



An Excellent Adventure

Telling the stories of Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award winners

Claire Goode

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The cover image is likely to evoke different feelings in different people. Similarly, in reading these stories, their significance will be in their personal meaning to each individual reader.

The image also captures the idea of teaching as a journey. There may be barriers and challenges along the way, but there will also be revelations and successes. For me, Palmer says it best:

"I am a teacher at heart, and there are moments in the classroom when I can hardly hold the joy. When my students and I discover uncharted territory to explore, when the pathway out of a thicket opens up before us, when our experience is illumined by the lightning-life of the mind - then teaching is the finest work I know".

1. Palmer, P.J. (2017). *The courage to teach: Exploring the innerlandscape of a teacher's life* (20th anniversary ed). Jossey Bass. [p. 1]

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Introduction

Why is it that we remember some teachers and not others? What is it that makes a teacher excellent, and do recognised educators see these traits and practices in themselves? Are these factors something which can be learned?

In August and September 2019, I had the pleasure of sitting down with many of Otago Polytechnic's (OP) national Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award winners for one-to-one conversations. While I had a core set of questions that I wanted to cover, it was also important to let the conversation flow naturally, and to allow people to reflect on key moments in their respective careers. What was it that drew them to teaching? What has influenced them as they have developed their practice? How do they describe their professional practice now? What would they like to see in teacher development for the tertiary context moving forward?

In terms of the context, it is important to note that, at the time when participants were sharing their stories, a governmental review of vocational education was under way in New Zealand. The uncertainty around this is reflected in elements of my participants' stories, as they grappled with trying to see what the future might bring.

The awardees include teachers from a wide variety of professions, including nurses, artists, designers, carpenters, and chefs. Some now hold formal leadership roles; others demonstrate leadership in their subject area. Stories are organ-

ised principally in alphabetical order, with the stories of four members of an award-winning team grouped together to close.

As a teacher myself, I was able to relate to many aspects of what we discussed. It is hoped too that, by reading the stories of teachers who have been recognised for 'excellence', other educators will relate to and recognise elements of their own practice, and will feel motivated and inspired to share these with their peers and the wider academic community.

These colleagues gave me goosebumps, brought tears to my eyes, and made me laugh. I am incredibly grateful for their time and willingness to share their thoughts, influences, and experiences.

These are their stories.

Caro's Story

"As a teacher, I feel that most of what I do is about relationships; I just maintain and foster relationships... I'm a relationship developer, and those relationships are as creative and as enabling as they can be, because it's about enabling everybody".

I'm a really creative person and a really social person, so those kind of drive my teaching philosophy in a way, in that it's about people; it's *always* about people. I've been teaching for 20 years, the first seven were at the University of Otago, and the next 13 here at OP. I started here as an Academic Leader, so that was taking on and developing curricula, and I've felt that I've had a *huge* amount of freedom and trust here. I was doing some of these things when I was at the University, but it was much less flexible, or more chaotic, whichever way you want to put it. In my role here, I've had the opportunity to direct the whole curriculum, the content and delivery of the programme, and then get a team on board to do that in the same way. I think we're all pretty clear about the what and why. I have taken a lot of licence. I'm not a traditional teacher.

I never intended to be a teacher. I think I ended up in education, because it's the main industry in Dunedin and, at a certain point in my life, I wanted a good job to get out of the house. I was running a business at home, and I had a young child, and I was like, "No, this is driving me *crazy*". I actually started teaching because I thought, "Well, *where* do you get a job in Dunedin, and what can I do?", and the thing I did *before* I left Dunedin, and before I had children and stuff, was studying. I'd been a long-term student. Back then, it was free, so you could just study because you love learning. So, I decided to pick up another course. The last course I'd finished before taking a couple of years out was Women's

Studies, then it changed to Gender Issues, I think. I went and enrolled, and I got the best mark in the class. I was only doing one course, and it wasn't too hard, and I said, "Well, now that I've got the best mark in the class, will you give me a job?". They laughed and said, "No, we don't have any jobs here, but you could try Design Studies". Now, at the time, I was like, no, Design is too stupid; it's not academic enough as a discipline, it hasn't got interesting enough aspects to it yet. It was quite a young discipline then. Anyway, that particular person became my academic mentor at the University, and she kept asking me, "Have you applied yet? Have you gone and talked to them?", and eventually I got a job. I got *one* tutorial a week, so it was literally just a *tiny* little job. Then the next semester, the other guy that was teaching on that paper left, and the guy that was supposed to be coming didn't arrive, so I ended up doing seven tutorials a week *and* running the lecture series, so I was kind of thrown into it. And it was a job I could figure out. I was closer in age to the students than most of the lecturers, and it was *just* as computers were starting to be taught, so I first taught Digital Design.

Along the way, I realised that people need to know about the world. Design can't be about *you*. It's not like Art; it has to talk *to* someone about something, and be heard and understood, so it's a relationship. So, as a teacher, I feel that most of what I do is about relationships; I just maintain and foster relationships. So, I often feel like a fake as a teacher; it's not that I'm *not* a teacher,

but I'm a relationship developer, and those relationships are as creative and as enabling as they *can* be, because it's about enabling *everybody*. I create opportunities for students within real-life contexts, and I create opportunities for people outside of education, to better understand how they can work. For example, this year I've been working with Orokonui¹. I'd never actually been to Orokonui, except for conference-type things, but they seemed to fit with what I was hoping to do. So, I actually sold the opportunity to two students to do postgrad work there, before I'd even talked to the people at Orokonui, and when I first talked to them, they were like, "Why are you here?". But as we talked more, we realised that we had lots of ideas that could help them that they hadn't thought of, and that maybe there could be a useful relationship. After the first few months, I said to them, "Now, my third years are about to start their student projects, so are there any graphic design projects that you have, that you'd like us to do?". And they were like, "Oh actually, yes we do", and they came up with about five projects (three with the education section, and two with the marketing side) and I put five students on them. Then, all year, I've been going up every Thursday. I've got a van and I'll just take whoever needs to go and talk to the Orokonui team, or even just hang around there, and we go for walks in the forest, and we've just become part of the community there, as these projects have evolved. We know that the manager is always there on a Thursday, so when we turn up, we just ask if she's available, and we have really long, productive conversations. And out of this relationship, students have identified potential projects, they've worked on those projects, and then, in response, the people at Orokonui have learned more about what they need than they'd ever known. They hadn't imagined these things. One student has been designing a colouring book, and we know there are not many resources for young kids, no educational resources focused on those species available in Otago. For this student, it's a joy of a book to design, like an illustration project, and for Orokonui,

¹ Orokonui Ecosanctuary, just north of Dunedin

they've suddenly gone, "Oh yes, could we get 10,000 of those printed, please? And we've got a sponsor who we think would be perfectly suited to this. And *congratulations*, we didn't realise we *needed* this!". But you know, there's at least three or four groups there that have met, and have discovered, along the journey of education, some needs. They've fulfilled those needs, and that's going to have quite a large effect. For instance, along the way, they realise "Oh, look, what if you put a voucher at the end saying, you know, bring your family back and get half-price tickets or something, then we can get more people back", so there are really practical things too. All of that is based on the relationship we have there; it's a *relationship* project.

I've always enjoyed art, and I've always been creative. I might describe myself as an 'expert learner', in the sense that I've always been successful at school. When I first came down to Dunedin, it was to go to Art School. I think I probably chose Art because I found it was a subject that I couldn't easily succeed at, or that there wasn't an *answer*, so there was more effort required. I *failed* Art School, two or three times, actually. It was back in the days when there was no brief, there were no learning outcomes, there was no *explanation* for how or why you failed... so, I could never understand, and no-one was going to answer those questions. I got A's or E's, and I couldn't understand it; I never got a B or a C, it was always an A or an E. I never knew which way it was going to swing! But I did a few papers at university at the same time, so I ended up kind of moving over there, and I actually gave up on that dirty 'A' word for quite a few years! I was so over it; it was just ridiculous and so demoralising. But I'd started working at *Critic*, the student magazine, just as computers were coming in. So, we taught ourselves how to use the computers, the first Macs, at a time when publishing was becoming democratised, I guess. I know there's always been a democratic kind of element to the *writing*, but it was also like the *making* of it, and it was a time

where I started to integrate what I was learning in Women's Studies, at that stage, and post-structuralist theory: For example, the idea that there's no such thing as being easy to read, and the writer is always making *suggestions*, but the reader is also bringing their readerly ways of understanding to something, and the role of the designer is integral in this relationship. So, we really tore up these publications, and they were often printed as newspapers. We were a small group of writers, designers who really had fun together, and we were there at the cusp of the internet, before anybody had heard of the internet, and we did a newspaper series that was part of Wellington Festival of the Arts in 1993. So, I was kind of really interested in the democratisation of knowledge and thinking, and that's where I learned about Design. There was no *teacher*, and our work was politically motivated, but I had come from learning printmaking at Art School, so it was an easy transition to make.

In the end, I think I have five degrees now, and I'd never intended to get any! I was just learning for the sake of it. I would literally open up the University calendar at the beginning of the year, and look through and go "Ah!". I'd enrol in five papers, even though I really only had time for one or two, and then I'd just withdraw from the uninteresting ones. It was at that point that I understood how an engaging lecturer made all the difference. If they were boring, I would drop out; it was "No, sorry, I can't stand listening to you and your boring delivery". That was way more important than the topic or the content. For me, it was more about "How interesting are you going to make this learning experience?". My most interesting lecturer was a woman called Sarah Williams. She was from Berkeley and she was teaching Women's Studies at Otago University, just for a few years. She was quite radical; she made us read really radical theory, but *do* something with it. And it's that approach that I think I've taken on; it's like "Do something with that". As groups of students, we created and made public an amazing poster series (Guerrilla Girls-style), and we made films, and we had a

really quite radical approach to making change with that knowledge. That kind of set the *groundwork* for my approach as a teacher. When people begin teaching, they often say they think back to, say, "How did I learn that? That's how I'll go about teaching it". If you had a boring experience as a learner, you're probably going to be a boring teacher. I don't think I probably ever struggled with being boring! Even when I was working at university, one of the first elective courses I set up was called 'Beyond Apple P'. You know, you're not just sending something to the (digital) printer. What happens when you take it off the printer and out into the world? I'd also be working on live projects, which no-one else was doing really; they were using more conceptual, in-house projects. Now I think that's part of what we do that's different here at OP. This year, we have 48 different clients that we're working with in Communication Design, all live. Orokonui is one of those, with six projects, but there are 47 others. They're mostly social and environmental organisations. I'm not really interested in working with business, and students will have as much time as they want to do that sort of work, but the learning we do is all very transferable. Often, social and environmental organisations aren't the best clients because they don't have much experience working with designers, but they will have a problem or a series of problems that you could help them with, so our work together becomes a learning experience for everybody; it's not just the OP learners; *everybody's* learning.

I think that working with Sarah Williams was definitely a turning point for me. It was the first of those moments when I thought, "Oh, you *want* me to make things happen? How can I twist this learning upside down?". Later, when I was looking for a job, I went back and did one course, I think it was called 'Women in the Media' or 'Gender in the Media', which just seemed awfully appropriate. I remember going to a tutorial - and I knew my tutor - and saying to her, "How do I get an A+? Can you tell us, here in this class, how do you get an A+? I want to know exactly, like how many pictures do you want, how many quotes do

you want, what do you need in your bibliography, your reference section?”. And so she did, she said, “Well, the best sort of essay has got this and this and this”, and then she said, “But to get an A+, you really need to critique the question”, and that was another lightbulb moment for me. I’ve never had *less* than an A+ since then really, because you can do the work, but you really have to say is that the right question, or could the question have been asked in this way? In which case you would be getting a different kind of answer. I think those are valuable moments in terms of being a *learner*. In terms of being a *teacher*, those a-ha moments are maybe trickier... I’m learning with the group. Yes, there have been multiple students, and probably an early one or two, who’ve only really experienced failure in education, and who even *want* to fail, and it’s a question of how do you find that engaging experience for them, that is going to transform them and take them so far beyond what anybody ever expected? Again, the solution has always been around finding meaningful engagement with relevant communities. I have a few examples of those, and it’s when those learners experience success that we’re all transformed.

When I first started teaching, I was brought in as a young person to teach software and I just learned it as I went. I didn’t know the software that they wanted me to teach, so I’d just learn it the day before and write notes, and, in the end, those notes became the course book, because there wasn’t any existing course material. At the university, I was the first person in the department to say, “Hey, isn’t it a good idea to write the assessment at the same time as the brief, and give students both of those things?”, and they’d never thought of that. Nowadays, I’m not very good at software at all, because I don’t teach software and I don’t use it very much, and those are ‘use them or lose them’ kind of skills. Having said that, in America I had to teach some software, and again I just went back to it the night before, writing notes, so I’ve got a process for teaching that stuff if I need to. I believe anything is teachable and learnable; there is no thing that’s not, but now

I think that my more valuable teaching skills are around building relationships. It’s interesting, because with the review going on at the moment, we are thinking, “Oh, will we have a job in two years’ time, or is this place going to change beyond recognition?”. I’m not really interested in going back to teaching those old sorts of skills; I think that kind of teaching isn’t really interesting to me now, but I still find it hard to see what I do as useful in a different context. I might not be doing the job most people would imagine is normal in *this* context, but I’m sure there’s somewhere that I can be useful. Most of my learners are school leavers, so they’ve got a lot of growing up to do, and I think, as much as anything we teach them design skill-wise, the real value is about having professional expectations, and about being able to maintain professional relationships, giving and receiving feedback, letting us know if you’re not going to turn up... some of those things are really valuable lessons. I think you’ll always be able to learn skills on the job, if you don’t have them when you leave, but we give students a lot more of those opportunities to practise with people they don’t know, and for me that’s probably the joy.

What is an excellent teacher? I think I can suggest a number of concepts. It helps to be organised, to be self-aware, to be really, really respectful, and to *share* how to be respectful, to model professional behaviours, to be really empathetic and to be *kind*, and to *not* put yourself or your needs ahead of the class, to be learner-centric - and that may or may not get feedback that says ‘excellence’ - to review and value and refine your own practices all the time, to celebrate with your learners, to facilitate learning through cultural practices, to *always* be open as a learner, to *be* a learner, and just to notice moments of learning, and to celebrate them all the time.

In terms of applying for the award, I’d been getting 100% feedback in my teaching evaluations for a few years, and really good comments, so I think probably my manager at the time noticed that and said, “Hey, why don’t you apply for

this?" (At that stage it was nomination for an OP award). It was very humbling. This led to an OP nomination for the Ako awards (Sustained Teaching Excellence). The exciting part for me was the relationship with my mentor while working on the application. I didn't know her before then, and she's now a really good friend. Again, it was about being a learner, and loving and enjoying that moment of one-on-one learning, because the way that she wanted me to write it was not the way I would have written it myself. To me, the document itself is a bit ugly, because I'm a designer, you know! But she said, "No, no, it has to be 12-point font, and a Microsoft Word document", and things like that. But I think I learned *heaps* through the process, identifying and developing my teaching philosophy, through reflecting on myself and my practice. Things have come a long way since 2014 when I applied, so it feels like I could write a really different one now, but it was just a really, really worthwhile learning experience. I had never articulated my philosophy before, and putting words to some of the things I do was great. It really helped to identify key influences too, so Sarah Williams was the person that I identified as someone who really transformed and gave me *permission* to do things with theory. Then I took that on to encourage others to do things in the world. I had the values already, but, on reflection, others gave language to my values. It was about integrating theory and practice, to engage in critical processes. I was probably still quite fresh here at OP, so I was still trying to bring theory in a university way to the Polytechnic degree. I think I've probably given up and I trust myself much more now to try and do that implicitly. It's more like, "No, we can pull theory in when we need it". Ethical frameworks can form the centre of an academic as well as a practice-based engagement. It's not that I *think* of my values as ethical; they're just my values, but when you start to look around and think, "What is driving my relationships?", it is probably a deeply ethical commitment to others, to transforming the world around us. And they're not words you use (about your practice) in the classroom, so being able to identify

and name some of those things was really humbling, but also you see yourself in a different way; you start to realise "Yeah, I *do* do those things. That's my approach to this job", and that's really valuable.

I actually love having critical conversations. Before I finished my portfolio for the award, I'd been doing the GCTLT. That enabled me to spend time talking with other people, and gave me the opportunity to ask questions and have a conversation around my teaching practice. The portfolio is more of a manifesto, I suppose, but the conversations were really valuable, and helped me think more about what I do, and how and why I do it this way. When I won the award, I was halfway through my PhD, but that's a different kind of thinking because it's not really about you. The award portfolio is about *your* practice in the world, and it's where you are, in the centre of that practice. There are not very many opportunities that you get to do that, to think deeply about your practice. It's a hugely lovely thing to be able to do.

I think winning the award has been just one of a number of things or people that have given me permission to be different, to be me. It probably helped me get the Fulbright scholarship that I went on, a couple of years after that. The Fulbright, again, gave me really interesting teaching experiences. It was a half teaching half research scholarship, and initially I thought, "*How* am I going to do this? I have no idea how I can walk into another country and teach the way I do", but I did. I took my way of being (and teaching) with me, and it was transformative. Even though we were talking about different things, and we weren't even planning to do project-based learning, we ended up doing project-based learning, which was really deeply transformative. So, I guess it's the flow-on effect, and actually it was wonderful to know that just being me, and doing things my way in another completely different context where no-one was expecting that, was still OK, and still worked. Those sorts of things, I think, have flowed on from the award. I am really proud of it... but I still feel like a fake! I mean, it's 'for *teaching*';

I'm thinking, "Hmmm, that's not really what I do", when you have in mind what a teacher is, and how they're respected in a different way than perhaps I am. I think I have respect, but it's different. I still feel I just have to do things my way; I wouldn't be able to be a different sort of teacher, or it would be very boring.

