confidential to the student. The tutor will not read the journal, unless requested to do so. Instead the journal entries will be used as a basis for discussion with the tutor(s). These discussions will be the basis for the ongoing development of skills and the assessment.
- More class time will be spent doing journal and writing exercises. It is acknowledged that more time needs to be spent in developing the skills necessary for successful journal writing.
- More emphasis will be placed on group exercises in developing the use of the journal and in peer feedback and assessment.

In a process similar to that adopted for the selection criteria/pre-requisites the next step will be to interview, or otherwise discuss with the students and tutors using the new system, how the modifications have worked.

5. Advisory Groups

Background
Before reviewing what individual interviewees said about the topic it is worthwhile briefly reviewing the history of the development of the three programmes the
interviewees were involved in and seeing how that relates to the issue of advisory groups.

The Christchurch Community Work Diploma was developed over a number of years by the Canterbury Community Work Training Group and taken to the Christchurch Polytechnic as a proposal developed for and by community workers in Christchurch. As was stated in the initial brochure it was intended to be run as a three-way partnership between the Polytechnic, the Community Work Training Group and a Maori advisory group.

In contrast the Wanganui programme was developed at the initiative of the Polytechnic and more particularly by staff within the Health and Community Studies Department. While this was clearly in response to needs identified in the community and was undertaken in consultation with the community the ownership and initiative for the programme was clearly with the Polytechnic.

The Auckland College of Education programme was different again in that it was initiated by community and political pressure groups dissatisfied with the number of places available on social work training programmes in Auckland. The type of education available also put pressure on the College for a programme to be established outside the University system. The programme was initially designed to include the needs of youth and community work training and the needs of the Maori and Pacific Island communities. These different histories are reflected in the way the interviewees saw the role, function and importance of advisory groups.

Results
Looking back on two years involvement with the Community Work Diploma Joanne saw the lack of development of an effective advisory group as one of the "key glitches":

One of the issues that we really blew was not having a thriving advisory group. I'd look back at that as one of the key glitches...

For Joanne the advisory group would have looked at issues such as student welfare, assessment, monitoring of the curriculum, student selection and maintaining a connection with the community.

The 1991 course brochure stated that the Diploma was:
A joint venture between Christchurch Polytechnic and the Canterbury Community Work Training Group.

However this arrangement was never formalised. As Joanne states:

... there seemed to be some discomfort with the idea of a community group having a strong involvement with curriculum issues, with student issues, with things that were regarded as educational issues. There was some acceptance that the CWTC would be involved in things like being the community work network that we would arrange placements through ... although it was requested the role of the CWTC was never formalised.

What is more, the model of partnership was never finalised either in the broad brush of roles and functions or in the detail of meeting procedure, voting etc, despite a number of attempts at making this happen. In summary Joanne believed:

... if you want to keep community work alive and distinctive as a separate discourse ... then that [an advisory group] was the thing that would have made it separate. It was the line of accountability between the community and the Polytechnic ... There had to be some influence from the community in terms of decision making processes, the way things were taught, the content, evaluation, the placements, the cultural input.

With a strong advisory group it would be possible for:

... the Diploma to feed community work and community work could feed the Diploma. It could be a reciprocal relationship that could be mutually beneficial.

and

... community work is changing constantly and without the continued renewed input from people in the industry then I think the course will atrophy or lose a lot of its freshness and currentness...

Speaking of the same programme Ruth considered the roles of the advisory group to be similar and its role equally crucial. Ruth saw the advisory group as primarily a forum where issues arising from the four principal groups involved in the Diploma could be discussed and resolved: those groups being students, tutors, community workers and the community in general and the Polytechnic. More specifically the advisory group should have roles in ensuring accountability, student welfare, monitoring of content and assessment, planning and evaluation of the course and student selection. Again the failure to develop an effective advisory group was seen as a key weakness in the Diploma.
I think it [the lack of an advisory group] has been a real detriment to the effectiveness of the Diploma and its credibility within the community.

Further Ruth went on to state the advisory group should comprise representatives from the Community Work Training Group, the Polytechnic, tutors, Maori community and Pacific Island communities. Students should have the right to make representations at any time but not to have a formal representative on the group, primarily because of the unenviable position that would put the student representative in, with regards to discussing other students’ work, and being a party to confidential discussions.

As stated earlier the Auckland College of Education programme arose out of a general community concern that there were not enough training places available in social work in Auckland and the nature of the existing programmes did not reflect community needs, particularly the needs of the Maori and Pacific Island communities and the need for training with a youth and community work focus. Thus the initial advisory group was set up to develop the course, select staff, and get the course off the ground. This initial advisory group was "high powered", formally run and expensive to maintain as some of its members were from outside Auckland. As time went on more and more functions of the advisory group were taken on by staff and the College Council. Within three years of starting the course had no advisory group. After a major community consultation in 1984/85 questions began to arise about "how closely connected with the community the course was" and there was:

... quite a lot of criticism that we were not in touch with the community.

Competing community interests particularly around issues of bicultural policy meant ACE staff found it easier to pursue their own developmental policies without inviting community conflicts to be played out in their institution. Effectively there was no advisory group for the rest of the time John was at ACE.

In retrospect John felt that:

... we were out of touch in that the community wasn’t moving in the same direction as us and we weren’t moving in the same direction as the community.

The Wanganui Polytechnic case is different again in that the Diploma course was developed on the initiative of the staff of the Polytechnic. Thus while Beth saw the
role of the advisory group as important in ensuring credibility, accountability and relevance it was also clear that advisory groups should not get involved in specific course issues:

... We don't want them [the advisory group] totally dictating what the Polytechnic does, we don't want the advisory group dictating what the programme does. We're putting ideas to them and they don't have the power to totally override them, it is more for feedback.

In summary, the perceived role and function of advisory groups depends on where the initiative for the course came from and the position of the person making the observation. Those associated with courses that were initiated in the community saw the role of an advisory group as being crucial and having a definite decision and policy making role. Those associated with courses initiated within the institution still saw advisory groups as important but only in a consultancy role, with the power of policy and decision making remaining with the institution.

Outcomes
Before relating what the interviewees said about advisory groups to the Diploma in Community Work it is worth considering the history leading up to the establishment of the Diploma and its effect on the need for an advisory group. The Diploma was developed on the initiative of the Canterbury Community Work Training Group (CCWTG). During 1990 three people were employed by the CCWTG to consult with the Maori, Pacific Islands and General communities, about the establishment, content and control of the Diploma. At the end of 1990 a hui was held at the then Maatua Whangai base and a Maori Advisory Group was established. The initial brochure for the 1991 intake stated:

"The diploma will be overseen by an Advisory Committee and a Maori Caucus.

Due to the difficulty in attracting and maintaining willing and able members, the Maori Advisory Group never really functioned effectively despite continued efforts throughout 1991.

The original proposal presented to Christchurch Polytechnic (CCWTG, 1991) included a recommendation on the composition and function of an advisory group (Appendix 4, part i). By the time the Diploma was established it was clear that events in the "reform" of the tertiary education sector had made some of the proposed functions and methods of operation inappropriate or unworkable.
Nonetheless the idea that an advisory group was necessary to maintain the integrity and relevance of the programme was accepted by the Head of Department, Community Studies in whose department the Diploma was located, and actively promoted by the CCWTG.

Throughout 1992 the CCWTG acted as the advisory group with the understanding that a more permanent arrangement was being organised. The 1993 brochure continued to advertise the course as a joint venture between the Polytechnic and the CCWTG. During 1993 major efforts were made to establish an advisory group. Debate centred around whether to have a Diploma Advisory Group or a Social Services Advisory Group with a Diploma sub-group. By August 1993 the latter was decided on and the guidelines attached as Appendix 4 part ii were drawn up. For reasons still unclear to me the guidelines were never actioned by the Head of Department.

In mid-1994 a small group, including three members from the community, met to discuss developments within the social services section of the Community Studies Department. This group continued to push for the establishment of an Advisory Group.

At the time of writing, the HOD Community Studies, is planning to establish a consultative group in early 1995. The group's task will be to advise on the development of social services programmes within the Department, and establish a Social Services Advisory Group.

The foregoing is not intended as a thorough examination of the events that took place nor is it meant to suggest that there were not, perhaps, good reasons for an Advisory Group not being formed (resource implications, precedents being created, institutional policy, etc). What it is meant to suggest is that from the beginning those involved in developing the course saw that the nature of the course and the history of its development meant that some form of partnership between the community and the Polytechnic was essential if the course was to retain its relevance, credibility, and usefulness.

The research process was seen as an opportunity to check out whether these perceptions were still relevant and shared by others involved in similar courses. Clearly from the results both have to be answered in the affirmative. While those involved in other courses saw the detailed roles of advisory groups in different
ways the general principles of accountability, relevance, monitoring and development run through all four interviews on this topic.

When what can be done in response to the issue is considered some of the weaknesses of the action-research method come to the fore. As Bishop (1994) pointed out action-research is not particularly good at affecting institutional or structural change, except in a cumulative sense. When the actions required lie outside the influence of the practitioner/researcher then there are severe limits on the usefulness of the action-research process as an impetus for change. Aside from renewing efforts to get an Advisory Group established it is difficult to see what can be done. Further the growing influence of Industry Training Organisations and National Standards Bodies in setting and monitoring curriculum and assessment standards may well mean that the functions of a local advisory group are taken over by these nationally-based organisations. Whether this is a "good thing" or not remains to be seen.

6. Other Issues

In an investigation of this kind where the topics of detailed study emerge as the research progresses and in which the primary data gathering method is the semi-structured interview conducted in an interactive way with people already known to the interviewer it is inevitable that other issues will come up that are not dealt with in the report of the research and/or are not pursued to any great extent during the research process. I have endeavoured to outline the process by which topics were chosen for further investigation and the reasoning behind these choices. Nonetheless in the interests of reflexivity it is worth listing some of the other topics that arose during the interview process and noting the issues discussed in each of these topic areas.

1. N.Z. Qualifications Authority (NZQA), The Qualifications Framework, Social Services Unit Standards
- The inadequacies of some draft unit standards (circa May 1994).
- Gaps in coverage of Unit Standards (circa May 1994)
- Discussions about the Framework model/philosophy.
- Implications of the Framework for social services education, e.g. more consistent standards; more prescriptive, less creative programmes; access
for remote practitioners; agency workers v professional workers; increased influence of employers.
- Role of the National Standards Body (NSB).
- Accreditation of courses.