My idea of a teacher is someone at the front of the class, and I don't think I'm that; I'm somewhere in the *middle* of a class, and getting people to go outside... I just spent the weekend with my very elderly Dad, and I did the same with him. I said, "Come on! Let's catch the bus. We're going on an adventure" - out of the old person's home and on the bus - and he's like, "We can't just catch a bus!" "Sure we can!". Then once you're out there, you're just embedded in this experience where everybody's learning, and you can pick out pieces. I just took photos of him to share, so "Look, this old guy can do this", and we were going to hire bicycles and go riding on the waterfront. We didn't actually get to that point, but we could've! It's like, what's possible isn't impossible until you move outside of the frame of expectations of what's probable. I think most teaching is about the probable, and I'm much more interested in the impossible, and the crazy, memorable experiences that will transform you, *and* transform me.

I don't know that you can teach excellence. You can empower people to develop. The teacher at the front of the class, yes, you can give them all those words to describe what they're doing, and you can ask them to identify things in their experience. You can show *examples* of excellence, maybe, but still, they can't copy examples, can they? I think they have to own their practice, and do it in a way that is real and meaningful and exciting to that person. If it's not exciting to that person, if it's just copying someone else's model, it won't be authentic, and it won't be exciting. In fact, it will probably be scary! There might be elements that are learnable, but maybe it's also about personality. Can you *change* people to become excellent teachers? I think there are some things that you can't change about yourself. Might those things stop you from being an excellent teacher?

Sometimes. Can you still be an excellent teacher? Yes, *sometimes*. We have to learn and develop; that learning and teaching thing is pretty tied up together. Maybe that's enough. I don't think everybody's ever going to like one teacher, are they? There are different learners who like different approaches to learning. I'm probably not very good for a student that really likes to sit down and take notes and be told exactly what to do, because that's not me, but some students *do* like that structure. They're definitely not the majority; most will happily be drawn into an adventure, and they'll learn along the way, but some would prefer a classroom where it's safe and the limits are clear. You *know* when you've had a good class, and you know if you've got the skills of engagement - those are things that I *guess* can be taught, but there's still that 'X factor'.

I think the 'Teaching Excellence' awardees at OP are all really, really different. We tend to think of teaching as a skill, but it's so much more than that; you're dealing with so many people's lives. It's both formative and transformative. It's interesting because not everyone wins, you know, that is nominated. And it's *not* about the award; it's about looking beyond that. These are just examples of people who someone else has said is OK. Well, 'excellent' is the word that they use. On the whole, though, when I go to Ako events, they're full of really interesting people; every single one of them is an *amazing* person. A big fuss is made of the winners at the time, and it is really humbling, but what's really amazing is that, afterwards, you realise you're part of this community of amazing people. They go beyond, they think innovatively, they've got really great personalities, they're *all* amazing people. It's a really nice environment to be in too. They're really interesting people, and they don't *look* the same; they come from very different backgrounds and contexts, but they all do have something special.

Thinking about the wider community, it's relationships that keep me here. But it's also the feeling that you can make change happen. Because of that, I have a sense of belonging. The change that happens needs to be free of me; it's not

dependent on me. It's dependent on the community, wanting, doing, and making change. I do quite a lot of work for Dunedin communities, and have for years, before I started teaching, and it's about knowing what needs to happen, and asking for that change to happen; having a voice, among other voices... a voice in the choir.

Yes, things change over time. There has been a lot more tightening up of expectations around meeting learning outcomes, for example. I don't see that as a bad thing, as long as there's creative freedom about *how* you meet those learning outcomes. For me, that has been a learning curve, and a learning curve for my team, who aren't all there yet, but I've learned how to write very broad learning outcomes, in order to create room for lots of opportunities. I've felt really respected and trusted here, and I think my managers have been really key to that, to let me do things in the way that I do things, even though they're more work, they're more random, or they're more difficult to quantify. Regardless of the qualification aspect, the success of the student as a person is really evident, so I feel really grateful for having a couple of great managers. I guess online learning has come and gone in that time as well. When I say come and gone, I'm just thinking about MOOCs and how they were the big thing for a while, and I think there was something in the middle there that went from "the future is all online" to "Oh, perhaps not". Some of the future's online; I still think we're figuring that out. Young people do not necessarily want to spend all their working life online; they spend a lot of their leisure life there, and it's conflicting, and they actually *like* the social presence of a classroom. And the relationships I like to work with are harder to foster online; they take much more effort online. I've gone from a lecture hall of 150 or 200 people through to a classroom of 40-50 people, where you can actually have relationships with each of them, or know where they sit in the world, and so I prefer that, for sure. That doesn't mean there aren't some excellent teachers in university contexts, who may or may not be prize-winning,

I've known lecturers who've been fabulous, who've not been able to put an application forward just because, maybe, they're not in the right sort of academic position, for example.

Who knows what the future holds? It's interesting; I think I've got multiple futures! I don't really ever know what the next step is, and I've never been good at having even a two-year plan. I did really enjoy living and working overseas for a year, and I will look out for more opportunities to do that, because I think you learn so much more about yourself when you're out of your safe place or your usual context. I think I would define my practice as a *social* practice, which includes art and design, and teaching, and community work, and, when I was in the States, I had a look at some other places teaching in that way. I think the closest one that I found was in Vancouver, so I'd love to spend a semester in Vancouver; to see and learn from people a bit more like me. I haven't found many people who think like I do, or practise like I do. That isn't to say you can't take it anywhere and try it; it's about being able to share a little bit more, find a community of practice. I can totally stay busy, with 50 projects a year in Dunedin, and I am really committed to that local space as a form of sustainable practice, but I also want to connect with others who understand and practise in that way. That may be outside of teaching, because I think there's a social practice in the design space, but usually it probably overlaps. I'm not really interested in commercial practice, so teaching's quite good like that, because you're getting paid while you go and do those things.

I'm happy with leadership; it's a concept and a practice that I feel totally comfortable with, but along with that comes less and less time for teaching. I wish I could drive this next part, but it feels like we're in a rocky ocean and we're not sure how the storm's going to go. I'm just going to hang in there for a while. Part of what I like most about the Polytechnic is the institutional culture of *trust*, of *enabling* people, and that's why I haven't accepted jobs for other places in the

last couple of years. It's like "Ah, no, I'm actually happier in *this* environment right now", but there have to keep being opportunities to grow, as well as a good environment. If both of those two things change, and both of them might, then I don't know what it will look like.

There are a couple of meaningful items for me. I got a grant to make a film, and I used the grant to pay some students to make a film about themselves. We wrote the film script together, and you can find it online. At the end of it, they say "Narrator, Caro McCaw". I love the fact that they'd written this thing. I did some research, we talked about it, they were happy about that, they made a film, and then at the end I get a credit as just like the voice. That's really nice, and that relationship is ongoing and lovely, so that's something special. One of that group is the guy that did the image on the cover of my portfolio. What does he say about it? "It feels as if you put the world in my hands and changing it at my fingertips". He's just come back to do his Master's and is a lovely, lovely learner, very passionate and generous. It's interesting for the fact that they saw me as just the voice actor. It's a really nice place for me as their teacher, because my role as a teacher is just to help them in their film-making, even though it was about the research that we did. It shows my place as the teacher is not at the front of the classroom; it's very embedded in a practice and a process, where the learners are leading it, and telling their stories. That's definitely a meaningful thing for me. I do love my work, which is good, and these things can sometimes, I think, give us permission to keep on doing it.

Jane's Story

“For me, being an excellent teacher is being able to work with a group of students, and get them on board, get them having fun...

You can feel comfortable in a classroom with this person; you know that you're not being judged, that you can make mistakes and be yourself”.

I wanted to be an artist when I was at school, and I studied Art. My parents really encouraged me *away* from going to Art School, with “Oh you’ll never earn a living being an artist” kind of thing, so I ended up working for the government first, and then I worked for IHC². None of those things were particularly what I wanted to do. I started teaching in the 1980s, and I was involved in teaching music first, and a bit of drama. I’m not really sure how I even got into teaching. It was probably through IHC. I started off studying Horticulture, and I worked for IHC on a horticultural block in Nelson. It rained a *lot*, and you couldn’t always work outside, and the work was very, very boring. So, I used to do things for weekday sort of activities, and I ended up getting people into acting. We got this kind of drama group together, and then I worked with a couple of other people who were in a theatre group in Nelson, and we started producing plays. As part of that, there was quite a lot of music involved too, and I used to really enjoy teaching. I thought, “I’d quite like to do this”, so I moved from IHC into various community groups, where I did things like after-school programmes, and I worked a lot with teenagers playing music, and I did quite a lot of bone carving and things like that in those days too. I taught courses for long-term unemployed people. The music ones were involved in getting people who could play a little bit,

2 New Zealand’s leading provider of services for people with intellectual disabilities

teach them to play together in groups, and then we’d tour around; that was really interesting. I just wanted to do something, I guess. Then slowly, I found my way back to my art practice, which took quite a few years, but also music; I did a lot of music at school as well. So, my art and my music were my first loves. I worked as a musician for years, in various bands, and I also did a lot of sculpture and painting and things, *before* I came to Art School as a student. Then I came to Art School and did my Bachelor’s. I *did* know, as I was going through Art School, that I’d really like to teach, but it was from the point of view of having some qualifications, rather than being more in sort of community-teaching type things.

I would say that key turning points in my career have been the ability to design programmes. How exciting it is not just to be told you’re teaching this, and this is the way we want it, but to be able to develop and design new programmes, and design the course content within those programmes; to be able to actually think about things more holistically - what is it that we want, developing courses that suit that Graduate Profile, and thinking, “How can we do this in exciting ways?”. There are many, many ways for people to learn about the Treaty of Waitangi, for example. When I was learning, I went to some quite boring Treaty workshops, I must say, and now that I’m a Treaty facilitator, I really appreciate working with a colleague on the course, and how we develop our courses. Now I’m looking

at the Treaty with *my* students, and finding ways to bring that learning into the everyday classroom. So, for example, because I'm teaching in Art and Design, we're looking at things like post-Treaty legislation, and people are developing art projects around it. In some ways, it's sort of finding ways to hide the veggies. Lots of people are "Ugh! I don't want to do all this Treaty stuff again", but then, here you are, you're a citizen of Aotearoa New Zealand, and this is a responsibility for *you* as an artist or designer to understand these things and how they impact on *your* practice, so how can we do it in a way that's meaningful? Once the students get involved in their own art practice, they really start researching different aspects. There are various pieces of legislation, and it seems very dry when you read about it, but once they started getting into it, they were making amazing projects! It's that kind of thing that is often a turning point for me; to think that there are exciting ways to teach material which wasn't taught in that way, when I was young. I found school *really* boring.

I *loved* playing music when I was a kid, and I *really* wanted to do music for School Cert. I was a guitarist and, when I got to high school, I was told "Oh, a guitar's not a proper instrument. You have to do piano or violin". I'd thought people weren't doing that kind of thing now, yet my grandson is a drummer, and he wants to do music at school. He's been told he has to play the piano or the guitar. At least a guitar is a proper instrument now, but he still can't play the drums, so nothing's changed!

My move into teaching all happened so *slowly*. I think I was living in Nelson, and there were some night classes starting up at Nelson Polytechnic, which is now NMIT. They were called 'Community Programmes', and I think the course was called 'Making Music'. I think that was how I started getting into teaching the full-time music courses. It was for people who had instruments lying around in their cupboards and *wanted* to play, but didn't quite know how, and it was about learning how to play together. There was a group of about 12 people, of a whole

range of ages and a range of abilities. I taught them how to play blues initially, because blues is really good for jamming on; you can do it with three chords, and you can teach people to do simple leads, and it's good for drumming, and good for singing. I ended up working with this group of people and we'd write our own songs, with me helping them get their lyrics together, and then singing and playing together. That course went on for about 12 weeks, and was really successful, so I was asked to do it again. I did several of those and that gave me the idea to put in a proposal to run three-month courses for long-term unemployed people. They were both Music and Drama, and they started in Nelson, then I did them in Golden Bay too.

I think it was around *that* time that I thought, "Oh, I'm actually quite a good teacher". Before that, I hadn't really thought about it in terms of *teaching*; it was more just kind of helping people play. I'm not sure if it was my own instinct or feedback from people that helped me realise that; probably a bit of both. People obviously were enjoying it and saying how much fun they were having. I think that's quite important. I mean *everything* should be fun when you're teaching, so if it's not fun for the students, that's no good! I remember some very miserable music lessons when I was a kid. I had one *amazing* music teacher in Form 2, who was a kind of shining light for me. He would have everybody playing. I learned a lot from him, and I realised I used his kind of formula, which was a case of OK, you've got a whole lot of people, some of them are much better than others. The ones that aren't so good, what *can* they do? You're getting a group of people together, and they're all playing a tune with several chords. If people can only play one chord, that's their chord, and they have to wait until it comes around, and then they go with that chord. Then they might get better, so next time they can do two chords, and there's one here, and then they're waiting again, and there's the other one. And that's how I was taught by this great music teacher. I used that approach with my students, and still *do* in various things; it's about contributing

what you can, not waiting until you're 'good enough' to do it. It's much more of a *community* in the classroom.

I always enjoy working with people, and that special moment when they realise that they've captured something, they've understood something, they've moved on, and that a world has opened up for them; I really love that. I find it quite hard to separate me the teacher from me the artist. Being a practising artist informs my teaching all the time, and my teaching also informs my artwork, because, for me, it's a very holistic process. It was all kind of accidental really. I never thought of myself as a teacher, and then I suddenly realised I was a teacher; it was one of those kinds of things. I think it happened when I did the Music course at polytech in Nelson, and then I was talking to somebody from the Arts Council, and they said, "Oh, we want to run these three-month courses, do you want to teach one?", and at that point, I thought, "Oh, but I'm not really a teacher", and then I thought, "Oh yes I am". There was that moment of "That's what I am, I am a teacher". I realised as I was making my CV for the Professor role, and I had written 'Artist and Educator' or 'Educator and Artist', or something like that, and I realised that I value these roles equally.

Over time, I've definitely become aware of the skills that I have. I probably felt far less confident years ago, but I don't necessarily think the Teaching Award, for example, made me think that I was any better a teacher. I think I feel quite confident, or I have felt quite confident in my teaching for quite a long time. Yes, there are still days when things don't go as well as you'd hoped, and things can go wrong, particularly with technology, which I always find challenging. You can plan a class really well and things can still fall apart. It happens to the best of us! So, there are days when I think, "Yeah, that went well. I really nailed it today", and other days where I just think, "Ah, that could've been a lot better". I think it's important to be self-reflective *all* the time, and not just think like, "Oh, I'm a pretty good teacher; you know... might have the odd bad day". I think you need

to also think about things: technology's changing, there's always new information, there's always new stuff out there to be showing your students, and keeping on top of, so you're really only as good as your last class. So, the award didn't make me feel differently about my skills. It was really nice to be *acknowledged* though; it was really nice to be acknowledged in that way.

Another thing is that it was good to look back. Until I wrote my application, I hadn't really considered all of my teaching life as *one* thing. I'd thought that, like, I was working with music, and I'd been working with the IHC community, and there were all these different things that I was doing, and I suppose I hadn't ever considered it in a holistic way... This is my teaching life, that started way back then, and these are the things that happened and brought me to this point, and it was very good to reflect on the things that had brought me to the award. To be considered for that was just really lovely. I don't think I thought, "I'm a great teacher", because I got the award; it's more a case of putting together all of these things that I've learned, and it's made me very aware of what my teaching practice is. Initially, I won an Otago Polytechnic staff award in the February, and I was told I should apply for the national one, with the deadline in March. I knew I couldn't possibly apply then; it was eight or nine thousand words and I was in the middle of a PhD too. So, I said that I'd really like to put it off for a year, and apply in a year's time. That gave me time to reflect, and think about what it was that I wanted to talk about. But I did enjoy it when I wrote it... I did enjoy reflecting on all of my teaching experience and what it meant, and also thinking about my teaching philosophy. I'd done that a bit with my GCTLT, but I went into that in more depth for the award, and actually began to realise the things that were important to me.

I would say an excellent teacher is a teacher who's really aware of all of the different needs of the students, I think, and being able to be in a classroom, and kind of know where people are at who are in your class, and they'll all have skills

in certain areas and not in others, and to be able to facilitate a *community*. For me, being an excellent teacher is being able to work with a *group* of students, and get them on board, get them having fun. Often, they're learning things that they might have been resistant to, but you're doing it in a kind of fun way, so they're not so resistant. It's kind of breaking down the resistance, and that resistance is often from *fear*, of making a fool of yourself. So, I've got students who won't try things, and they say they're not interested, but it's often because they're scared of getting it wrong. So, kind of creating an atmosphere where it's actually OK to make mistakes. We all make mistakes, and that's how we learn, and that's cool; it doesn't matter. So, I guess, for me, that's what a good teacher is. You can feel *comfortable* in a classroom with this person; you know that you're not being judged, that you can make mistakes and be yourself, and there's a good enough atmosphere within that classroom, that people are not ashamed of doing badly in front of other students. Somehow that, for me, building an atmosphere is the most important thing, building a good atmosphere.

I think you have to be a warm person too. I have not enjoyed being taught by people who are cold; that's just my experience. Personality is so interesting. I've known some excellent teachers, who are quite quiet people, who are not bouncy and energetic, and get everybody revved up; they're very quiet, and they're wonderful at observing the people who're not managing, and noticing things, maybe, that sort of bouncy people might not notice. I've done a lot of team teaching, and I've loved teaching with people who're quite different from me. Together, we bring things to each other, and I think there's not *one* kind of good teacher.