2. **Summative Assessment**
- The rationale for it, the ways of doing it, and discussions of experiences to date.

3. **Recognition of Prior Learning**
- Rationale, how it is done (in one institution), resource and organisational implications, a case study.

4. **Assessment of Fieldwork Placements**
- Variability of placement tasks, quality of supervision, experience of supervisors.
- Problems with placement assessment, e.g. standard forms for non-standard situations.
- Recruitment and training of placement supervisors.
- Issues of supervision and assessment in collectives.

5. **Pedagogy of the Course**
- Community work pedagogy v Polytechnic pedagogy.
- Ideal v reality, e.g. student participation in course content and assessment.

6. **Course Structure**
- Part-time options, structure and issues.
- Progression criteria from year 1 to year 2.
- Order of teaching subjects/modules.
- Workloads.
- Assessment timing.
CONCLUSION

In conclusion it is worth returning to the objectives of the research project, which were to:

(a) review aspects of the Community Work Diploma
(b) learn about the action-research method
(c) develop responses to the issues identified in (a).

In reviewing the research project it is clear these objectives have been met. Five issues were chosen for investigation based on both the need for improvement in the way they are dealt with in the course and their relation to the dilemmas and issues listed on pages 4-6. The issues were investigated using an action-research methodology. Suggestions were made regarding how the course could be taught, organised and overseen differently in response to these issues. In addition suggestions have been made as to how the next stage of the action-research cycle can continue with each of the five issues. Finally a number of lessons have been learnt about the action-research method. Some of these are dealt with in the process section, some are evident by the results and others are mentioned at various parts in the report.

Nonetheless in reviewing the research project I feel an element of disappointment, disquiet and unease, that the full potential of the research project has not been fulfilled. In tracking down where this feeling originates I returned initially to the tension outlined on page 16 of the methodology. As a recently established course I wished to address some of the pressing practical problems associated with the course. In order to address some of the dilemmas outlined on pages 4-6 I also wanted to explore the emancipatory aspect of emancipatory action-research. In reviewing the project it seems the major emphasis has been on the practical problem solving aspects to the point that what is represented here is more akin to practical action-research than emancipatory action-research. The aspects of discourse analysis, developing critical frameworks, feeding these back to participants to develop collaborative interpretations and from there instigating further actions are left almost untouched.

While it is true that these activities can fairly be placed in the second cycle of the emancipatory action-research process and what is represented here is the first cycle (see Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988), on reflection I would have learnt more
of the emancipatory action-research model if only one of the five topics chosen had been taken through a number of cycles.

On re-reading some of the published examples of action-research (e.g. in Altrichter et al, 1993; Kinchloe, 1991; and Winter, 1989) it seems we may have made a strategic error in choosing five topics to investigate. Many of the published examples are much more specifically focused, taking just one of the aspects looked at here and taking it through several cycles of the action-research process.

Thus rather than five topics going through the first cycle of the emancipatory action-research process it would have been beneficial to have concentrated on one of the topics and taken it through a number of cycles.

Another consequence of having five topics in the research project was that it limited the amount of time and effort that I could devote to researching the background to the issues identified. One of the roles of the action-researcher is to provide background information, research findings and discussion points that highlight different perspectives on the issue being examined. What is represented here for analysis is the first thoughts and reflections of interviewees. They are reported as though these issues have never previously been thought about, written about and experimented with. Consequently the actions suggested are a reaction to only the initial thoughts and feelings of the interviewees. If one topic had been taken through a number of cycles it would have allowed me the time to act as a resource person and provide participants with other views that could then be interrogated against their own. This is not to downgrade or devalue those initial views but simply to acknowledge that to arrive at actions after only limited input and discussions limits both the potential quality of those actions and the potential for perspective transformation on the part of the participants.

Another source of disappointment is the absence of my own perceptions, developing frameworks and critical analysis as an element in the developing picture. Once the "cultural capital" hypothesis was abandoned I took on more of the role of the "neutral" researcher reporting on others' views. While this again can be explained by stating this factor would become more evident in the second cycle of the process it nonetheless points to a fairly severe weakness in this study. Looking at the published accounts of emancipatory action-research the interplay between the researchers' views and those of the participants is a key element in the dynamic development of new ideas and actions.
So what can be gained from these insights? One approach is to examine what might happen if one of the topics was taken through the second cycle using some of the insights, hunches, and reflections gained from the first cycle. In looking at the interviewees' answers to the questions on assessment and considering my own reflections and reading about the issues raised it appears to me that some of the apparently conflicting statements about assessment may be related to:

(a) differences in the perceived audiences for assessment, and
(b) differences in the perceived functions of assessment.

When looking at my own role in and practice of assessment I can identify five audiences that have at some time had an influence on what I think needs to be assessed, the appropriate methods of assessment, and the format of assessment. These are:

- the student(s)
- other tutors/teachers/educators
- practising community workers
- the setters of "industry" standards; in this case the N.Z. Council for Education and Training in the Social Services (NZCETSS)
- representatives of community groups, particularly those who take students on work placements and are likely future employers of community workers.

Some evidence exists in the tutor interviews that those interviewed saw these as potential or actual audiences for assessment outcomes.

When reassessing the student interviews it appears evidence could be found to suggest that students have at least four audiences in mind as recipients of assessment outcomes. These are:

- the student him or herself
- fellow students
- future employers
- those responsible for accrediting courses, in this case NZCETSS as the Industry Training Organisation (ITO) and NZQA.

In a similar way it appears to me there are a number of possible views about the function of assessment, some of which are represented in the interviews and some which aren't. These are:
informing students of the degree of achievement of the learning objectives of the course
- mapping students' progress through a course of study
- protection of "standards". In this context standards could refer to:
i) the standards required by organisations for competent workers
ii) the standards required by the "profession" to protect the integrity of the occupational group
iii) academic or scholastic standards required by the institution
- maintaining the integrity of the institutions' system of qualifications, e.g. the NZQA Qualifications Framework or the University's degree, masters, doctorate system.

For some of these audiences and functions there are some possible one to one correlations (e.g. the audience of other community workers with the function of protecting professional standards) while others would appear to have a more diffuse inter-relationship.

Without going into too much further detail here the next step might be to use this emergent typology and rescan the interviews for evidence of each one. Then armed with appropriate research and theory go back to the original interviewees and continue the dialogue further. It may well be, for example, that one of the outcomes might be a recommendation for different forms of assessment for different audiences and/or functions.

Some of the disappointment with the project relates to the action-research method itself. By concentrating on changes that can be made immediately by the participants the method seems to work against examining the role of institutions and the political and historical arrangements in the situations being studied. While the descriptions of the theory of emancipatory action-research give prominence to these considerations the method itself appears to work against these factors gaining equal or greater consideration than the more pragmatic, practical, and immediate changes. The focus on issues within the sphere of influence of the participants, the prominence given to consensus and co-operative strategies, and the need for tangible outcomes all work against structural issues being studied. Similarly the setting of much of the action-research writing describes busy professionals making time in busy schedules to undertake research. Such a setting is more conducive to technical adjustment than examining underlying structural
and normative constraints. Winter (1989) provides a good example of this. After a
detailed examination of action-research's relation to critical theory he goes on to
describe examples of action-research that are basically technocratic: improving
written comments on assignments, an analysis of the role of a support teacher and
evaluating an Access course.

Further the action-research method fails to make the role of the
researcher/teacher/tutor problematic. One of the things that appeals to me about
post-structuralism is its insistence that the discourses that define the practices of
teachers/tutors be deconstructed and their normative assumptions and power-
relations laid bare (see for example Ellsworth, 1990). One of the consequences of
this failure is that in action-research the relationship between the researcher and
the participants, and the researcher and the institutional setting is seen simply as
"context". That is, something that the rational self can understand through
reflection and take account of. Context then becomes passive, unchanging, and
"out there". Subjects/participants are seen as producing discourses rather than
being produced by them.

In a similar vein the discourses informing action-research itself are left outside the
essential boundaries of the action-research process. While authors such as Gore
(1993), Hart (1990) and Kosmidou and Usher (1991) have analysed the discourses
informing action-research, such analysis is seen as outside of the action-research
process. A couple of examples will suffice. Emancipatory action-research has at
its heart a conception of a "self" that is unitary, stable and authentic. This pure self
is battered, manipulated and made impure by the demands of the institutions we
live and work in. "Empowerment" then becomes the process by which the true self
reveals and expresses itself and acting with other true selves changes the
institutional arrangements to be more in tune with these true selves. In a similar
way there is prominence given to "the rational". Actions can only be decided on by
what is rational. There is an implicit denial of the role of the unconscious in the
conduct of human affairs and so on. This is not to say that any of these things is
necessarily bad or good, just that they go unstated, and unexamined. While the
position of the researcher and the discourses of action-research remain outside the
usual focus of the research its full potential as a method of enquiry will go
unfulfilled. As Kosmidou and Usher (1991, pg 39) state:

"... the significance of action-research lies precisely in its potential
for changing the positioning and subjectivity of teachers."
In summary, this research project was undertaken with three specific objectives in mind. While these objectives were fulfilled, some limitations to the study remain. Some of these limitations are related to strategic decisions that we made during the conduct of the project, while others were related to the perceived limitations of the action-research method.
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Introduction:

Good community work practice requires the use of appropriate processes. The way you go about achieving an outcome is often as important as the outcome itself. Processes can usefully be divided into work processes and personal processes. Work processes includes understanding the theory, models and practices of community work and its attendant skills such as research skills, social policy analysis, bicultural ways of working group work skills and the like. Personal processes acknowledge that you are working in an area where your personal attitudes and values, cultural background and ways of working will have a profound, dynamic effect on what you are attempting to do. Most forms of learning and assessment are snapshots, they take a picture of where you are at, at a particular time. The journal allows you to develop your own understanding of both your work processes and personal processes over time and for your development to be commented upon, guided and assisted and ultimately assessed.

Purposes:

More specifically the Journal is seen as a means to:

a) Provide a means to develop and apply an action - reflection process to your learning and your community work practice. In other words to ensure your actions are informed by critical reflection.

b) Assist you to record and reflect on your development as a community worker.

c) Provide you with a record of the significant learning experiences that have taken place.