Passion is another thing which makes you a good teacher; you've got to feel *passionate* about your subject, and, if you do that, your students feel passionate about it too. In my teaching feedback, I get a lot of that, that I'm really energetic and really passionate, and they love coming to my classes, *because* they can feel that energy. You know, sometimes I get up in the morning and I'm really tired,

I haven't slept well or something, and I get in front of my class, and I feel really good there because the energy's coming back; it's going out, and it's coming back, and if you get there and you don't put any energy out, you can't expect to get it back. Good energy feeds on itself. So, I think anybody who's passionate about their subject, that's a very good start. That's why it's always important to teach some new things, and update your content all the time. You need to do that for your students, but you also need to do it for yourself, otherwise you'd be sleepwalking through your day!

I use much the same approach whatever subject I'm teaching. I don't really teach Music anymore; I taught some Sound Engineering courses here about four years ago, as part of the level-4 programme, and that was really fun. A lot of my teaching now is actually supervising Master's students, one-to-one. I've got a level-4 classroom-type situation, with an Art and Design History course, which could be really boring, and it even *sounds* boring when I say, you know, "Here's your Art and Design History", you can see the learners going "Oh no!" on the first day. But I spend most of my time taking my students out. We go to galleries all the time, and, what they're doing in that course is writing, and we do all our writing *in front* of artworks and in front of design objects. So, we're out there in the world. They're not only describing things, but they're actually responding to the *effect* that a piece has on them. They're not looking at stuff online, not looking at stuff in books – yes, you can do that for backup – and it's made a *huge* difference. That's been a big change, and I've really, really enjoyed that. Another thing I've been doing is taking level-4 students to see Master's students' exhibitions, and getting the Master's students to talk to them about their work. Many of those Master's students used to be level fours, so it's been matching learners up with people who did the same course as them, and they're thinking "Wow! This is a pathway". They can actually see, "This is a viable pathway for me. This is somebody who was where I was; no school qualifications and now they've got their Master's", so sometimes you only

need to, like, *show* that doorway to make a difference.

Every year, the very first class that I teach with my level-4 students is the introduction to the Art History course. I always bring in lots of objects for students to talk about, and I introduce them to this idea of the difference between, like, *describing* something - you know, you can describe anything in formal terms, and it's the beginning of, really, Art History speak, so, formal terms: line, colour, tone, texture, all of those kind of things - so what's the difference between *that* and having an *emotional* response to an artwork? And I ask them to have both kinds of responses, and the emotional response could be that this thing reminds me of a story, a person, something in my past, something I want to do. There are



Woven nest (photo credit: Jane Venis)

some key things that I always have, to help kind of start them off, and every year I always bring in different things, apart from this one object, which I bring every year, because it is the object that people totally engage with, and they always write really good things about it. The other objects change, but I always bring in this nest; it's this beautiful, hand-woven thing, made out of reeds, like a bird's nest, made by this woman called Willa Rogers, who's an artist in Nelson, and it's gorgeous. I bring it in, and every year people gravitate towards it, and write heaps about it, and how they feel when they see this nest. It is a beautiful object, but it's also that feeling of the nest and safety and security. It's an object that you could look at and have an emotional response with quite easily, and I guess that's kind of nicely symbolic too, because it's like they're first starting off, the year ones, starting off in their learning.

Energy is really important. What keeps me in the OP community, for example, is I think it's a *brilliant* place to work. I can't talk for the whole of OP, but I really like working in both the Art and Design Schools. I have really supportive colleagues, and it's a place where I feel like my voice is heard; I've got ideas for change, and things like that. People don't go, "Oh no, I don't want to know about that"; it's a place where they go, "Oh, tell me more". I really enjoy the Dunedin community too. I think it's a very energetic, vibrant community. It's a good place to live, very creative. I moved down here in the mid-1990s when I enrolled at Art School, and I've been here since then. I wasn't intending to *stay*; I was intending to come and do my Arts degree and go home, and I never went home. I just liked living here. I finished my Bachelor's, then I was offered some part-time work at Art School. I did my Master's whilst teaching, and then my teaching built up as I finished my Master's, so, by then, I was just really enjoying the career, and realising that I was in the right place.

Things change over time, of course. The main thing is that learning is much more student-centred than it used to be. When I first started teaching, even here

at Polytech, it was very lecture-based. There were slides in those days, pre-PowerPoint, we used a slide carousel. The lecturer was up the front, talking to images, not a huge amount, and then there'd be tutorials later on, the next day or whatever. Sometimes that kind of thing can still work quite well, but attention spans are not as long as they used to be. I've really noticed a difference in the students over the many years I've been teaching, and that lecture-type situation, for me, doesn't work so well. I will give presentations and show people images, and we'll discuss them, but I always have lots of time for the students to talk about things in groups and talk about things together, or even just bounce ideas back when I'm talking about various things, so it's not me just spouting off to them. I think that's a big change.

There are far more pressures on teachers now, compared to when I started. Things that need to be done, like endless reviews: annual reviews and consistency reviews, and all that sort of thing. Often, I just think there's not so much time for planning good lessons, because there's a lot of that admin stuff, and it's kind of becoming a bit like secondary school now, especially with the consistency review. We've got *two* six-month courses, when we used to have one. We were told by TROQ that we had to change, so we went through the TROQ thing, and where we had one one-year course, now we have two. I thought TROQ was supposed to cut *down* the number of courses, and now we've got twice as much work, twice as many interviews, twice as many portfolios, twice as many reviews, twice as many everything... and I am Programme Manager for both, so that all takes me away from teaching. I mean, I still have lots of teaching, but, yes, not as much as I did.

I don't know what the future holds. At the moment, I'm really enjoying what I'm doing. I'm also really quite focused on developing my art practice. It's taken off more internationally in the last few years, so that's been really exciting, and I'm also really enjoying my collaborative art practice with a colleague; I jam, and

she draws as I'm playing. We're off to Portugal soon. We teach in the Certificate programmes together too, so that's good. I think my practice will be lots more research, and more of the same really. I don't have my eyes on some change, at the moment. I'm *really* enjoying my new role as a Professor. I'm also doing quite a bit of mentoring, as part of that, and I'm enjoying that, so I want to keep doing that. The research is going well; more international research is always good. I'm just really happy with the trajectory it's on at the moment, and I'm not thinking about going anywhere else. I've got a show in Korea next year, so I'm working towards that, and all of those things feed into the teaching too, so we are seeing very interesting international work all the time, and then we're bringing that back and sharing it with our students.

I think *experience* is what trains people to be excellent teachers. Can we train people to be excellent teachers? The answer *should* be 'yes'; it should be 'yes', but I'm not sure. I think team teaching is a really good way of learning, you know, working alongside other teachers who are beginning, because I think people get thrown in at the deep end quite a lot with teaching. They might be practitioners and then they apply for a job, and they get a teaching role, and they're doing formal teacher training too, whilst they're teaching, which is quite a lot of pressure, whilst they're also learning to teach. I'm just thinking, that, for instance, secondary school teachers go out on placement, and they get supported, and all that kind of thing, and I'm not quite sure how it works now with somebody new teaching here at Polytech. I know people that have thrived in my team, who started off as teaching and research assistants - well, some of them - and then became teachers, and that was really good. Can you teach somebody excellence? *Observation* is a very good way of learning. I've done observations, and I've been observed; in fact, someone's observing me for an article or something at the beginning of next year. And I used to do teaching observations for EDC. I would say, though, that I think teaching observations are only useful if the person being

observed knows what it is that they want feedback on. Having somebody in there observing you when you're teaching can be quite sort of terrifying, and it can be terrifying, you know, for the observer too, because you realise the person is trying to put on a good show. Really, it's better if they say, "Look, I'm really, really worried about *this* part of my practice, and there's this particular thing here that I'm concerned about, and I really want some support, and can you observe, and what do you think?". I think that kind of teaching observation's really useful, because it comes from the person being *observed*, rather than somebody that's thrust upon them, and they're told that this has to happen.

With teacher development here, a lot of the formal teacher training is all online now. From conversations I've had with new teachers, they *hate* it being online. That sounds very strong, and I can't speak for everybody, but people are struggling with it being online. What they're wanting to do is just to actually be in a room full of other people who are experiencing the same things, and actually have real conversations, how it used to be. There used to be classes. There you are, you're alone, you've started a new job, you're teaching for the first time, you're working with students, you haven't really done it before, and you have to do this course. There you are, sitting on your own in front of a computer doing it, rather than being in a supportive classroom environment. That's the feedback that I've had from a lot of people, so I think that would be a really good change, to have more opportunity for face to face. I know everybody that's developing the online thing is working really hard and trying to make that really good, but I think they're just missing that personal element. Those discussions are important, those conversations with other people who're learning to teach too, like, "How are you managing your ---?". I mean 17- and 18-year olds, they're not always easy! How do you manage this group of people when you're actually lacking a bit in confidence? I mean, you've got to be really confident, or people can walk all over you, so those conversations are really important.

I think it would be really good to have some teaching forums, perhaps even with a panel or something; not even a panel, that means you're up the front and everything, but more like a *group*. Ako teachers could work... we could sit around, and learner teachers could be sharing some of their issues, and, you know, bounce ideas off people with more experience. I mean there's millions, there are so *many* good teachers here at Otago Polytechnic, and they're not all award-winning teachers, but still there's lots of great teachers. You know, it's just if you're lucky, and if you've been chosen, and you go for the award, but I mean there's *equally* good teachers who haven't had the award, who've got lots of things to share. I would be really happy every so often to come along and sit in with a group of learner teachers, and bounce ideas around and stuff, and I think, I'm sure other people would too. If there's enough of us who would be happy to do that, and if there were, say, a couple of Ako people, and others who were just starting their DPP or something, it could be pretty good.

Across the Poly, I really like the development days when there are lots of different workshops that you can choose from, rather than the ones when we listen to a speaker and then we have to have a workshop where we talk about that particular speaker; it's almost like you have to prove that you heard the speaker! There was a really good Staff Development Day last year; it was fantastic... heaps of different workshops that were really, really good. Things like that are great for our own development, and you need that in teaching.

Leoni's Story

"I think of excellent teaching as empowering students, of excellent teaching as based on real understanding and depth of knowledge, as being flexible, depending on whatever situation one finds oneself in".

My first teaching experience was when I was 20. My partner went to work at a university in South Africa, which is my first country. It was near a College of Education, and I was asked to work there. In the first instance, it was to teach English, which had been my third major in my first degree. Because of a number of circumstances, I had started university earlier than most people, so by the time I was 20, I had already completed my English major. I studied for a BA in Fine Arts, a four-year degree with a triple major in English, Art History, and Painting, and obviously, all the other studio and academic subjects.

It was a very difficult and problematic situation, because all the students at that college were African people, from a range of African ethnicities. Most of them were slightly older, in their 30s, and for many of them, this was almost a second-chance education. I think the last thing they wanted was a young, female, European person teaching them. I was kind of thrown in at the deep end and, initially, I experienced a lot of pushback from the students. At that point in time, there were no support systems in place. You were just given a job, and told to get on with it.

I decided to have a good look at the curriculum, and realised that it was completely Eurocentric. It was all supposed to be set in stone, but, fortunately, there were no formal audit documents that precluded one from being a bit flexible. So, I tried to relate, say, prescribed books or prescribed short stories

to African equivalents. I had the advantage that my second language had been Sesotho, which is an African language, so that helped me to understand some of the difficulties. It wasn't an easy task, because most of the students there were *not* Sesotho, they were Xhosa-speaking. Also, many African languages are based on predominantly oral communication, which meant the basic tenets of the whole situation were deeply problematic to start with. It was based on a Eurocentric idea, on an established canon of literature, and many of the readings prescribed were *completely* outside the experiential world of the people that I was supposed to be teaching. One thing I tried was eliciting the students' help in reconstructing elements of the curriculum. I'd ask them, "What do *you* know?", "What have *you* read?", "What stories can *you* tell?", "What are the things that have played a role in *your* life?", and I tried to incorporate their responses into what we were actually doing in the class. I felt that it worked after about six months, but it was a very difficult experience for me. I was very young, I was inexperienced, I had no teaching or learning background, no learning and teaching support or professional development support whatsoever. Basically, I just had to get on with it and do the job. Fortunately, there were very few rules around how one should actually *interpret* the set curriculum. There were also a few people on the staff who were very experienced, and they offered advice and support.

After about a year teaching English at this college, I was asked to move to

teaching Art. They could find another English teacher, but they couldn't find somebody to teach Art. I continued working there for about another two years before we moved away. I was sad that I had to leave then, although the second part of the job had had its own challenges. For example, they had this huge hall where people were supposed to have their Art classes, and there were very large groups of students at the time. When I switched from the English position to the Art position, over that holiday I went to have a look at this space. It was dusty, and brown, and uninspiring, and dirty. There was going to be *no* help with changing this place, so my partner and I just got stuck in over the holiday, and painted it, can you believe it, orange and green! Still today those are my *least* favourite colours, because we had to paint a *lot* of walls, and wallpaper a lot of dingy tables. Anyway, when the students arrived for the new term, they walked into this brightly painted new place, and it was a good start.

My key learnings from those experiences were around the importance of adapting to the circumstances, involving students in their own learning, and creating a place, a *physical* place, that is actually inviting, rather than being soul-destroying or uninspiring.

After that, I was appointed as a lecturer at a South African university, when I was 22. I worked there until I had children, a few years before we emigrated to New Zealand. I worked at the University up the road in Dunedin for a while, and then Otago Polytechnic decided to start their first Master's programme, which was the Master of Fine Arts, and I was asked to head that up. I had to decide whether I was going to work at Otago Polytechnic full time or not, and I decided to go for it, because it was quite a challenge to start the first postgraduate programme in the Dunedin School of Art. I was the Programme Manager for that for quite a while, while also teaching Art History and Theory, and supervising postgraduate students.

Moving from South Africa to New Zealand, I didn't find many differences in

teaching *practices*, but there was a dramatic difference in terms of content, and the frames of reference were drastically different. The class sizes were smaller here too, which was a welcome surprise! I inadvertently landed in what was then called the Art History and Theory Department of the Art School. At that point in time, there were quite a number of staff there, and the wider tertiary context across New Zealand regarded that particular department as forward-thinking, contemporary, *extremely* productive, and innovative, both in its teaching practices and in the ways it worked with content. I was fortunate to land slap-bang in the middle of all of that, and it really helped me to get a rapid education about kinds of new content, new frames of reference, and so on. Obviously, I'd come from Africa, and the whole African context and learning environment is very different from New Zealand. I had to learn about the context and the content, much more so than the teaching practices, because I'd worked in a studio context before. The studio context is very different, in terms of teaching and learning, from a traditional lecture-style delivery, so I was already used to more experiential learning. I'd been using what people would call innovative teaching practices anyway, because that's what you do in the studio context. I'd also changed delivery styles with those first students in my English courses; instead of lecturing, it became more of a *workshop* kind of environment, which was one of the reasons why I think it worked, because the students had expected me to just lecture at them, rather than working with them.

In terms of formative turning points in my career, there is one which had a huge impact on my teaching and supervision. This was quite a long time ago in South Africa; we're talking about the late 1980s, we're talking about apartheid South Africa, we're talking about intermittent states of emergency security called by the government, which made all sorts of things impossible, like large meetings, protests, and so on. I was working and living in the larger Johannesburg area. This wider region includes a population of roughly 12 million people, in the

most cosmopolitan metropolitan area in Africa. There were about 48 different language and cultural groupings in this area. At some point in all of that, given those circumstances, my university decided to initiate a project to bring all these groups together, and I was invited to be the project leader for this initiative. We thought people could be brought together around a massive exhibition of material culture, which means artworks, but doesn't exclude other things, like textile designs or traditional objects. We could do a big exhibition around that, and combine it with symposia and conferences and other events. Long story short, I invited nine people to start looking into this project with me and, after a while, we found the money to do it with. Over time, it evolved into a massive project which we called the *Intercultural Visual Kaleidoscope*. We had two years to prepare it, and then the whole event played out over a period of six months. I was a complete wreck afterwards, because it was a real *risk*, but it was an incredible success at the end of the day. In terms of personal impact, it brought me into contact with an exceptionally wide range of people; it really extended and deepened my understanding of different cultures, different languages, different ways of working around things, and different ways of organising things. I would say that each one of those different sets of people had different ways of managing themselves, of communicating, of making things, of doing everything really. The idea wasn't just to be involved in the project, but also to be involved in it *with* one another. It was a really pivotal event in my life, which had a big influence on the way that I've been able to work with people from different cultural groups and the way I work in the classroom. Coming to New Zealand, I was introduced to Māori culture, of course, which I'd known very little about before that. I had some Pasifika students in my class, from different parts of the Pacific, and international students too that came to the Dunedin School of Art. In many ways, despite the different content, different context, and different environment, I actually found it easy to work with these students, because I'd become flexible and used to

working with people from a range of cultural backgrounds. At the moment, I'm working with people at our Auckland International Campus, and they're *all* from different countries, India, China, Malaysia, Nigeria, from all over the planet. Again, I find it a familiar context and a comfortable workspace, and I think this all started with that South African project now so long ago.

Things change over time, of course. As one example, there's been a move from studio-based learning to experiential learning involving external bodies, and industry placements, with connections between students and the actual workplace. That's one massive shift that we've had to become aware of, and build into the way we think about students' projects. The move away from a lecture-based to a studio-based context has never been an issue for me personally, because I grew up in a house and in my study contexts being basically like a studio, so that's not been a new thing for me. I do think, though, that the connection with industry, communities, workplaces, and so on, has been a shift for many people at Otago Polytechnic. Over time, I also got to work with different lecturers, different studio supervisors, different people in the Art History and Theory context, and so on. All people who intersect with one's life play a part in how one's way of teaching and supervising develops and changes, because people all do things differently. One sees people doing things in a different way, and one learns from that.