Uses for Your Journal

You may wish to use your Journal for a number of different uses including:

1) Processing course material. This could include study notes, study summaries, notes from extra reading, interpretations and applications of the material given in class and your personal responses to the material given in class.
A personal log or record of your journey as a Community Worker. Your philosophy, attitudes, values as they relate to community work; aspirations and future plans; relationships with other people. A chance to record meaningful experiences as a basis for continuing reflection. Often the first writing about an experience or observation will lead to further writing and reflection, and to making conscious what you were previously only partly aware of.

A record of the learning process. Reflections on your own learning style, what you have found most helpful, useful.

Assistance in expressing thoughts and feelings and formulating actions. Often the process of writing something down can assist in giving you some distance and objectivity from the experience and help formulate your responses. It may help you distinguish what happened, how you interpret what happened and what you thought and felt about what happened.

Integration of learning. Integrating your existing knowledge and experience with the new learning to construct your own particular view of the world.

Evaluation. A chance to review your progress towards meeting course objectives, personal objectives and any special projects. Self evaluation should become a more or less constant process.

**Hints on Using Your Journal**

1. The Journal is meant to be a very personal document: there is no right or wrong way to keep it. Seek out the method that suits you best. It is very important to keep the journal personal. It is to be shaped by your own talents and needs. It is important to be yourself; that what you write is important to you, not just what other people say is important.

2. Be frank and honest in your entries. "Write it as it is, not as you would like it to be, nor as you think it should be". Be open and sincere in what you record.

3. Have a positive approach to the portfolio. Recognize the potential that it has, and approach it as something that can give rich return.

4. Be aggressive in approaching the portfolio. Do not dally round working out how you are going to do it; get down and do something. The more one plans, the less spontaneous it can be. Let it flow, uncensored, and in whatever order it comes. It is very useful simply to write, and then to reflect on what has been written.

5. Feel free to express yourself in diagrams, pictures, through cuttings or other types of material. Sometimes a symbol can express what we are trying to say better than we can.
The Journal is meant to be a work-book. Entries can be worked through a number of times, and important aspects of them highlighted. Therefore, underlining, circling, different coloured inks, and anything else that will draw out significant things can be used. As the year progresses, it is important to go back to the very early entries in the Journal and to reflect further on them. It may be necessary to leave some space after each entry for recording later reflections.

Be spontaneous, use your own words, put your own names on things. Do not be concerned about how you write. Do not look for style or literacy eloquence, or worry that your writing does not seem to be great stuff.

Take up issues that surface when you are working with the portfolio. Do not let other things take your attention. Focus on the things that are important, and do not waste time in trivialities.

Do not be rigid in the way you keep the Journal but rather be prepared to change if necessary. Feel free to try different methods, so that you can mould this exercise to your personal talents and needs.

Be faithful to it; persevere in the face of initial difficulties in keeping the portfolio. "Stick at it".

Record the experiences as soon as possible after they happen, and as fully as possible.

Have a regular time to write in the Journal, and a fixed time each week to reflect back on it. To use it to fullest advantage, it is important to read over it frequently. It is not just writing in it that is important, but the continuing reflection on what has been written.

Important issues in the Journal may need to be shared with others. Talking about one's ideas, thoughts and reflections will bring feedback that can help deepen them.

It is recommended that a loose-leaf folder be used for this exercise. This enables the insertion of new pages if previously reflected on experiences need more reflection. It also means that material can be rearranged within the portfolio.

Be selective. Most participants recognised that in the beginning they wrote a great deal more than was necessary. Selectivity was a sign of experience in using the portfolio.

The Journal Process

It is up to you how often you use your journal, though to be useful I would suggest you need to write in it at least one-three times per week.
From time to time specific exercises will be given in class that will help you get into the habit of writing your journal and assist you with the development of the action-reflection process, and specific journal writing techniques. Journals will also be used as a means to assist with your utilization of supervision particularly while on placement.

**Assessment**

The emphasis will be placed on giving feedback and guidance in order for you to develop your analysis and skills. Feedback will be given after each set exercise as mentioned earlier. At least twice a term Journals will be used as the basis of discussions with the tutor. You may either hand in your Journal prior to these discussions or if you prefer identify specific issues, topics, or incidents that you want to discuss using your Journal as a basis for discussing your reflections and actions on the issue to date. These discussions are intended to help you develop your skills and analysis as outlined in the purpose section.

At the end of each year your use of your Journal will be assessed.

You should be able to:

- Demonstrate that you have used your journal frequently throughout the year.

- Describe how you have used your journal to reflect on your values, attitudes, and philosophy of community work.

- Discuss a number of issues or situations in which you were able to apply the action-reflection process.

- Give examples of how you have used your journal to reflect on your learning, and how you will apply it in community work situations.

The Journal will be marked on a pass/fail basis. This will be worth 10% of your final grade for the year.
ENTRY PRE-REQUISITES AND PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

1) 500 HOURS SUPERVISED COMMUNITY WORK PRACTICE

An authoritative person (e.g. office holder, paid worker, long-term member) from a recognised community organisation will be required to provide a statement that the person has satisfactorily completed a number of hours of supervised practice.

The hours maybe completed in more than one organisation or group.

2) GROUP WORK SKILLS

The applicant will be required to:

a) Demonstrate they can work effectively as part of team by:
   - sharing skills and knowledge
   - seeking advice and feedback
   - taking responsibility for actions and decisions
   - joining in activities and exercises
   - maintaining enthusiasm and commitment
   - encouraging others to participate
   - responding constructively to others’ issues
b) Demonstrate a knowledge of group processes and roles

c) Demonstrate appropriate adoption of roles in a range of situations

3) COMMUNICATION SKILLS

a) Written Communication Skills. The applicant will be required to:

i) complete a work report that includes:
   - an introduction of the topic to be discussed, the scope of
     the investigation and problems to be addressed
   - a variety of sources of evidence, opinion, and information
   - has clear and logically developed arguments
   - uses diagrams, graphs, illustrations etc, where appropriate
   - reaches a conclusion and has recommendations for action
   - includes a summary of the main points of the report and
     recommended actions

ii) complete a formal letter or submission that includes:
   - a clearly stated purpose
   - is appropriately formatted and addressed
   - states the case clearly
   - uses succinct formal language registers
   - has a clear statement of action required
b) Oral Communication Skills. The applicant will be required to:

i) express their own thoughts, opinions and feelings clearly

ii) demonstrate an understanding of others thoughts, feelings and opinions

iii) recognise issues involved in personal interactions and respond to them

iv) establish relationships with others from different life experiences, e.g. age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation

v) demonstrate a range of communication skills from:
   - active listening
   - giving and receiving feedback
   - giving and receiving praise
   - questioning
   - clarifying
   - summarising

4) SELF AWARENESS

The applicant will be required to:

- clearly state own beliefs, values, attitudes and cultural influences
- identify and discuss the impact of their beliefs and values on their work in the social services
- demonstrate an ability to step outside their own social and cultural
setting and experience to analyze critically a social situation or issue.
- demonstrate an ability to establish and maintain clear professional/personal boundaries

5) COMMUNITY WORK THEORY AND PRACTICE

The applicant will be required to:

- state to a beginning level an understanding of community work theory and models
- discuss the differences between community work methods and processes and other ways of working in the social services
- describe a project or organisation they have been involved in and relate it to their understanding of community work theory

6) UNDERSTANDING OF NZ SOCIETY

The applicant will be required to:

- demonstrate an understanding of NZ society, its major institutions and social structures
- demonstrate a beginning knowledge of NZ history
- demonstrate a beginning understanding of the distribution of power and influence in NZ society with a reference to issues of race, gender and class
1990 Criteria and related questions for Pakeha applicants:

1. Personal qualities e.g. warmth, communication skills, mana, flexibility, team commitment, attitudes to women.
   a. "Outline the values that guide your approach to social work."
   b. "Describe the personal qualities that you possess that would make you a good social worker."

2. Commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi e.g. an awareness of key issues; commitment to tino rangatiratanga; acknowledgement of tangata whenua (refer to written exercise as well).
   a. "What do you think are the most important social work issues for the 1990's?"
   b. "What is your vision for the future of Aotearoa?"
   c. "What are your views on our affirmative action selection policy?"
   d. "Students in the School work in separate ethnic groups for a significant part of the week. What are your views on this?"

3. Relevant work experience e.g. evidence of social work experience including what they have learned from experience and training; ability to work with individuals, families and community groups; experience in anger management work; ability to work alongside social work colleagues.
   a. "How have you already demonstrated a commitment to social/community work?" (refer to application form - this may already be well covered there)
   b. "What has led to your interest in social/community work?" (ditto)
   c. "What have you learnt from your experience of.........? (a significant life experience noted in the application form e.g. addiction) Relate this to your interest in social work." (Is the applicant a survivor, or still a "victim?")
   d. "What do you understand to be the task of social/community work?"
   e. "What do you expect to gain from training?"
   f. also an aspect of 1.b. above
4. Knowledge and experience of other cultures (in particular Pacific Islands cultures); experience of working successfully with families and communities from other cultures.

a. "What role do you feel you have as a social worker in relation to other cultures?"

b. "Outline the experience you have had in working with other cultures, and tell us how about the outcome of your work."

5. Knowledge of own culture.

a. "What do you value about Pakeha culture?"

b. "What criticisms would you have about Pakeha culture?"

c. "Is there anything you would like to say to us about the written exercise?"

6. Factual information:

a. "What do the people who are important to you feel about your interest in this course?"

b. "How do you propose to financially support yourself whilst on this course?"

(N.B. it is a full time course with limited time available for part time work; Tuesdays are not available for this purpose. Also we cannot guarantee that the Field Work Allowance will be paid in 1991.)

c. "If you have child care responsibilities, are you aware of the College facilities e.g. Te Kohanga Reo or Creche), and the need to make early contact?"

Check out Important issues from the application form that have not been covered by the "standard questions".