If I think about people who have had particular influences on my teaching and supervision, a previous Head of the Dunedin School of Art definitely had an influence on my way of thinking. He has a real understanding of the interfaces between contemporary philosophy and what goes on in contemporary art. I've worked very closely with the current Head of School for many years too. She comes from a very different background, intellectually and philosophically, so we kind of bounce off one another and learn from each other. I've also learned a lot from another colleague, who is, in my view, one of the best studio supervisors

I've ever come across. I think the thing I learned from him, or that *reinforced* something that I'd been doing already, is his ability to *listen*, and his ability to let a student drive a project. He allows that to happen but, at the same time, he expects a lot from the students, so the end result of this can be really magical. The student doesn't feel they have to do what he wants them to do, which, at a postgraduate level, they actually really resent, but at the same time, he gives them enough information and enough options for them to drive the project forward. It's been a real privilege to work with those three people in particular; and I think I've learned different things from them. Earlier on, my masters' supervisor and my doctoral supervisor were major influences on my thinking, teaching, and supervision. I learnt flexibility and criticality from them and will always be deeply grateful.

I think an excellent teacher is a combination of things. I think one definitely needs a really thorough and deep knowledge of one's subject, whatever that might be. That might be one discipline, it could be cross-disciplinary, or it could be multi-disciplinary, but, at the end of the day, the student is coming to you for that knowledge. It's not just the knowledge either, but also the knowledge of where to *find* the knowledge, because nobody can know everything. As a lecturer or supervisor, I need to guide students around where we can look for what is actually valuable or viable information, and what's just rubbish on the internet. So, I think an understanding of the discipline or disciplines, and how to negotiate around them, is fundamental. The second thing, and maybe the most important, is the *relationship* between the teacher and the student. It's that sense of give and take, and of open discussion and learning from one another. It's not about laying down the rules or being too dogmatic, and it's not about making it your project. I think that there's an *empowerment* element in that; not playing power games, but empowering somebody to rise to the occasion of whatever it is they're studying. Thirdly, I think the ability to bring a student into contact with other people, whether that's in the institution, or locally, nationally, or internationally, is really

important. It's about connecting them with other options and possibilities, and that might also include employment possibilities. In a way, one becomes a conduit for students to connect them with other things and other people. So, for me, I think it's the knowledge, an empowering relationship with the students, and being an enabler for productive relationships and networks.

I think there are elements of 'excellence', if I may say that, that have come about from my life experience. Firstly, I think that I grew up in a house that was very much around empowerment, rather than disempowerment, and I had parents that were role models for me. My mother was a music teacher, and my father was an architect. Their open discussions and arguments were all normal in the sense that disagreement and critical thinking were encouraged. Secondly, I mentioned earlier, I think I had fantastic supervisors for both my master's degree and my doctorate, really *critical* people who were super supportive. They were really focused on the *work* and on *helping* me, rather than playing games with me, or trying to be in charge, so both of those people played a big role in my life. Thirdly, and very importantly, I have a partner who plays out these things in his daily life in his own work, empowering people rather than disempowering them. Finally, I've had some amazing students and colleagues. Through all of it has been, at the centre, my trying to help other people; it's never about me, it's about the student's project; it's about whatever they need to achieve.

Achieving a National Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award, and the whole event at Parliament, was really lovely. I enjoyed applying for it too! I was asked to put together a portfolio, and I had a colleague mentor me through writing it. It was a lovely experience, a lovely process, and it was actually quite fun; we still laugh about it today. I wrote the portfolio flat out in one go, and my mentor said, "It's too long, it's too boring, it's too academic, and it doesn't read like your story!". I understood, and I could see the value in re-writing it. I ended up in a hotel room in Melbourne, with my phone next to me, so that I could ring my mentor. It was

one of those funny situations where my partner had said, "You are not going to work this weekend. I will divorce you if you work this weekend! You're going to see lovely exhibitions and things while I'm at a conference", and I said, "OK, sure". Then the minute he walked out of the room, I just grabbed my laptop and started writing! Fortunately, I'm a writer and it comes naturally to me. I can write really fast, and I'd taken on board the advice to make it more of a personal story, so the writing itself was not a big deal for me. Later, my partner sent this text saying, "I'm not coming back at five, I'm coming back at three", and then he messaged again and said, "I'm actually coming back at two". There I was, just writing furiously, and then, literally when I heard the lift door open, I put everything away!

The award itself feels like validation of a long time of teaching. It's not an easy job; one is faced with many, many different students, with many, many different needs, and it can be very difficult. Also, in terms of a field like Art History and Theory, which is my main discipline, it's about supporting a student who's being supervised both in the studio and for writing. It's like a kind of bridge between the physical *making* and a conceptual understanding of what one is doing and how to translate that, and articulate that, in writing. This is a *really* complex thing to do, and not many people can do it well. A lot of teachers who work in a studio context are very good at what they do, and can also be really good with studio supervision, but they find it difficult to relate that to the writing. Then there are a lot of people who study Art History and Theory but do not work in an art school, and don't have a *physical* studio background, and they can't bring the physical making and the writing together either; so there's a real gap. To do both really well, one has to focus on the individual project, and one has to be extremely flexible, because every student brings another project to the party. It's not like they're all doing a task and you're assessing that task; literally every single person is different. So that's a real challenge, and I felt that the award validated that. A big part of my portfolio was around that kind of teaching, and how I understood

the difficulties of it, so it was very much a validation. I think it was great for the Polytechnic too, because these are very high-level awards, so it's really good for the reputation of our institution. Since achieving the award, I've also had more people coming to me for advice and support around their teaching, which has been great.

I am not sure if it's possible to teach 'excellence'. I think one can model it, one can help people, and one can support people into changing their teaching practices. Often, in the first instance, it's not about their teaching practices, but more about their *attitude* to teaching. It's no good specifically *telling* these people what they should do or not do, but by modelling it, I think one can gradually change a culture. For example, it might be by focusing on a student-centric approach, with a sense of "Let's do it together as a team!". That can have a huge impact on what the student actually experiences. Instead of one course, then another course, then another course, they can then experience a programme more as a whole.

Having said that, I've also come across teachers that will never fundamentally change, and, personally, I think that a deep reason for that is a kind of insecurity and a sense of inferiority, which makes people hang on to things. They hang on to power; and they hang on to a way in which they've always done something, and it all results in the students' experience being disempowering, which is the exact opposite of what we're trying to achieve at Otago Polytechnic. I think that's a fundamental thing that maybe one *can't* change, and people will often default to those kinds of positions under stress, or in new circumstances, or when they are expected to do something in a new way. They might default to old patterns because of a fundamental sense of insecurity. I also think, if you grow up in a context where people make you intellectually challenged all the time, one just gets used to it and uses it productively. In the most positive possible sense, in the Dunedin School of Art, for example, when I was Head of School, people would say to me, "This is the dumbest idea we've ever heard!", and I would say, "Right,

OK, let's go back to the drawing board", and one just got *used* to being criticised, and it's part of life and it's part of a natural way of being, rather than clamping down and becoming scared and insecure, and then making all sorts of dogmatic decisions.

I don't think excellent teaching is different in different contexts. I think of excellent teaching as empowering students, of excellent teaching as based on real understanding and depth of knowledge, as being flexible, depending on whatever situation one finds oneself in, and so on... I don't think there is a fundamental difference across different contexts. That's not to say that the context is not different. For example, in a polytechnic kind of context which is more *applied*, one is more likely to be faced with the need to look at each student individually. One has smaller groups, there's more workplace and studio-based teaching, and one is also more aware of the students' connections with the world out there. In the university model, at least at undergraduate level, one is more geared towards having a group of many students, lecturing to them, and then having tutorial assistants who will do the rest. For me, the fundamental tenets are equally important, however, even if there is a shift in context.

The community here at Otago Polytechnic is very important to me. I value a sense of collegiality and a sense of community at work, because I don't experience myself coming to work as an isolated individual. I loved working in the Dunedin School of Art because there was a real sense of a team and of collegiality. I'm also really involved with a lot of people around research now, and again find that collegiality and interaction with people really valuable. I think I'm basically a relationship person.

Over the years that I've worked here, which is quite a while, I've been offered other positions in Auckland, and also in the Netherlands, at different places in different contexts. Even though most of those positions were pretty attractive, at the end of the day, I've felt sufficiently challenged and happy and valued at

Otago Polytechnic, with a sense of freedom, and a sense of being able to chart my own direction, that I've stayed. I've never ever felt that somebody is looking over my shoulder and saying you *can't* do that, and you *must* do that. Obviously, there are rules and regulations, and one must be accountable, but there's a real sense of freedom and possibilities here. I think Otago Polytechnic is way more flexible about these things than many other institutions, and I think staff are given way more permission to experiment and to be more flexible around things. Phil Ker's leadership, and the whole leadership team have made all of this possible at Otago Polytechnic; I hope he and all of them know how much we all appreciate what they have enabled for us all over many years. I often get a sense from other places, nationally and internationally, that they're very set in their ways, and that staff have very little room to move, in comparison to what we're doing here. In the wider community, and on a more personal level, I love Dunedin. My partner has always worked here, and my children grew up here; I'm happy here. On another personal note, I would also like to acknowledge that anything I have ever achieved in my working life would not have been possible without the love, support, understanding, and often also sacrifices made by my wonderful partner Karl Schmidt and my three amazing children, Kari, Lydie, and Barry Schmidt and his partner Niharika Jalota.

I've seen a lot of changes in the learning and teaching community over time. At Otago Polytechnic, I think there's been a shift towards a greater understanding about work-based learning, and more of an understanding of the importance of connecting with workplaces. I recently did a stocktake of all the postgraduate programmes and, working with people around the seven clusters of postgraduate studies, I saw the difference in the conversations around work-based learning, and the importance of making bigger connections. In some cases, people are also starting to understand that they *can* learn something from Art and Design, because teachers in that space have always worked in those more flexible ways,

where the project is driven by the student and not by a set curriculum. I would say those two things - that sense of work connections, and a veer away from lecture-type presentations, and thus from the power of the lecturer - have shifted over time. They might seem obvious changes, but I don't think they happen overnight.

Looking ahead, I think there are possibly two things on the horizon. The Research and Postgraduate Studies team here at Otago Polytechnic is working like a well-oiled machine; it's really a wonderful team to work with, to lead, and to be part of, and everything's going really well, in terms of what we've set ourselves as goals and aims. However, two things are likely to change in the near future. I think we'll continue with the work we're doing right now, but I think there will be more opportunities to work on a national basis. For example, I'm the Otago Polytechnic representative on the ITP Research Forum. There are 16 institutions that send their Research Director to this forum, and there's a sense, for the first time, of working more collaboratively. I've advocated for this for quite a while, for us trying to agree on a foundational document around what we actually think we are, what we're doing, and what our role in the world is. There's been some resistance, but that seems to be changing. At recent meetings in Wellington and Auckland, everybody attended for the first time since the group was formed, and they came for that particular agenda item. After a lot of debate and discussion, everyone agreed to subscribe to our foundational document and to the next steps that we are planning. What I'm seeing is a much bigger national collaboration between research at different ITPs, and potentially the same for Postgraduate Studies, and those are great opportunities. I *firmly* believe in the clear connection between research and teaching; they're not two separate things in my mind. I think that Otago Polytechnic can play a major role in this. I think that we've got a clear picture of what research is at a polytechnic, what it can be, what role it plays, and also what the governance issues are around it. The other thing

that's on the horizon is a much closer relationship between Otago Polytechnic and the Auckland International Campus; a much closer connection between us, both in terms of research and postgraduate studies. Those are two changes I'm seeing in the immediate future.

In terms of teacher development, I think there are still people on the ground at Otago Polytechnic who cannot see the use, the value, the importance, or the practical implications of learning and teaching support. This might be because they are really doing a great job without that support, or they've just become set in their ways or, alternatively, because they don't know enough about what it can offer them. There are other people who see it either as a superimposition of yet another compliance, or they don't have a sense of a personal, professional relationship with the people that could help them. For me, even some of the best teachers I've come across can still benefit from some learning and teaching development. Let's take a really simple example. Somebody might be a *really* fantastic studio supervisor, but not see the importance of actually documenting the supervision as it goes along. Maybe they feel it's a bother, or they don't have time, or it's intruding on the flow of the conversation in the studio. Then, two years later, that documentation becomes an integral part of the project, and it's needed. It might sound simple, but some people don't do it, because they don't see why it would be important at the end of the day, never mind what could happen to one if a student makes a complaint and one doesn't have that documentation.

I think there's a *relationship* problem or legacy; maybe it's a historical thing of people having felt in the past that things are being done to them, rather than for them. Things like that can have a ten-year legacy; it can be very hard to change perceptions. That is probably the biggest obstacle in my view, to people actually saying, "I want to teach better; I want to have access to the best teaching practices, I'm not an expert on this, let me go and ask people for help, to let me improve it".

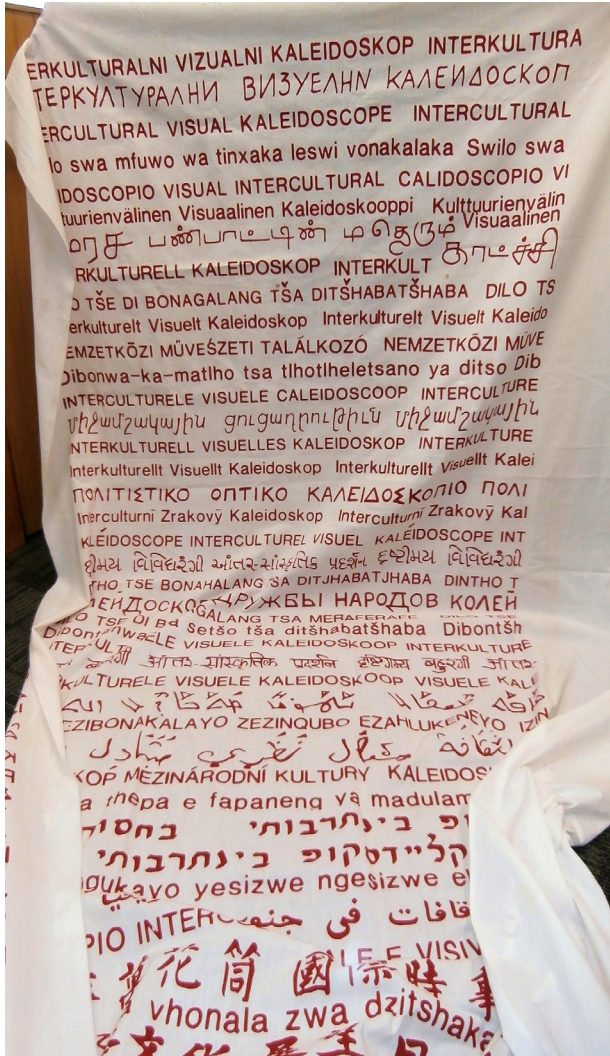


Bakelite heart, crafted by a student.

I have two objects here that are particularly important to me. The first is a little item made from Bakelite, which is the material they used to make music records with, in the olden days. We had a student in the Dunedin School of Art, who is now living in Australia. This school is known for 'strange' students, students who think outside the box. This particular student was very much an out-of-the-box thinker, who ended up being very successful. However, he encountered a real problem with bullying here at the Art School. I tried to broker things for him, because I thought that he was being treated unfairly. He wasn't one of my students directly, but, as the Programme Manager, I saw a lot of things happen, and I put up a fight for him. I'd make things possible for him, simple things like access to studios, access to IT, things like that. Long story short, he completed his studies, did really well, and then went away. Maybe five years or so later, I just got this thing in the post, without any letter or anything. I knew it was from him, because he worked with Bakelite; it was his *signature* material. I got this in an envelope without a return address, but he would know I knew it was from him. It's always been a special object for me.

The second thing is a few metres of this material. For the project in Johannesburg, one of the people who was involved from the Armenian community there had a textile factory. We asked him if he could make a few metres of this material, which translates the *Intercultural Visual Kaleidoscope* into all the languages I mentioned earlier. It wasn't easy to get these translations, and even at the very last minute, somebody came running up and said the Japanese one was wrong. The man came back, and he'd made 500 metres, so it became a signature part of the exhibition. At the end, we cut it all up and kept a piece each.

These items are from totally different contexts. One represents a major pivotal point in my life, and the other represents a good relationship with a student, and all the other things that go into teaching, often not directly related to the teaching itself.



Material made for the Intercultural Visual Kaleidoscope project

Liz's Story

"I think excellence is about bringing out the best in your learners, in whatever way, shape, or form that you can do".

I guess I've been an accidental teacher, through life. My very, very first teaching experience was as a violin teacher when I was 14. I used to teach in a summer school holiday music programme. That was just because I was experienced in playing; I got to grade five in the violin. I had all these little kids to teach, and I didn't really *like* it that much. If anyone had said to me, "Would you like to be a teacher?", I would've said, "No, no, no! I don't want to be a teacher!". It wasn't something that I always wanted to be at all.

It didn't ever *occur* to me that I could *be* a teacher. I became a nurse because my mother had been a nurse. I grew up in Nelson, and I didn't have to leave Nelson. I was just there in that very small community. I'd never been on an airplane. It never *occurred* to me that I could go beyond home, beyond where I lived, and do something. I lived with my family. My father had been a Dutch immigrant, my mother had bipolar disorder, and I had a collection of brothers and sisters who were adopted. I am lucky to have a biological brother, an adopted sister and brother, and had a foster sister for three years. Mum collected many 'waifs and strays' as she called them, and welcomed them to our home as boarders. Mum always collected waifs and strays. We also had animals such as chooks, pigeons, guinea pigs, and a pet lamb that needed bottle feeding, and I was responsible for looking after my brothers and sisters as well. We didn't have a *car*, we had bikes, so I had a very small geographical view on the world. I

did well at school, because our family valued education. We read a lot of books, and we'd go to the library every week and get seven books, one for each night. I knew I wanted to do something different at the end of my sixth form, but in my last year at school, I went to the Headmaster and he said, "Well, you're going to be a prefect in school next year". I said, "No, I don't *want* to be a prefect! I want to go back, and I want to do School Certificate Maths, Music, and Typing, and I'm just going to do a certificate". He said to me, "No seventh former in my school is going to do that. Here's your leaving certificate". I got signed out of school, and that was it.