Finally, check driver's licence; any issues that relate to question 7 e.g. health issues, and permission to contact a relevant doctor if you think this is necessary (probably needs to have a written authorisation) or convictions; and check that we have an accurate contact address and telephone number in case there is a need to call the applicant back for a second interview.
CONTROL, CONDUCT AND MONITORING OF PROGRAMME

8.0

8.1 The Community Work Diploma will be seeking validation by the N.Z. Qualifications Authority.

8.2 It is likely that the N.Z. Council for Education and Training in the Social Services (NZCETSS), through the Authority, will act both as the delegated validation and accreditation authority and in an advisory capacity in matters related to the conduct of the programme approval.

8.3 Community Work Diploma Advisory Committee.

8.3.1 The Community Work Training Group and the Christchurch Polytech will establish and maintain a Community Work Diploma Advisory Committee.

8.3.2 The membership of the committee shall comprise:
- one programme tutor;
- two current participants;
- Community Studies Head of Department or representative;
- three members of the Community Work Training Group;
- two representatives from the Maori community;
- one representative from the Pacific Island community;
- one representative from NZCETSS.

8.3.3 The quorum for the committee meetings will be seven. Advisory Committee members would be appointed for a period of two years, with provision for some of the membership to change every year to ensure both continuity and fresh ideas coming into the committee.

8.3.4 The committee exists as long as the programme is in existence and would be required to meet at least once a term to review the running of the programme. In order to refine the programme, the committee may need to meet monthly for the first two years.

8.3.5 Each year the committee would need to show evidence of review and every five years the committee would become involved in the preparation of a accreditation submission outlining significant changes to the programme structure and content arising from monitoring and annual reviews of the programme. Once the accreditation document is complete, it would be forwarded to NZQA for consideration.

8.3.6 The Diploma programme will be conducted jointly by the Community Work Training Group and the Christchurch Polytechnic. Hence the specific duties of the Advisory Committee will be to act as an advisory body to:
i. Advise the Polytechnic Academic Board on administration of the programme and the maintenance of programme standards.

ii. Monitor the conduct of the programme to ensure that the courses are conducted in terms of the validation given by the Authority.

iii. Receive and consider reports from the Director or Programme Supervisor, and the NZQA.

iv. Make recommendations to the Authority, through the Council, of improvements to the structure or administration of the programme.

v. Recommend approval of assessment results prior to publication.

vi. Recommend approval of the award of the Community Work Diploma to those programme participants who have completed the programme requirements.

vii. The accreditation of prior learning, the setting up of procedures, monitoring and recording results. See Appendix F for details.

viii. Act as a sounding board in the ongoing development of the programme in terms of content, structure, assessment, educational processes, curriculum etc.

ix. Select staff.
SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND WORKING OF A SOCIAL SERVICES ADVISORY GROUP

General premise is that of a nucleus group drawn from the C.W.T.G. and the present tutor. That the group be small and can invite participation from specialists when required. [Should a student be invited to attend].

The groups function will be:

* To consider present courses in light of their relevance to the community
* To suggest modifications where necessary
* To consider new courses or course content deemed necessary to meet changing conditions within the community
* To advise on the appropriateness of course content
* To represent the views of community groups/organisations
* Provide input to and support for Polytechnic submission in Social Services to outside bodies
* To be part of selection panels for staff and students - full time, proportional staff and, where appropriate, part time
* To assist with the development of "Placement" process and its organisation
* To meet regularly, at intervals deemed necessary by the group
* Work with the HOD in resolving any disputes which may arise which are not directly staff related
* To support any course applications or correspondence with the Academic Board of the Christchurch Polytechnic
* Make recommendations to the relevant authorities on improvements to the structure, financing and administration of Social Services education
INTRODUCTION

The Advisory Group acts as a link between relevant community groups and the polytechnics community and social services programmes. The link's primarily to provide advice and recommendations to the polytechnic administration and teaching staff on the effectiveness and appropriateness of existing and proposed programmes. The groups' function will be in 5 main areas.

1. Course development, monitoring and review.

   To represent the views of the community and relevant community groups, for new and existing courses, on appropriateness, relevance and required standards for course content any assessment of the Community Work Diploma. This will include the institution of regular monitoring and review procedures.

2. Liaison

   To act in a liaison and advocacy role with appropriate organisations eg. Polytechnic Academic Board, NZQA, and appropriate outside social services bodies.

3. Selections

   To be part of selection panels for students and staff for the Community Work Diploma.

4. Special Projects

   To act in an advisory and support capacity for special projects associated with the Community Work Diploma programmes eg.

   - developing a placement process and guidelines.
   - developing procedures for the recognition of prior learning.

5. Review

   To act as a review body in matters of dispute over student assessment and to work with Head of Department in resolving any non-staff disputes.
Appendix A

DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY WORK

BELIEFS

The organisation and structure of society cause problems of powerlessness, alienation, and inequality. To achieve greater equality and social justice, resources and power must be redistributed.

Collective action is a proper and effective method of working for social, political and economic change. Community work is a process which promotes such action.

It is necessary to confront racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination both within ourselves and within society.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To change power structures by:

- promoting equality of resources

- seeking to influence statutory, voluntary and private organisations and make them more responsive to, and open to the needs and demands of community groups

- assisting groups with multiple disadvantages (for example ethnic minorities and women) to gain access to equal opportunities.

To spread knowledge by:

- developing awareness and understanding of issues through social and political education

- enabling people to develop the expertise and skills necessary to further their own objectives

- facilitating access to information.

To encourage self determination by:

- helping community groups to define and achieve their own objectives

- supporting community groups to run mutual aid projects
To promote co-operation by:

- the developing of community groups to work on issues of common concern
- seeking to create unity between groups within a locality around issues of common concern, on a basis of mutual respect
- encouraging the development of alliances in order to achieve common goals and influence decision makers within society

WORKING PRACTICE

Community workers should work in ways which:

- honestly confront issues of belief and ideology
- start at the point where people themselves identify issues and problems and help them create change in the context of the beliefs above
- always assist people to develop their own leadership and ability to speak for themselves
- respects the contribution made by all people with whom they work, opposes oppressive power relationships

Community workers should not:

- attempt to impose either their own or their employing agencies' concealed ideologies or methods of work
- seek to become spokespeople or leaders of community or community groups
COMMUNITY WORK DIPLOMA
REQUEST FOR APPLICATION FORM

Please send me an application form and further information about the Community Work Diploma.

Name ____________________________
Address __________________________
____________________________________
Telephone __________________________
Facsimile ____________________________

Send to:
Social Services Coordinator
Christchurch Polytechnic
PO Box 22 095
Christchurch

Tel (03) 379 8150
Fax (03) 366 6544

- written and oral communication skills
- an understanding of NZ society, its major institutions and structures
- an awareness of their own beliefs, values and cultural influences

Assessment
The Diploma will be internally assessed by the module tutors. Each module will be individually assessed using a mix of tests, individual and group assignments and practicals.

A minimum of 90% attendance is required as the skills developed in the Diploma are dependent on satisfactory participation in group activities and learning.

Application and selection process
A written application is required. Applicants will need to supply evidence that they meet the course entry requirements which may include references from current/former employers, testimonials from current/former supervisors or colleagues, course or training programme transcripts or examples of work completed. Shortlisted applicants will be required to attend a selection interview. Once selected students can enrol in any module or combination of modules offered. Applications close on 22 November 1994.

Course fee
Cost to be advised.

Further information
For further information and application forms please contact Marg Hughes, telephone 364 9094.

CHRISTCHURCH POLYTECHNIC
COVENTRY STREET PO BOX 22095 CHRISTCHURCH
TELEPHONE (03) 379 8150

COMMUNITY WORK DIPLOMA

Introduction
The Department of Community Studies is committed to developing a range of integrated studies and qualifications for those working in or intending to work in the community or social service fields. The Department currently offers part time stand alone courses, the Community Skills Certificate and the Community Work Diploma.

In 1995 the Community Work Diploma will be offered part time, to meet the needs of those in paid or unpaid work. The course is the equivalent of two years full time study with one year's equivalent study and experience as a prerequisite to entry. The Diploma is recognised by NZCETSS as meeting the requirements of a B-level Diploma.

Community work
Community work is working with individuals and groups to bring about social change, promote community development and learning and providing a greater sharing of resources, knowledge and power within the community.

Community workers are employed by central and local government, church and community social service organisations, local neighbourhood groups, and support, advisory and advocacy groups.

Course aims
The course will provide participants with the theory, knowledge and skills to develop and enhance their understanding and practice of community work. On the completion of the course students will be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding and effective use of social change processes
- work and take part in the management of a community organisation
- demonstrate competency in key community work skills
- demonstrate competency in written and oral expression
- demonstrate an understanding in the Treaty of Waitangi and bicultural development and apply there to the community work setting
- demonstrate an introductory knowledge of Te Reo Maori and Tikanga Maori
- demonstrate an understanding of the structures of NZ Society, its institutions, public policy and the allocation of resources
- describe their own support structures and demonstrate the use of supervision and work management practices
- demonstrate an understanding of human development throughout the lifespan and its application to community work tasks
- demonstrate an understanding of research planning and evaluation methods and strategies and apply them to a community project or programme
- articulate a personal view of community work theory and practice

Course structure
The course is divided between classroom study and supervised fieldwork practice. Course work consists of 18 modules of 60 hours duration. Each module will require 40 hours of classroom contact and 20 hours of self-directed study. Community work theory and practice - Bicultural Development and NZ Society must be completed within a year of starting the Diploma. Other modules can be completed in any order.

Course participants must complete two fieldwork placements with community organisations, one of 320 hours and one of 400 hours. One of these placements may be undertaken at your place of work.

The requirements of the Diploma must be completed within four years from commencement date.

Course content
- Community Work Theory and Practice
- New Zealand Society
- Bicultural Development
- Neighbourhood and Issues Work
- Communication Skills
- Principles and Practice of Group Work
- Social Policy and Social Change
- Research Planning and Evaluation
- Human Growth and Development
- Tikanga Maori
- Te Reo Maori
- Networking, Resources and Funding
- Professional Issues and Survival Skills
- Recreation Skills for Community Workers
- Organisation Management
- Preparation for Placement
- Self-designed module
- Summative module

Entry requirements
The Community Work Diploma is a three year programme. The first year is made up of work experience and prior learning achievement. Applicants will need to demonstrate that they have:

- completed 500 hours of supervised community work practice
- an understanding of community work theory and practice
- an ability to work effectively as part of a team