My very first teaching moment was when I was a newly registered nurse. There were four of us who were assigned to the medical intensive care unit, when I was 21. At the end of my fourth week, I was the only nurse remaining out of that group. I was determined I was not going to be bullied or disadvantaged in any way in my nursing career, and I thought, "What is it that I need to do, to make it work for me to be here?". So, I looked at my surroundings. There was a very dictatorial Charge Nurse who withheld information from people. There was a culture of staff who had been there for one to three years who regarded themselves as very experienced, and they also withheld information from other staff, and then there were doctors who were the kind of "Do it my way, or else" kind of guys, usually guys. That was the first time I actually thought

about why I was unhappy or why I wasn't successful. I *wanted* to be a nurse and I liked the idea of being in an intensive care unit. It was about information being withheld from staff, so I thought that I could empower myself, and I could teach others, and we could work together as a group.

I thought, "Well, I'm going to learn on the job. I'm going to make this work for me". I started to collect cardiac rhythm strips, and I pasted them into a big exercise book. I wrote at the bottom of each strip what the name of the cardiac arrhythmia was, using a textbook because we didn't have online resources; this was 1976. Also, when we had to do an emergency procedure, like inserting a temporary pacing wire, we had a small operating room down the back of the coronary care unit. People *kind* of knew what to do but then there was no procedure, so you'd end up wearing a heavy X-ray gown and a sterile theatre gown, running backwards and forwards to get equipment that you didn't have on hand. I started an exercise book for procedures too, so every time there was a procedure, I'd write it up: What do we need? How do you get it? What do you need to do before and after?

The doctors started to notice what I was doing, and they said, "Oh, can we come to your teaching sessions?", because by this stage, we had a weekly teaching session as well. So, the doctors started to come, and then we got to a point where staff *wanted* to be there, staff were interested in learning, and everybody wanted to contribute. That stopped people leaving, and we got to a point where, at the *end* of that year, the new recruits then had an induction and training programme. We went from being a unit with regular and rapid turnover, with one staff member leaving every month; suddenly, we had a workforce where the duty roster filled up and people weren't leaving. People actually wanted to come and work with us, and we had a very stable workforce from then on. I was then the youngest Charge Nurse appointed in the hospital. I'd only been registered as a nurse for 18 months, and they made me Acting Charge Nurse. You couldn't

hold a Charge Nurse position until you'd been registered for two years, so I was Acting Charge Nurse for 12 months, and then I was made Charge Nurse at the unit.

That was all when I was a practising professional nurse. Then the Nursing School would ring me up and say, "Would you like to come over and do the session on xyz, in the Nursing classroom?", so I went in and out of the Nursing classroom, while still working as a practising nurse. Eventually, I got offered a job in the School of Nursing, teaching students who worked in the hospital-based system but were in Nursing class for a week. That was my first *formal* teaching experience.

It was the olden days, and we had a blackboard and chalk; one of those boards that went round and round and the chalk would fly off. We used to teach in study blocks, so we would have the 'Ear, Nose and Throat' study block, for example, and we team-taught. There would be maybe three or four of us teaching over that week, and I always chose to teach something I didn't know about. I would always pick something that I would have to go and *learn* before I taught *others*. I set myself challenges, and I always made it as practical as I possibly could. I enjoyed going right back to basics, getting the books out, looking at it, and learning about it, so that I could learn together with my students.

When we were doing the 'Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat' week, for instance, I chose the eye. I went down to my local butchers and I got a bag of bulls' eyes, and I took them along to class, and we had an afternoon session of dissection. We had newspapers and gloves and scalpels, so we could actually take the eye apart and have a look at it, and think, "What is this? What does this eye actually do? And what does it look like?". So, wherever possible, I'd do something I didn't know about and make it really practical. You probably can't do that anymore, with health and safety regulations, but we had the eye, the heart, and the kidneys all in classrooms. I would always try and get people who were

subject area experts, and invite them over to talk to students. I guess that was about me learning as well; I always wanted to be *learning* as well as teaching. For me, the most effective way of teaching was to say, "OK, what do I need to know? How could I learn this?", because I'm a visual, kinaesthetic learner, and I used to be a reader writer. I still use that as a support strategy, but I realised very early on that I needed to see things and *do* things and *practise* things, so it was very experiential-based learning.

I don't feel that there was a transition from professional nurse to educator for me. I always saw them as totally *connected*. For example, in the Eye week of teaching, I linked it back to intensive care. Working in intensive care, you use the eye as a window to the brain and the body, so it's not just an organ of vision, it's part of an extension of the brain. When you're looking at someone, and looking at their level of consciousness, you're looking at the pupil reaction. You can always link content back to a *practical* nursing situation: "This is an eye. When you're unconscious, what's going to happen?", or "You're at home and someone has an eye injury. What are you going to do about it?". There was always that connection between practice and content. I still see myself as a nurse educator. My teaching practice and my research now is about Nursing education.

I haven't just taught in Nursing Schools though. I taught at university as well. When I was first in the School of Nursing, I worked as a teacher and as a nurse, I studied part time in a Commerce degree, and I had three small children at the same time. As a Nursing tutor, the Nursing Council required you to do some formal training, but they also said that you could have four hours of paid study time a week to go to university. After I'd done the training I needed to do, I looked at the schedule of topics and said, "OK, I can go to a class at 3 o'clock on these days, which one will I do?", and it ended up being Economics. I thought, "Economics, I don't know anything about that, I'll start that". So I used to get the paid study time to do that, and I started to work my way through a Commerce

degree, through building blocks of papers that I could do, and that I became interested in. Over those years, I got a Bachelor of Commerce degree, majoring in Economics, which is still a surprise to me!

Staff at the university knew I was a nurse who was also a teacher. Our classes were reasonably small, and as an adult student, there was a little cohort of us. In one of our lectures, our lecturer died in front of the class; he had a cardiac event and died. There were three nurses who were adult students in that class that day, and we sprang forward to try and resuscitate him, and failed. One outcome of that was the Head of School saying to me, "Well, you teach, don't you?". I said, "Well, I do in the Nursing School", and he said, "How would you like to come along and take the lecture for this paper, next week? The notes are on the desk". I asked him what it was about, and he said, "Critical path analysis and scheduling. That's what nurses do, isn't it, all that stuff?". So, I said, "OK, I'll give it a go", and that was my very first university lecture.

It was very different from a Nursing class. My teaching has gone into all different subject areas, and different levels: Human Resources, Management, all sorts of things. Again, a staff member left, and they said to me, "Oh Liz, would you like to teach xyz?". First, it was Communication Skills, and I was OK with that. I had a very entrepreneurial colleague who suggested that we revamp the Communications programme, and make it available to *all* university students, so it could be in any degree. So, we sat down with a big piece of paper, and we came up with a tutorial plan, a lecture plan, and a book that went with it, which we wrote as chapters. There were three of us team-teaching it, and we had a tutorial programme to support it and some tutors too. In its heyday, there were 550 students doing that paper! It was a very practical skills-based course with a lot of tutorials, and our book was adopted by quite a few polytechs actually, after we wrote it.

Next was Human Resources; that was another time that a staff member left

and they said to me, "Would you like this opportunity to teach Human Resources?", and I said "Oh, what's that? OK, I can do that". Basically, all my teaching opportunities have been a case of a door opening, and me stepping in.

I taught at university for 20 years, as a lecturer with big classes; 350 students in one go sometimes, and *that* is a different dynamic. But I still tried to keep the same *principles* of what I was doing with my nursing teaching. For instance, I used to look at a 50-minute lecture as a 'lecture with advert breaks', and I'd have a little quiz or an activity in the middle of the lecture. In the very early days, we used to use video clips, so I'd make it a media and activity-based lecture, as much as I could, using, in those days, articles cut out from the newspaper and scanned and put on an overhead. Sometimes I might use a cartoon from the newspaper to put up as a talking point; Bart Simpson was a comical character, so we used to have little Bart Simpson quizzes from time to time. Before PowerPoint, there were overhead transparencies, which you used to layer. When I went to Teachers College, we learned how to put four layers onto a transparency, so you could build up a whole visual, and that was quite a cool thing to do.

My most challenging teaching assignments were here at Otago Polytechnic. This one course, I was teaching in the Business School and Management department at the university, and I was invited to come and teach on the Diploma in Management course for the New Zealand Institute of Management. It was in night school, 6 'til 9 on a Tuesday night. I used to finish my day job at the uni, go home, have tea, and then come to polytech. I'd have 30 people who'd just come in from work, and they weren't very keen on coming to polytech night school for three hours! The first class was the *hardest* work I've ever done, because I thought, "These people aren't getting it. They're not interested; they just want to go home and have tea". I realised that, for the next class, I was going to have to do something different. I worked hard to make classes enjoyable and interesting, and relevant to their work.

I remember one night, one of the staff from the Business School came to check I was there. I remember seeing their eyes in the window, and I had everyone up in the class, and we were doing a timeline. We were writing key events in New Zealand history, and looking at how the world had changed. So, people were up standing at the board, writing things, and she asked me afterwards, "What were you doing?". I said, "Well, we were talking about how work has changed, and how society has changed, in order to understand the employment context, and I thought it was a really good idea for the students to get up and write on the board". She said, "Oh, I hadn't thought of that".

We had another exercise, where I had them all lined up sitting in the classroom, like we were going on a bus trip somewhere, and someone had to be the leader, and they really enjoyed it. They loved games, role-plays, and as many creative things as you could think of, because it helped them to learn. I *really, really* worked my butt off in those classes! It was the hardest work I've ever done. I guess a lot of those people would've been older. One student was the police dog handler; he used to come in sometimes with his dogs in the van outside, and he'd just say to me, "Oh, I've got to be out of here by 7 to let my dogs out of the car", and I'd say, "OK, well, would your dogs like to come up?". He'd say, "Oh, I really don't know", and I'd say, "Well if you're worried about your dogs, go and deal with that, because obviously you can't be focused on what you're doing here". They got good results though. I had 30 students that first year, and then 42 the second year. I did two runs of that.

I think I've become much more relaxed as a teacher now. I always used to be worried about what students thought, whereas now I'm not; I'm quite prepared to stand back and laugh at myself, and just to allow that uncomfortable gap or pause that you sometimes have in a classroom. If you're not getting a response from students, I'm quite happy to have silence or to have them in conversation. As a Nursing teacher, we used to go to Teachers College for one hundred hours

of teacher training, and it was a traditional sort of teaching model. You had that sort of authoritarian model where you were the teacher and the class were the pupils, and there was that *power* relationship. I don't see my teaching as that relationship though; it's much more equal. I see it as me learning from the students, as well as helping them to learn. It's not about control; it's about facilitation.

I would say an excellent teacher is someone who cares about their students; it's someone whose students succeed, in whichever way that they can. It's not all about high marks; it's about success for the learners and belief in themselves. If you have someone who is confident that they can learn, confident they can find answers and information, and if you encourage people who are not just your typical A+ students, you can just see them grow and develop over time. So, I think excellence is about bringing out the best in your learners, in whatever way, shape, or form that you can do. I think you need to be diligent, and I think you need to care. You need to be prepared, although sometimes it's quite good *not* to be prepared, or at least not to be *over*-prepared, but to allow a bit of flexibility.

There is a difference, though, in expectation of what it is to be a good or an excellent teacher in the polytech contexts and at a university, in my experience. When I was working at the university, *nobody* was trained as a teacher; I was the only one who had any kind of teaching qualification. The emphasis at the university was very much on research. In fact, the people who could not teach very well were given teacher training help and tuition, and, if they didn't improve, they were given smaller classes to teach. It was as if you were *rewarded* with small classes for being a bad teacher!

The good teachers, or the excellent teachers, were always given the big classes, because they were regarded as the *difficult* classes and the ones that nobody wanted to teach. If you looked across the university, it wasn't *always* women, but it tended to be female teachers who were there with the big classes. I don't know if there is a gender difference or not. I do remember one of my male

colleagues, a senior member of staff, who was assigned to teach on the year one management programme. He did one lecture, and came out and said, "I'm not going back there again!", and he was allowed to drop that class.

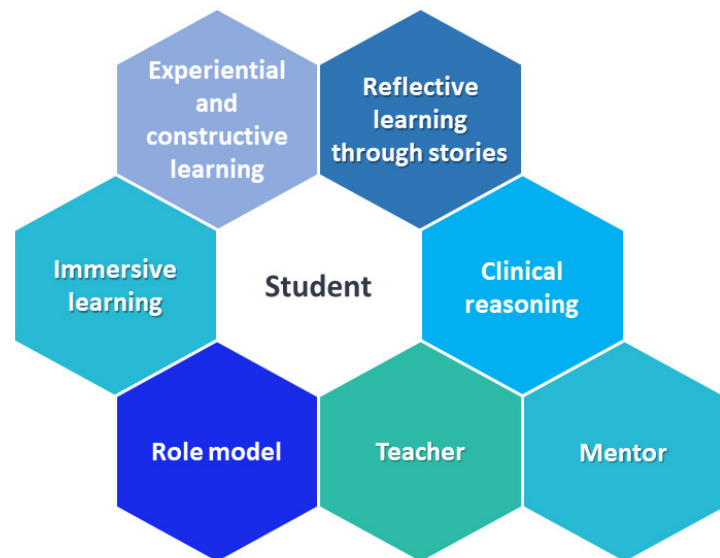
It becomes a workload issue too. At the university, everyone was appointed as a full-time staff member; and you had a proportional teaching allocation, depending on your work. Most of us had around 200 contact hours of teaching, as a full-time staff member; and the year one teaching, the one-hour lectures, had an extra workload attached to them, because they were more work! At the university, if you were good at something, you got more of it, and, as a consequence of that, you had less time to do your research. The trouble is that the university model rewards and recognises research as a promotion criterion. Being an excellent teacher was a great thing, but it didn't get you a promotion; you had to be excellent at teaching *and* research. However, if people were excellent at *research* and *good* at teaching, they still got promoted, so, in my opinion, in the university model, teaching is still undervalued.

Here at the polytechnic, it's more of a team-teaching approach. There's a mix of formal classes and smaller group classes. I'm currently a part-time staff member, so I have a pro rata teaching load, but it still seems like a lot of emotional energy, working with groups of learners, because you put a lot more time and energy into the class than delivering a university-style tutorial.

I think the *learners* are different at a polytechnic too. They might come from different walks of life, for example. The skill-level in writing is probably, in my experience, not as academic as it is at university. At polytech, there's a lot more pastoral care, and a lot more concern for student well-being and support; at university, there are a lot more closed doors. Students really have to fend for themselves, unless they ask for pastoral care. When I was teaching at the Business School, if I found a student who was struggling, I'd say to them, "Well look, this isn't the right environment for you to be in. You're in a *large* lecture theatre,

you're in quite a large tutorial group". It's very impersonal and very hierarchical; if you don't have the right *tutor*, there's not a lot of talking or communication or learning that goes on. I would recommend to some students that they think about coming to a polytechnic, which has a more applied style of learning.

Applying for the Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award was a really interesting process. I broke it down into the elements required, and set up a document with those four different elements. I approached it in quite a mechanistic way, because I was a bit overwhelmed when I started. I would say writing the teaching philosophy was particularly important. Having done the work at Otago Polytechnic through the teaching certificate was helpful, because I had done some thinking in the past about my philosophies of teaching, because it's not just one.



Liz Ditzel - Teaching Philosophy

Drawing a diagram of how I see the building blocks of learner success helped me understand and reflect upon my teaching practice. It also helped me remember all of the things that I had done over the years to get to that point. Luckily, I keep records! I had cards and letters, and teaching evaluation reports and things like that, that I could use as evidence, so I was quite confident I had that information. Really, the hardest thing is putting yourself forward, putting yourself out there, and actually acknowledging and *championing* the things that you have done in the past, in the context of the time that you did it. For example, a lot of the work I was doing at university, which was regarded as innovative teaching practice, was because I had a Head of School who was also a kinaesthetic learner, and he wanted to support and help me.

I came up with this one idea of running a business case competition. I thought, "OK I'm going to have 600 students do a business case competition. They can work in groups of four. We'll run it through the lectures, the finals, and we'll have a ceremony". My Head of School said, "What can I do to help?", and I asked him to put some prize money in, so that we could show the students that we were valuing their support and their effort. So, we had 150 teams of four students, and we had to run it over weekends to eliminate some groups and get to the finals. Now, if you'd gone with that proposal to any other Head of School, they would have said, "Don't be daft! Why are you doing this?", but it was great. When I meet students in the street, some of them will still say, "I remember that case competition we did", because they said we actually had to go and learn stuff, and we had to put it together. It wasn't compulsory, but it was part of their learning where they could compete, if they wanted to.

I had all sorts of crazy ideas and my Head of School would support me. For about five years, when I was teaching Human Resources, I had a media assignment event. The students had to find something in the news or media, like a strike. They could pick the issue, and they were invited to present it, individually

or in groups, in whichever format they wanted. I had this one group of five boys who all lived in the same flat, and they were not interested in studying at all. I remember saying to them, "OK, you guys haven't done anything. I haven't got anything on my list, so what are you going to be doing?", and they said, "Errr, we don't really know". I said, "What do you think you'd *like* to do?", "Errr, something easy". So I asked them, "Well, where are your strengths?", and they said, "We don't really know", and I said, "Well, have you got any *ideas*?", and they said, "Oh well, can we just sit round and have a chat about human resources?". I said, "Well, you can't *just* sit round and do that. Why don't you make it into, like, a radio show? A talkback show, where someone asks questions, so, you know, you're going to be going out to work, so someone might say, 'Well, you know, what are my conditions of employment? How many holidays do I get?'; So, you have a question and answer quiz, sort of talkback show".

They liked the sound of this, and they went away and made this radio talk-back show. They handed it in at reception. It was a cassette in an envelope, and I remember another lecturer going by and saying, "What's going on here? How can you accept that as an assignment?". I said, "Well, I'm going to listen to it, and I'm going to mark it", and they said, "Well, how are you going to do that?". I said, "I'm going to get a piece of paper" - we didn't have marking rubrics then - "and I'm going to write down comments, and I'm going to give an evaluation score, and they'll pass or fail it". So we had all sorts of collages and paintings and really *amazing* assignments that year, that came in the door. They used to fill up the whole reception area, so my colleagues used to cart it all down to my office on a trolley. But people would be suspicious, and ask lots of questions: "What's going on here? Why are you doing this?".

There were some people who were interested, who wanted to find out what I was doing. I wrote a paper about that, because I had all sorts of different kinds of teaching schemes that I'd write up as little case studies. Some colleagues

got it. I remember one of the staff members, whose son was doing my paper, and he said, "Oh, my son handed in an assignment for you. It was a cardboard tube that was painted on the outside", and I said, "Yes". He said, "I didn't really understand what he was doing, but then he explained it to me", and I said, "Oh!". He said, "He really got stuck in, he really enjoyed it", and I said, "Well, ... that's great!". That's how people learn, getting stuck in and enjoying it.

That's my passion really, to see someone learn. Having someone just say, "Wow! I get it!" or "Wow! Thanks! That made a difference". Being able to help people succeed is great. I remember one student from the Disability Services who I advocated for, through her university degree programme. She was not a good writer, but she had a very creative brain. In talking and working with her, it turned out that she had been bullied a lot; she had been in employment and been bullied in employment, and she needed to be confident in what she was doing. She wasn't confident in her writing skills, and I said, "Well, what *are* you confident in?", and she said, "I want to *show* them. I want to show Disability Services that I *can* learn and I *can* be a successful student", and I said, "OK, , for the assignment we're going to do, what do you think you could do that would serve that purpose?". She said, "Well, I want to write a short play about my experiences at work, and I want to dress up, and act it out, and I want someone to *film* it, and I want them to see; I want there to be a *video* film of me doing this, and I'm going to take it to them and show them", and that's what she did. She prepared and produced this little five-minute play; she dressed up, and she had buckets and mops when she was a cleaner, and she told her *story*, and it was filmed. I was able to give her an A+ grade. Through her career, she eventually did get her commerce degree with excellence, and helping her to get there, it made a huge difference.

There was another student I remember helping. He was a young man, 18 or 19 years old, and his girlfriend was pregnant. He was really, really upset because

she'd chosen to have a termination, and she hadn't told him. He was looking very upset one day, and I asked him if he wanted to talk. He said, "Not really", then he started to cry, and I said, "OK, what can I do to help you?". He was really worried about his next assignment, and I said, "Well, under the flexible assessment scheme I'm running at the moment, you've actually passed the course without sitting the exam, and you don't seem to be in any shape to sit the exam.



How about I guarantee that this mark you've got will be your course mark, and you don't have to worry about the exam, and you can go and spend time with your family recovering?". He was so grateful, and he said, "Oh, that's saved my life!". He came back the following year, and he'd bought me this little giftset, a little white towel and a handkerchief embroidered with lavender, and he said, "Thank you for helping me with my problem".



Left: Student assignment for Human Resource Management (photo credit: Liz Ditzel)

Above: Student assignment about Nurses' pay (photo credit: Liz Ditzel)

Going back to the award, it was a great thrill to win one. I think I'm quite humble, and I didn't really expect to win. I guess it made me feel more confident, and proud to be a teacher. It validated who I am. People would *tell* me I was an excellent teacher, but I was never sure. When I worked at the university, you'd do your teaching evaluations, and they'd send it back to you in a big brown envelope. If there was ever someone who'd written a whole lot of nasty comments, you got to see them. So, if I got my teaching feedback, I would always put it in the filing cabinet and wait, and leave it until the end of the year, so I wouldn't feel upset or resentful in any way; I didn't want that. I'm actually an introverted person; I was very shy as a child. It takes quite a lot out of me to project forward, so the award helped. I guess I've got *self-belief* now that I actually am a good teacher.

I am not sure if you can teach others to be 'excellent'. I think it's possible to *role* model it, and to *encourage* its development in other people. I have one colleague in the School at the moment, for example, and I've encouraged her to do things differently, and encouraged her to write about her classes and submit it to a conference, which she did. I can encourage it, but I would never want other people to do things that they're not comfortable doing. I read a lot of different things and that can help too; it's not all out of books, but I read a lot, I watch a lot of different documentaries, and I listen to things on the radio. I'm always thinking about the content and how I can include that in a class, or how a current issue can be related to what I'm doing, to try and make things relevant.

One of the things I think you *can* teach people is preparation and planning. In my early days of teaching, I think one of the reasons I *was* successful and admired as a teacher was that I would train tutors, to work in my papers, and every time we had a training session, I'd give them a sheet of paper, which had the lesson objective and a time-plan down the side, so 5 minutes do this, 10 minutes do this, 10 minutes do that, right down to, you know, wrap up and check, at the end. So for everyone coming into class, it was like a formal lesson plan, with the time

'budget' down the side. I've stopped doing the paperwork now, but I still do that planning in my *head* for every class I have. I think about how much time for which activities, and I have a beginning, a middle, and an end. I think *those* things can be taught, and you can learn to be relaxed about content. I think a new teacher always tries to cram too much in, to the point that nothing gets retained. It's about simplifying right down to the *core* points, and making sure that those get communicated.

If I think of the community, I think of my home and my garden. I like this place; I feel it nurtures me. Every now and again, I have to just stop and say, "OK, I need a break, I need to be away from this place to get a different kind of nourishment". I love it at OP. It's a *vibrant* and diverse community with lots of really interesting people. I like that you can talk to a variety of colleagues, students, practitioners, and I like how it is an open environment, compared to the university environment which was very siloed. I like being here, and I like doing what I'm doing.

I have seen a lot of changes over time, especially around assessments. The language of formative and summative assessments came into the university probably around the mid-90s, but no-one really had much idea what it was about. Assignments tended to be quite traditional essay-based or exam-based (apart from the ones I was doing!), and then you'd end up with 600 essay questions to mark. That was your *job*; if you were teaching the paper, you had a huge mountain of essay marking to do at the end of the year. There was no feedback loop for students through the exam process, so you either passed or failed with a mark, and that was it. It was the same for students in the days where we marked assignments, and we just handed them back, or they came to collect them; there was a mechanism for some feedback, and some critique, but it was really very little. I never used a rubric to mark anything at university; there were the marks, and the guides, and that was it.

I was introduced to marking with rubrics at polytech, so I'm not sure whether

universities use them regularly or not, but that was the biggest difference for me. I think, when I was marking, I had a mental rubric in my mind, so it formalised what I was doing. I've seldom had any student appeal a mark that I've given them, because I look at it from all aspects. If it's not a high mark, I'm saying to myself, "Well, why not?". That was the kind of feedback that I was used to giving too. In the early days at the university, there was a bit of flexibility in the kinds of assessments that we could do, and then it changed and became, "No, we really are just a factory; we're a bit of a machine, and everything is going to be multi-choice". One result of that was seeing students stop coming to lectures, and people were not so engaged with the learning. Then, of course, with the advent of technology and online learning, you have a whole different scenario...

I don't know what the future will bring. I never want to stop teaching or being involved in the academic community. I'm 64 now, but I don't *really* want to retire; I would be very bored! The thing I find the most challenging with today's learners is the distraction, the disruptive technologies. We used to talk about disruptive technologies 20 years ago, and I'm really concerned that they're not just disruptive, but they're *destructive* of students' abilities to concentrate, to retain, to study, to learn. From what I'm seeing in class, if I ask people to put their phones away, because I want them to listen and to participate, they find it really, really hard, so I'm really concerned about the *addictive*, psychological dependency that people have on their devices. I don't know whether this is a generational thing; I don't know whether my parents said, maybe, "We don't like the fact that you're watching colour television, and look what it's doing to your eyes, look what it's doing to your brain!". I don't know whether I've reached that stage of reflection. It might be a *good* thing for people's brains and people's intellect, and maybe *I* need to change; maybe I need to get to be part of that world, but it's not how I work. That's the thing I really *fear* for, and I know it's a huge exciting opportunity, and I'm part of that. I've been doing research with the holographic equipment, and virtual

world, and I can see the learning potential it does have. I guess it moves students off their phones and puts them into a headset-space. So I'm *part* of it, but that's the part I find the most challenging. I have developed ways to deal with my frustrations. If I see a lot of texting activity in class, for example, I say, "OK, well I'm finishing there; I'm finishing now. Anyone who'd like to stay on and continue with the class, who's not texting, I'm happy to stay here, otherwise I'm leaving". I've done that a couple of times, and it sort of changes behaviour, for a little while. It's better for me too; I'm not getting so frustrated! I think students today do take in a lot more information more quickly, but they don't seem to retain it. They don't have any of the *patterns* of learning; I mean, I think you need to have some kind of patterned learning to actually retain information, to remember information, to know how to go and find it again. That's how I learned.

In terms of teacher development, every now and again, I go to a workshop and I think, "Gosh, this is really interesting, there should be more people here!". I'd like to see options around developing group work, group thinking, and different ways of teaching and learning. When I was doing my Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Learning and Teaching here at the polytechnic, the really great benefit of that programme was that it connected me with a whole range of diverse teachers from across the polytechnic, and we shared ideas and experiences, as part of our learning. I've already *done* that certificate, so I don't need to do it again, but how could I get that same experience? Maybe it's a workshop, maybe some more courses, maybe it's more of those opportunities where you can get together. I think it needs to be in a non-time-pressured way, because if it's seen as a workshop or a development activity, people often prioritise other things over that. I try and take opportunities to go to as many development sessions as I can, just to see what other people are doing; conferences too, to listen to people and hear new ideas about how to help my practice.

One meaningful item I have is this photo that appeared in the Otago Daily



Liz Hall (left) and Sharon McGarry in Medical ICU (1976)

(Otago Daily Times, 8 Oct. 2016, p. 16)

Times newspaper, in the 'Living Memory' section. It's of myself and a colleague in the old medical intensive care, and we're standing there with a clipboard. That was the beginning of my teaching career, and it appeared in the paper 40 years after that one day. We still keep in touch, and we met up at a function where we had our photographs taken again, standing side by side, so I have those two photos of my teaching career. That photo from the paper means a lot; it's the beginning of my teaching career, and it also makes me realise I'm very much part of this community, being in the local paper.

Matt's Story

“A wise person told me, right at the start of my education career, that if you treated every student in the classroom like one of your friends' children, you'd probably go just a little bit further to ensure that they succeed”.

I never wanted to be a teacher, ever; I had no inkling whatsoever. I met a school friend last week, and he asked me why I'm teaching because, like any normal bloke, I wanted to be an Air Force Pilot. But with my being so tall, the Air Force told me I was never ever going to get into an aircraft cockpit, so I had to look at other options.

Now, looking back on it, I had a good gene pool of teaching. Mum was a teacher; the people that were some of the biggest influences in my life were teachers, and the people I enjoyed being around were the ones that actually helped me learn things, and I really, really enjoyed that. But there's no way I wanted to be a teacher; because I didn't really like teachers. It wasn't until I came back from Australia, where I'd been working as a carpenter; and I was completely disillusioned with my job. I always knew that it wasn't my vocation in life, to build things, although I do really enjoy it and it's a good thing to do. I thought I could do something else. I went to Teachers College, for the open night, ready to become a primary school teacher. I was ready to sign on the dotted line, and then my partner said she wanted to enrol too, because it looked like fun, and that stopped me in my tracks. I didn't want to go into teacher training with her; she'd get A's and I'd get C's, guaranteed! So that was the end of that.

I carried on as a carpenter; but I was looking for other things. About a year

later, my partner suggested that I investigate teaching carpentry at Polytech, so that I could still do the things that I enjoy. And a job came up in Invercargill. Well, I never wanted to go to Invercargill in my life, but I got the job. I'm not really sure how I even got through the job interview. I remember they asked me about things I'd built before, and asked me about carpentry, rather than asking me why I wanted to work with young people. Anyway, I did that for two years and really enjoyed it. Some of the biggest influences in my life were my first class of apprentices, my first class of carpentry students. Looking back at it now, I remember a lot of their names and I often wonder what happened to them. That was a really good introduction to teaching; those successes are important, looking back.

The transition did not go smoothly though, I have to say. I remember going out for a beer one night with another trades tutor in Invercargill, and we had one too many. I've only ever gone to work hungover once in my life, as an educator; you can do almost anything you like as a tradie, but you can't do it as an educator! And you can't use the same kind of language when you're teaching; people don't get it. So, there's a big mental transition you've got to go through. It's not just doing something you know how to do; now you've got to *show* people how to do it. That wasn't too bad for me, because I talk a lot, but it was a definite mental shift.

And then I came here, to Otago Polytechnic, 15 years ago now. There was something about Otago Polytech; they were more interested in developing you as a person and you as an educator, and I suddenly became really enthusiastic about tertiary education. I had no idea it was in me, but it was there, it just had to be drawn out. I thought I'd written my last ever essay back in 1986 at high school, and then I didn't write another essay until 2005. And I wasn't particularly good at writing, never have been, never probably will be, but you get what you put in. So, one thing that I guess OP has done is they have developed my ability to write something that's legible. And I hate speaking in front of people, so it was an odd career choice, really. But I'm happy in a classroom; I'm really relaxed. I spend far more time now thinking about the people that I'm teaching, as opposed to the subject matter. So, I really, really enjoy it, the teaching side of it.

I've been thinking about things like that recently, because I've just turned 50, and maybe you start looking around and thinking that you could have done a whole lot of other things. But the longer I do this job, and this goes for both my knowledge of the profession and also my knowledge of education, I realise how much I *don't* know. Sometimes I can beat myself up a bit about my perception of my own knowledge and skills, but every day you realise something else you don't know. Then you've got two options: you can go and learn it, or you can just go, "Oh, I'll let someone else do that". If it interests me, I'll always go and learn it; I love, love, *love* learning new stuff.

When I think about my teaching now, I think it's more *considered*. It's also something that I enjoy so much. This morning, I didn't leave home in a good headspace, but on the way to work, I walked along, and I thought, "Oh, I'll think about what I'm going to teach tonight". It's almost like relaxation now, thinking about these 14 students in my night class, and thinking about how they learn, what they'll enjoy at the end of a day's work. So, there's a whole lot of other things you start to think about, but it's all about the students. You have to put

yourself in their shoes. When I first started teaching, and probably for the first 11 or 12 years, I was teaching students that had just left high school. When you're teaching those people, you teach in a particular way, but now I'm teaching a lot more apprentices. They range from age 18 through to their mid-40s. I don't really like the word 'facilitation', but you're pretty much *facilitating* some learning, because all the knowledge is in the room, and you've just got to get it. It used to be about getting information from my head into their heads, and now it's more about sharing stories, maybe directing a little bit, and sharing some knowledge. Everyone has different experiences and different levels of understanding, but you get them sharing stories and you don't have any problems with them not really engaging. They want to share their stories, because they're work stories, and they all think they have good work stories. It's so much nicer to do, and it's really, really relaxing.

The thing that has been the most successful thing for me with students is putting yourself in their shoes, and going in a direction that helps get all the information they need into them. You do this in a really, really nice way; in a way that *you* would like. You just have to try really hard to just do it for them. A wise person told me, right at the start of my education career, that if you treated every student in the classroom like one of your friends' children, you'd probably go just a little bit further to ensure that they succeed. It's not about what *I* do, it's about what I can get the *students* to do. I've never really had classes I couldn't work with. If I can create a *place* and a *space* and some things for those students to learn in a way that they really, really enjoy, that's the key. Yes, it takes lots of time. You have to be overly generous, I think, with your time, and you have to be super enthusiastic about the subject matter. If you don't enjoy it, it's going to be a struggle to make it interesting for anyone else. One student said to me the other day, "You know, you really like wood, don't you?", and I said "Yes, I do, I do actually". I show lots and lots of photos of good examples, and the students

might say they've never heard anyone so enthusiastic about wood. Well, that's fine; I do really like looking at beautifully made things that look nice. Then there is the other side of it. If someone is about to spend \$300,000 on a renovation or on a new house or something, there is that social responsibility for me to do my job well. That's important too.

My colleagues are great, fantastic. We might have differences of opinion, but everyone that I meet here is *super*, super nice. They're always there to help you, and there's always someone to talk to about whatever it is you want to know. That enthusiasm does float down from some of the people around me within the Polytech, especially some of the old timers that have been here for a long time, with good stories. Their level of enthusiasm for teaching just oozes out of them, and you can see it.

I've been talking with an apprentice that I've encouraged to apply for the 'National Women in Construction' Awards, and it has reminded me of my own experience of applying for the 'Tertiary Teaching Excellence' Award. I've said to her that she will gain more from it if she loses and tries again, based on my experience. A couple of colleagues had been trying to talk me into applying, and I didn't really want to do it, so I just ignored them, and the problem went away! And then my Head of School at the time said that, if they nominated me for a Staff Award here at OP, and if I won, then I'd be expected to apply for the national one. I thought it might be an A4 sheet to fill in; little did I know! Not being a writer, it was *really*, really hard, and I spent *hundreds* of hours doing this thing and I really, really, *really* hated the work, I hated it. But I learned so much about myself, and I realised that at the time. It was really good to learn how to put what I've learned about teaching down on paper. I had to think about teaching and what makes a good teacher. I'd never even really considered this kind of thing before. Then, of course, I didn't get anywhere; I lost. No-one told me; there was no phone call or anything. I just knew that other people had been announced as

winners. Yes, I was a bit disappointed, until a colleague told me I should try again. Initially I thought 'Ha! I'm not that stupid!', but we talked about it and she gave me some ideas.

There was also a new teaching qualification at the time, the GDTE. I didn't have to do the whole thing; I just did one project. I'd been playing around with e-portfolios for ages, and we did a research thing on mobile e-portfolios, and then I got involved with a whole lot of other like-minded people from around New Zealand. Straightaway, there was something there. I knew I wanted to do e-portfolios; I wanted to do mobile learning. There was a lot that kind of aligned with it, which I really enjoyed. It was fantastic, because I got to choose the project, and I got to focus on something that a) I was interested in, and b), more importantly, somebody would benefit in the Polytech community. I really, really enjoyed that.

It was around the same time that I decided that I'd had enough of where I was, and there was a new opportunity in teaching at the prison, and I did that. I spent a year at the prison and then another year writing the second application for the award. It was easier the second time, because the structure was there. I knew how to collect student feedback and colleague feedback, and that kind of thing. Two colleagues felt that if I got involved more in *thinking* about teaching, *thinking* about education, thinking about learners, thinking about different types of learners, then that would take me down the right path. The best thing I ever did was go to the prison and work with those guys there, because it was *humbling*. It was so humbling working with people at a different level. It just really, really widened my horizons, and my teaching practice changed. My colleagues were right, and you need people like that around the Poly, you know, around your work to help guide you.

Winning the award made me realise that, before I walk into a class, I have to look at myself and think, "Someone gave me an award for doing this - I'd better

do a *really* good job"! I feel far more accountable than before. No-one's ever really mentioned it, and, as far as the institution goes, they've never asked me to do anything because of it. But I do look at it *fondly* and I think it was a really cool thing to do. I know how much I *changed* through the process; it wasn't winning the award, but the preparation changed me in the way I thought about teaching and about my learners. I took ownership of it, *far* more than before.

I'm not sure how it has all come about. Maybe my life experiences have made me a nicer person than I probably could have been. I wasn't the most intelligent person, but I knew that if I worked hard, I could achieve things, because I could see that in my family. I was never a super popular kid at school; I was kind of in the background, I just got on with my life. I knew how I wanted to be treated, though, and I'm sure that that has helped me. I'm also a good talker. I've always been quite keen to talk to people and sit down with people and have a yarn, and I'm sure that's a skill that I've grown up with, time spent on building sites chatting to everyone who's there. I really enjoy travelling too, because you get to talk to people, and I always think, if you can talk to people and people talk back, it means that you've engaged someone in a conversation. That's really all teaching is, and I'm sure that's helped me.

Working on building sites has also made me more aware of the massive ranges of capabilities of people. I'm always saying to my students that there is no reason that you can't do anything you want. You can actually achieve so much by putting your mind to it. No-one's special; no-one's actually that clever. I keep listening to interviews of really, really successful people, and not *one* of them is a particularly special person that was born with a calculator in their hand and they could read Latin backwards from the age of three. They worked hard. I'm sure that if you want to be an excellent teacher, you *can* be. You can talk to any of the award winners, and you know they work hard.

There are some traits of teachers that might make them successful. I do think

having the ability to talk to people quite naturally is a good trait; good conversation, good humour, nothing too serious. You need to have passion for your profession too, and you don't stop when you've achieved something; you keep going, for no particular reason. You just want to get that good. In my experience, it's about genuinely trying to succeed in life, and to succeed in your profession. It doesn't matter what you teach. We might teach different subjects, like fire engineering or microbiology, say, and really, really different students, but if you have that same enthusiasm for creating something for your students to learn, the students see that. They might not like you personally, but they like what you do in the classroom; *always* thinking about something new, something exciting for the students to do.

Sometimes I look at two of my colleagues, one teaches Carpentry and one teaches Engineering, and I always wonder why they haven't ever been recognised as excellent teachers. Sometimes I think it's a little bit political. For me, I've always been quite keen to talk to people, and I genuinely find other people's jobs interesting; I love talking to people about their jobs, and what they're doing. But I always look at these people, and think that maybe they don't want to tell anyone how good they are actually at doing their job. There are some *fantastic* teachers here, within our institution, way better than me, but who've never been recognised for what they do. There are many other amazing teachers out there, so I don't feel that I'm better than anyone else.

Maybe there's a *modesty* with excellent teachers. The award is not something that I ever tell people about, and even my own team never mentioned it. It's definitely an achievement, and I do think "That was really cool". That's all I think of it as; I've shared my story with some other people. I was talking with a friend who is a primary school teacher; he's a very, very good teacher. I told him that I'd be happy to nominate him for an award, the equivalent national award for primary school teachers. His reply was, "No, we don't do that at this school, we're all good

teachers. We don't want anyone being off on their own". That could be a thing too, how the awards are perceived.

In terms of the community around me, it is a genuine pleasure coming to work at Otago Polytechnic. I really haven't met too many people who don't think that. People actually want to succeed. Sometimes you can see some cracks appearing, with changes in the Polytech. I remember we had some lay-offs in my department a few years ago, and then some cracks appeared, but, overall, people were pretty positive about quite a disastrous outcome. People are genuinely optimistic about work and the way things are going, and we're in a good place. I'm sure it helps, having a good workplace.

There are some people, though, who just get by. They roll off the same notes year after year. That's not teaching excellence; that's teaching. It's not enough. You've got to look at your practice. I know my own practice is driven by my passion for the way I want to teach, or the way I see my learners. I'm sure that teachers are teaching at a *far* higher standard now than they were nearly 30 years ago when I was here as a student. I think we have some really, really good teachers, and the effort that teachers put into their work is *far* more than when I went to school.

You've got to work to your own abilities too. There's lots of things I can't do, so I have to teach to my own strengths. I see others around me; people teaching exactly the same subject matter and the same students as me. Sometimes I look at them and I think, "Oh, you could do that a lot better", but then you have to be aware of their own skill set, and help them develop that and encourage them to try some new things. It might be thinking about other things you could be trying in the classroom, and then things that make the students' life a bit more bearable, and thinking about them more. For example, a while ago, a colleague taught me about learning paths, and I might not have called it that, but it still made sense to me. So actually, going *through* that and applying those same principles, it was

something that we all did without maybe realising. It made me think about actually having a series of 'you're going to do *this*, then you're going to do *this*, then you're going to do *this*'. If you think about an assessment that you've been using year after year, you know what is in it, but you might not actually have the learning path for all the things that the students have to learn to be able to achieve that assessment. Those things worry me. I don't think lecturers get a really good education themselves around how learners learn. I always try and break it down for them, so if we're going to learn how to hammer in a nail, where's the start? Where's the end? And what are all the small things along the way? Actually talking, at that level, about every single thing you do, and talking about learning paths, and talking about how students *learn* this, and going into these things; I do lots of talking with staff about that. It's a sort of mentoring role.

I do really enjoy mentoring. I've been asked to be a mentor on the GDTE. I don't know how successful I was at that the first time, but with people I *know*, I find it easier to gauge, especially the subject matter, because it's easy to teach them things because I know what they know. They might know more than I do about carpentry, but I can help them get it into a place for students to learn. I really enjoy that side of it. It's something I've noticed with a lot of the awardees having mentoring roles. In my mind, it is an ideal situation, because you have some level of influence.

I do a lot less teaching now, and I manage a carpentry apprenticeship programme. I do a little bit of teaching on site visits, but not much; it's mostly assessing. It's difficult because the more you manage, and the more you get into different parts of the organisation, the less you're teaching. So, there's a dilemma with Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award winners. You've got two options: you can help them mentor other staff to maybe help others develop, and keep them teaching, or you can move them into other roles; maybe they're really good at doing other things.

We know that there are sector reforms on the way. What I would like to be doing is having a bigger influence nationally on the way that carpentry education is delivered to apprentices. I've been thinking about it quite a lot lately, and I've got a group of other like-minded carpentry staff from around New Zealand. We meet maybe every two or three weeks just by video-conference, and we talk about what we're doing with our students, and our ideas for different assessments, for instance. It is great because we're not afraid to challenge one another. We're really like-minded, but we do have this hope that we can influence things as everything starts merging. It's about doing the right thing. We *all* live in houses and it costs the same amount to build a really *bad* house as opposed to a really, really good one. With my own department, when my boss retires, I'll do parts of his job as well. Management isn't something that comes really easily to me; I can do it, but it's not something that excites me. I'd much rather be with people *doing* stuff, as opposed to sitting there on a computer. It's already taking me away from the classroom, and that's what I really, really enjoy. Sometimes I take a couple of classes for other people and lighten their workload, so I can do the teaching!

If we end up doing the national project, we hope that it will use what we've already developed. We're two years in now, so we've developed about three quarters of the programme. At the end of each year, we start redesigning it, looking at what went right, and what went wrong. We can then apply our own learning further down the track. This year, the two courses that we're delivering across the country have gone really, really well, and the feedback we received from students was great. I think we've got seven polytechnics all on board now; all delivering the same courses. If we can apply that en masse, that will be fantastic. We have never involved any managers, just lecturing staff, and it's all been done via video conference. Apart from a little bit of money that's changed hands to pay for a person who puts everything together and makes it look nice, it's all

done for free. It's based on existing relationships and connections; people that like talking and love teaching.

Thinking about teacher development, the original tertiary education qualification that I did was awful. It was really, really well *delivered*; I did learn from it, but it didn't really help me do my job. None of the courses, compulsory or elective, helped me as a trades teacher, teaching students with all kinds of problems, and literacy and numeracy at *such* a low level. It didn't help me with the *type* of teaching I should have been doing. I was learning about theories, but I didn't have the capacity or the support to apply those theories in the classroom.

I think that, right now, we need a different kind of teacher development. Yes, we need people that understand education, so perhaps half of the qualification would be developed and delivered by the Learning and Teaching team. If you want to be an educator, everyone needs to know these things; that's not something we can compromise on. The other half of the programme should be written by the department or the school, the subject specialists. These are the things you need to know, these are the skills that you *need* to have, and these are the skills we'd *like* you to have. Then when that person's employed, we can help them map their capabilities. They might be a great communicator, but they might not understand anything about educational theory. My map might look very different to the one for, say, an Occupational Therapist who starts on the same day as me. We both need to know the core things, but the subject area would be a really, really different skill set. We need experts in those skill sets to be mentoring us and teaching us, so we're not jumping through unnecessary hoops. The more I see some of my workmates flailing hopelessly, the more I keep thinking they're learning the wrong skills. If they had a Programme Manager or a Head of School that would actually sit down and say, "No, no, these are the skills they need to have", then we could develop those programmes. At no stage would I expect anyone on the Learning and Teaching team to know how to teach Carpentry

properly, but they *do* have the skills and the knowledge to be able to show them how to teach, and how people learn. That's what I was saying before about teaching different subjects, be it microbiology or fire engineering or whatever it is, it's about passion. It is important to learn about other types of education, and not just focus on what you know; you do need to expand your horizons a bit. I just think with new tutors, they're probably learning the wrong stuff to get into teaching.

In terms of meaningful items that are important to me, I have two things. One is a photograph of a piece of timber that a student carved, and it just so happens to be a traditional Māori carving. It might have been made out of pine or mdf, it's a very, very low-level item of carving, but it was something that this student did for me at the prison. When you're in prison, you don't get crayons to make birthday cards for people, you don't have anything. So, if someone makes something for you in prison, it means they've gone to a *huge* amount of effort. I always remember the person that did this. My students had to make a box, about the size of a box of tissues, and the end of the box opens up and they put an oil stone in it. On the plan, there's a chamfer all the way around the top, like a big kind of angle on 45 degrees. This student did this, but it wasn't really their cup of tea and there wasn't any enthusiasm. They couldn't use the box afterwards, because I couldn't afford to get them all a 40-dollar oil stone to put inside, so I had a pretend one made of wood. These were grown men, and they all laughed, and they thought it was a bit lame. They asked me, though, if they could spend some time decorating the box. Some were more naturally artistic than others, but this one student did a carving and it was really, really good, and I told him it was outstanding. He asked me if I like carving, and I said, "Well, I appreciate art, and I'm not artistic. I can't carve, no-one's ever shown me how, but even if I could, I don't think I could make one that looked like what you've done". He went away and he carved this thing for me over time. I could see him doing it, but I didn't



Carved gift from a student

(photo credit: Matt Thompson)

realise it was for me. It was pretty special when he gave it to me, because I knew that he was giving me a bit of artwork; he'd *made* me something. It wasn't about how beautiful the carving was, it was more about the gesture. I really, really like it when people make me a cake or make me a card or something. It's nicer than if they'd just bought it, because they've put a little bit of heart and soul into it. But then this student told me that he really enjoyed the classes and he was learning a lot, and then he kind of told me a bit more about himself, which they generally didn't tell me because they were embarrassed about it, and I always thought that was really, really nice.

The second item is a hammer. It's something that I got when I was around 20, and one hammer lasts you for a lifetime. The thing with the hammer is it's a tool that everyone knows. It's a carpenter's tool, but it's like sitting at your desk and logging on to your computer. Sometimes you think, "Oh gee, I had that old computer that would take five minutes to log on in the old days", and you kind of reminisce. Every time I pick up one of these hammers, I always think, "Yes, that's a little bit like my one, and mine's got little bits of yellow paint down there". I've got about two or three hammers at home, but I've still got my first one, and every time I pick it up I think, "I can't believe how many things I've built with this thing!", and it could be this very building. You think about how you just put on a few tools in the morning, and then you go and get some materials and you're trying to transform them into something else. Then over a year, voilà, there's magically a building. I always think about what a basic tool it is, but there are so many uses for it. You'll often find that there's dints and bits all over them, or they're a little bit worn out, from pulling or putting in nails, and people write their names on them, and this one's got a number, because it's a student's hammer. They're just an item used every day, and, like you might not feel comfortable if someone used your laptop, for instance, it's the same thing with your hammer; you don't leave it lying around for other people to use.

For me as a teacher, the hammer is one of the first tools students expect to use. They have to learn quite quickly how to use a hammer and a handsaw, but it's not about using the tool, it's about what you can produce with the tool. About six weeks into every course I've ever taught, students say "Hey, why can't we use the nail guns?", and I always say, "Because you can't use a hammer properly". Then they want to have a nailing competition with you, and so it goes on. Eventually you'll end up with people that can use a hammer better. It's definitely a teaching tool, and it's just a real symbol of carpentry to me.



Carpenter's hammer

Megan's Story

“Underpinning all of my philosophy is always that whakawhanaungatanga; understanding the relationship, enabling people to be successful, and trying to find different ways that worked for different people. There's no 'one size fits all'”.

I came into teaching completely by accident. I remember at high school I was told I would be a really good teacher, and I said, "I'm not doing that!". I didn't *want* to be a teacher, because I saw how we treated teachers. When I was at school, we had great teachers; there were some phenomenal teachers, and I was a good student, and I had good class sizes and good classes, because I was highly streamed, but still, we didn't treat teachers with the respect that often they deserved. I had two outstanding teachers that I can still remember. One was my Chemistry teacher, and her daughter was in our class, so we gave her a bit more respect because her daughter was right there! She'd tell us *stories*, and she told stories about things that happened at home, which used to mortify her daughter, but gave us a sense that she was *real*. I can remember coming to class one day, and she had a broken elbow, because she'd fallen off the step-stool that she used in class to write on the board, because she was short. So, her stories became real to us. The other teacher was my Physics teacher; he was my Maths teacher in 5th form, and then my Physics teacher in 7th form. One day in 5th form, and I still don't know to this day how he noticed us, but I was talking and I don't normally talk, I'm normally a really good student - and when I was at school, I was a really good student - and he caught me talking, and he moved me right in front of his desk, so that my desk backed onto his desk. I did really well that year, and I paid

attention for the rest of that year, but it wasn't because I paid attention, it was because he then took an interest in me because he saw me *all the time*, sitting right there! So, we created a relationship, and I felt quite comfortable to go and talk to him, during class, after class, before class, about what was happening and how my learning was going. I had a different Physics teacher in 6th form, and I somehow managed to get through Physics, but I didn't learn anything. Then I got him back in 7th form, and he just looked at me and said, "What were you doing last year?"! That understanding became really key, and both of them were about the relationship that we had with the teacher, not about what they were teaching me. In general, though, my thinking was, "I can't see why I would be a teacher, because I know that *most* of the time, people aren't going to really engage". I listen to my son now, and just the things he says like, "Ugh, this teacher did this", and I think "Wow! Actually, these are the people that are supposed to be teaching you, and *enabling* you, and *allowing* you to reach your potential".

I understand now what people saw when they said I should teach, but, at the time, I had no idea. I know that I can create good relationships with people, and understand people, and support them to do things well. I do that in athletics coaching too; it's about allowing people to realise their potential, to be the best that they can be, and I really *enjoy* that. It probably came through when I was at

high school, because I had leadership roles, and I was involved in lots of different activities. Then I ended up in dietetics, which is, again, it's helping people.

I didn't know what I wanted to do when I was at school. I *thought* I wanted to be a Physio, but I didn't really, and my Principal wanted me to be a Doctor, and I didn't really want to be a Doctor. So, I kind of fumbled into my first year of university, studying PE, and by the end of that they told us the only pathway was PE teaching. Again, I said, "But I don't want to be a teacher", and actually PE teachers were even *further* down the list than a normal teacher, so that was really fun! It moved me out of PE. I'd studied Chemistry and Biology in my first year at university as well, which was lucky, so I went to Nutrition. They told me they'd put me on a Dietetics pathway, and I said, "OK", and went along and did all the courses I needed to. I wasn't very questioning when I was younger, and I didn't actually know what a Dietetics pathway was. At the end of my third year, when they said we had to apply for Dietetics, I was like, "I'd better find out what this thing is"; so I did find out, and I thought, "Actually, yeah, I could do that". At the same time, though, I also applied for Teachers College, because I had a friend that was going to Teachers College. I applied to Canterbury and Dunedin, and both of them came back and said I could be a Home Economics teacher, with a secondary in Science, and I thought, "Well, that's as low as a PE teacher", and *again* I said, "I don't want to teach". So, I ended up doing Dietetics, which effectively is just working one-on-one with people, to enable them to reach their potential or help them to better themselves. After a few years of being a dietitian, I moved to Auckland and ended up getting a job at Massey University, so I ended up teaching. I didn't look for that role; I was in private practice, and I was also working for the District Health Board. I was doing some sports nutrition work, and they had a new 'Sports Nutrition' course at Massey. They approached me and asked if I would be interested in coming along and developing their third-year content and then delivering it. It actually wasn't that bad at that stage, because I was teaching people that were

interested in nutrition, and I was interested in nutrition, so it became about finding ways that I could get these people passionate about what I was passionate about. It was kind of like a *dream* job, because I was on about 0.7 FTE and I had to teach one paper a year. I was a Teaching Assistant; I wasn't even a Lecturer. Then I got a few Master's students to supervise. I mean, really, it was probably the easiest job I've ever done; I had one semester where I taught and one semester I didn't.

I really enjoyed that transition into education. You got to effectively be on stage, interact with your class, and get them to see things how you saw them, and *challenge* and question. With Nutrition, you're always challenging people's belief system, so we would start by saying that everyone's been eating since they were at least six months old. What you like and what you don't like isn't in dispute, but how do you improve your nutrition? Why is food something that has all these other boundaries around it when we talk about healthy eating? Yes, I thought it was great fun really. The hardest thing with teaching at Massey is that you had to create resources for distance learners, and that was just *horrendous*; photocopied books of readings that linked together somehow. I've always found that really challenging, that people would have to sit and read this stuff that I thought was kind of interesting, and then tie it into their work. That was the *last* thing I did; I always left it 'til last! I used to go through topics and work out what the key readings were, and what work needed to be done in each of those spaces, and then think about what was manageable really. I mean, they were for my Postgrad students, so they were expected to read, but some of those books are really dry. I probably put in what I thought they needed; I tried to use a system where I'd give them historical and seminal pieces of work, with guidelines of where it might branch out to, because I thought, at least if they had those seminal pieces, I knew they had those bits, usually the pieces that were informing most of the other research at the time.

I think, when I came to OP, I learned rapidly what I was capable of, and how

we get good engagement. Initially, I obviously had Nutrition to teach, but I also had Physiology. When I first started, I was 0.3 FTE, teaching two full classes, which were the first year, of 120 students, a second year, which had 90 students, and a Graduate Diploma, which had about 15, so, in a 0.3 role, I had four papers to deliver. But I *never* actually saw that as overworked or hard or anything; it was just the fact that you could be out there working with so many people, and them moving through material, which is kind of how I saw it. At the end of that first year, it really confirmed that that's all I was doing, because a guy turned up for my exam that I'd never seen before, and he passed with a B+, and I went, "Wow! He's just been reading what I've been putting up". At that point, I actually realised I need to change this; this is the model that I was *given*, but actually it's not the model I believe in - the 'Yes, I've got an exam that says they know it on that day' doesn't mean they can apply it. Can they be personal trainers that know what basic nutrition is? Can they *understand* the physiology that's happening when someone's exercising? So, that kind of changed my philosophy a little bit, and I looked at ways that I could get people really *showing* me that they knew and could apply, and actually, if they could apply and they didn't really know, that was OK too; if they knew when it was the right time to use it, rather than the details, it was fine, because we were looking at learners at levels 4 and 5.

At that point, I moved into teaching in Midwifery as well, and we trialled Bioscience being the first online course. The rest of the degree was still taught face-to-face, so I got *slammed* that year because mine was online, and they wanted Bioscience to be face-to-face. What we learned really quickly, or what I learned really quickly, was that their labs became really, really important, because that was the time they saw with you. Then the next year, when the whole degree went online, I was like the golden child, and they knew that I knew how to do it, so that was interesting as well. It was really just the perception of the learners that I was a little bit, year ahead, more organised; that's *all* it was, was organisation,

because the labs came out of the programme at that point as well. That, again, reconfirmed with me that you didn't have to *know* stuff before you could apply it. We were able to play around with the curriculum, so students might learn how to take a blood pressure before they knew what a blood pressure was; they knew how to do it, and they knew what the normal parameters were, and then later on, we taught them what they were actually looking at. That didn't change whether they got it right or wrong at the end of the year. A couple of other institutions were teaching the same qual, and they were quite adamant that you had to *know* things before you could do them, but there was no difference in results and things like that. Our thinking was that these people have come to be Midwives; they want *skills*, they want to feel like they can *do* something, they want to go up to a Midwife and say, "Well actually, I *can* do the blood pressure, and I *know* what I'm listening for". So, we changed our model of what we thought was important in skill development as well.

I don't do a lot of tertiary teaching anymore, but I really *strongly* believe that every learner has the ability to succeed. And in tertiary, they've chosen to do the course of study that they are enrolled in, so you don't have to sell it to them. What you have to do is meet their expectations and keep them engaged. As a *practitioner*, I worked really hard to get to know my learners, to really understand who they were and why they were there, in order to be able to meet *their* needs and their expectations. Even now, it still stresses me when I get a student complaint that their expectations haven't been met, because no one actually bothered to find out what they wanted and why they were there. Yes, sometimes they are not in the right place, so part of your role as well is being able to understand where's a better place for them, and that it's not a loss of a student to you, it's putting them in the place that best suits them and their career aspirations. Underpinning all of my philosophy is always that *whakawhanaungatanga*; understanding the relationship, *enabling* people to be successful, and trying to

find different ways that worked for different people. There's no 'one size fits all'; most of my classes had multiple ways that learners could engage with the same material in a way that suited them.

As far as education goes and key moments, I think there are *always* key moments. Every year, there's always something when you think, "Oh, yeah - should've done that a bit earlier". I think one key moment that has stuck with me probably *forever* is the first time I went to a marae with the Sports Institute. We went as staff, to start moving us into a space that we were comfortable with. There was a staff member that had been away on leave, had come back, but was jet-lagged and was really tired. She got through the first day and then, that night, she said, "I can't do this anymore, I need to go home, I'm too exhausted", and that was fine. But as she packed up to go, she put her pillow on the table, and she just got told off big time, which was fine. It's always stuck with me, though, that I *knew* the difference between noa and tapu, and what that meant, but actually that one moment really illustrated it. Quite often, my daughter will put her hairbrush on the table, and I'm like, "No, it can't go there", and she *knows* now, but it's taken a lot of training. It's those sorts of things - and sometimes you can't plan for them - that have the biggest impact. I used to teach a personal training course in Auckland, as part of my private practice, and I used to teach how to take a food record, so how to record off someone what they had eaten. One day, I got this student to come up to the front of the class. I'd prepped her and said, "Look, I'm going to be asking you what you've eaten over the last 24 hours. Be as honest as you can be, as long as you're comfortable with that", and she said, "OK, no worries at all". We went through it, and then we got to afternoon tea. She'd eaten a chocolate biscuit, and everyone knew that because we'd just seen her, and she said "a chocolate biscuit". Then she said to us, "If I was talking to my trainer; though, I would have called that an orange". I kind of looked at her, thinking "Wow! This is going to be cool", and she said, "I don't *like* oranges, so I

would know on my food record that I'd had chocolate, because there's no way I would have eaten an orange. And my trainer thinks I'm being good because I'm eating fruit... so we're both being satisfied". I could not have *taught* that to that group; there's no way that I could've got that message across, but the lights that went on around the room, and the honesty that came out, was unbelievable.

There is no planning, I don't think, for those magic moments in education. I think sometimes they happen by creating the environment that allows people to feel safe to *share* their experiences, because their experiences have the richness that allow those points to come out; all the planning in the world couldn't ever get you there! I think you have to create it; I don't think it just happens, and I think that's where the Tertiary Excellence Awards come in. It's about establishing relationships, creating a safe environment, allowing people to feel that they can contribute, and bringing them into the conversation, and being at that level *all the time* that allows the magic to happen. We talk about 'the sage on the stage' not being there, but you *are* an actor in the *performance*, and you have to create the environment that allows the performance to happen. We've all been to the most boring lectures, when someone stands in front of the room, and talks in a monotone, and tells you what they think they need you to know. The most magical ones are when you're involved, and you're riveted, and you actually can't write anything down, because you don't want to miss anything. That's one kind of difference, but it has to be *made*, and you have to listen to the feedback. So, if you come out exhausted and you feel like you've had to draw everything out, then you haven't done a very good job; if you get to the end of the time period, and you've still got heaps to do, then that's fantastic. For example, I had a slide deck that I designed for a lecture, and it took us *three weeks* to get through that slide deck, and I had this student that used to get really frustrated because we didn't get to the end; they had it, but we never got to the end, and I'm like, "I don't care if we get to the end or not. It's actually about the conversation we're having.

And, look, we're getting stuck on a slide, which means there's lots to contribute, so I'm just giving you a framework', and, as we got through it, he said, "Actually, this has been amazing!". I said, "Well, I don't need to give you any more content. You all know now how to find it, where to get it from, how you draw your answers together, and the conversation that goes with it". So, yes, it's about creating those different environments, and how we do that. It's about knowing your learners; you *have* to know them. It used to stress me in Occupational Therapy, as Head of School, when staff would tell me that they didn't know the names of their third-year learners yet, and I used to say, "That's just fundamental! You taught them in year one for a start off; the first thing you should do is get to know their names". My husband is a primary school teacher; he's *terrible* with names, but he spends three or four weeks in summer with the class sheet, learning the names; it's important!

I wouldn't say that there are particular personality traits or characteristics of excellent teachers. I think that everyone has to bring their authentic self, so, therefore, it doesn't matter who you are or what you are. If you look around the awardees at OP, there's a lot of us that are probably a lot more outgoing, but there's also a lot that are quite introverted and quite quiet. You've got to bring that authenticity to the class, so that you get trust and respect. If you bring someone else, you'll just be someone else, and the students will know that; they're not stupid. So, I don't think there's any particular trait; I just think you have to be authentic, and give a little bit of yourself. It's not about *taking*; you've got to share and participate. I used to say to my learners all the time that they knew as much about my family as I know, because I had to share those stories for them to believe, and we'd have all sorts of examples that would come out. I can remember coming to work one day with great big plasters up the front of my shins, because at the gym that morning, I'd missed the box on the box jumps, and I'd just taken out my shin. I was wearing shorts that day, and the students

just thought this was hilarious, but we did a whole session on how they would respond to that: If they were the trainer, what would that mean, what would they do? It was my stupidity, but it made a lesson as well!

In terms of applying for the award, I actually applied twice. I wasn't successful the first time, and, looking back now, I wouldn't have given my portfolio an award either. I didn't give enough of myself; I just kind of answered the questions, and I didn't come through in the portfolio. Then the second time, I really didn't want to do it again; I couldn't see the point. I knew a lot from the first time around. It had taught me a lot about being a practitioner and about the reflective process, so I'd *gained* heaps out of it, and I wasn't too worried about the award. I felt a little bit false when I won the award two years after I'd first applied; it was quite a weird space to be in. The second time around, though, my portfolio was much more about who *I* am, and much more of *me* came out through it. It wasn't that my practice had changed, but I *reflected* on it better, and I could see how I needed to be situated in it. It was really interesting as well, because the rules changed between those two or three years. It was quite nice, because the new rules allowed for a little bit more reflection; it was still a really tight reflection, because there's a word limit, but it allowed me to go, "Actually, I don't *want* this bit in here. This is a bit false; I need to show who *I* am, and why I'm here, and more of my journey". Probably the big thing, if you read the first portfolio compared to the second one, was that my teaching philosophy changed. It didn't change a lot; I just changed how I demonstrated it. The first time, I wrote about it in words, and the second time I *drew* it; the second time, I thought, "Actually, it's got these bits in it, and this is me, and this is how I am", and it made a lot more sense. It was a bit like juggling, but it wasn't juggling with one ball, but with all the elements that are *in* that ball, that allow me to ensure that the learner can reach *their* potential. That was my underlying philosophy. It wasn't that I was going to be great at education, but actually I was allowing those that I was working with to reach their potential;

so, that included getting to know them, understanding them, respecting them, upholding their mana, and so there was a real intermingling of Māori kaupapa alongside capabilities, that I thought was important as an educator:

I think I felt a bit false when I won the award, because I've never seen myself as an excellent teacher; I see myself as doing the best that I can for the learners, and I do that in *any* job. You're there for a reason, so you may as well try and do your best. I would hate to go into a class and think, "Oh well, that was alright". We do have classes like that; I used to teach a class on genetics of obesity, and ughh, I'm sure I never did a good job! It was alright, but I couldn't work out how I could make it better. It was just the driest topic, and, in the end, we asked, "Well, do they need to know this?". That reflection that goes on there, around what's a different way of doing this, is vital. I think it doesn't matter *what* award you get, at whatever level; yes, it's a recognition, but that's not the end point either. That's another reason why it felt false; I wasn't doing it for *me*, I was doing it to acknowledge the learners that I had worked with. It was really interesting because *just* before I submitted my portfolio, I got a Facebook message from one of my former students. I'd had quite a lot to do with her, because she had run the well-being programme for the Polytech for two years, I'd supervised her, and I'd taught her for three years. She sent me this message saying that she'd had to say at work two people that had influenced her, and that I had been one of them. It was around understanding her, always making her feel good, being super organised, showing her that a female can do more than just one thing, because I was always juggling, and that, at the same time as being an amazing teacher, I was being an amazing mum. That was really cool, because she saw me kind of as Superwoman, which was really nice at the time. She'd posted it on my Facebook page, and I got heaps of 'likes' about it, and lots of comments, but, actually, it was the fact that I'd made that impact, more than the fact of what she'd *said*, that made me think, "This is pretty cool... Not what you've said about me, but more that you've

realised that there's been an impact on you, and that you can now see that *you* can do those things'. That was something that I added to my portfolio, because I think that kind of embodied what my philosophy was; that it's about allowing other people to see what *they* can achieve.

Winning a national award didn't really have any impact on me. There were some very *negative* comments around the place, usually from people that taught near me, that were just kind of like, "Well, what do *you* do different?". It's not necessarily negative, but not positive either. And then things like staff would take a photo of me standing at the front of a class, saying, "This is what an excellent teacher looks like", so there was that sort of element to it, which was really interesting. I hadn't envisaged that really. I don't think they meant it in a nasty way; I just think they were kind of like, "Well, she doesn't do anything different to what we do, and we didn't get this award". I wouldn't really agree with that, because I think, over the years, there's a fair share of pastoral care that I've done that other people haven't had to do, because people haven't had that trust and understanding, and because I like working with people. Then I think, with my *teaching* practice, it's not *winning*, but actually going through the process makes you a better reflective practitioner. It also makes you understand that narrative is really important for people, and I think we underestimate that sometimes. We have to be human. When I think of the best lecturers I know around the place, it's that they get *alongside* the learner; they're not trying to be at a different level.

I don't think you can teach 'excellence'. I think what it is, is that we have to work with people's capabilities, and get them more comfortable with being vulnerable, showing who they are, being authentic, being accountable for their actions, and *that's* hard if people don't naturally position themselves in that space. I don't think excellent teaching comes from *what* you teach, I think it comes from *how* you teach it. It's interesting, because the Teaching Excellence Awards are measured on your success rate, and your student feedback, and all these

measures that make people go, “Well, *that’s* not true”, or “We always get that one grumpy one!”. For excellent teachers, though, they *don’t* get that one grumpy one; they have 100% the whole way. And it’s not that they’ve taught something amazing, it’s how they’ve done it, and how they’ve engaged with the class. The class isn’t going to mark you down, if they really like you and they think you’ve done a really good job for *them*; they’re just not. They don’t really care if the learning outcomes align with the assessment tasks. You’re going to get 100% in your feedback if you’ve done a really good job, by getting to know them. So, how do we teach people how to be excellent teachers? I think we have to get them to reflect on their own practice; I think that we have to make them accountable for what they do. I mean, we have this stupid system at OP where you can do a spotlight on your teaching practice that you don’t have to share with anybody; you don’t even have to show your manager, unless you want a promotion. I mean, that’s stupid! That’s not reflective practice; it’s not continuous improvement. And you *have* to be open, so therefore you have to be vulnerable. If I think about the people that have won the teaching awards for OP, none of them are closed; even if they’re quiet and introverted, they’re open in their own practice, and what they do, and how they reflect on that.

What keeps me in this community is the impact that we keep having on people’s lives. I think education is a business of *transforming* lives, so we have to do the absolute best we can. Our Chief Executive talks about the fact that, if you have an 85% pass rate, then you’ve got a 15% fail rate, and you’ve failed 15% of your class. What that actually means is that 15 people, if you’ve got a class of 100 - it might only be two or three, if you’ve got a smaller class - had expectations when they came in. That’s the bit that keeps me here: How do we help people help their lives? And what does success look like for them? And it may not be success by completing a course, it might be success that, actually, they’ve turned up and they’ve done something regularly; it might just be one course over a

semester; but they’ve committed to it, or it might be that we’ve found a job that they can go into and be successful in that space. That’s the bit that keeps me going.

Having come from a university to a polytechnic, there was a difference in the *how* things are done. I think there’s sometimes a lack of understanding in the narrative that happens around the institution; we talk about experiential learning, and we talk about integrating things into curriculum, but we don’t talk about those that are already doing *that*, and what a great job they’re already doing. We talk about places like ‘Capable New Zealand’ and ‘EduBits’ being innovative, but we don’t look at what we’ve already got, and I think here, we have *heaps* of innovative practice, and really *exciting* ways of how we’ve changed teaching to maximise our learner outcomes. We talk about our Educational Performance Indicators, and about how great we are, but we don’t say, “Well, why?”. For me, *that’s* the bit that’s missing, particularly in this community. I think we quite often look at others and go, “They’re doing this and this and this”, but we’re not aware of what *we’re* doing. We talk about the Bachelor of Culinary Arts being innovative; it’s no more innovative than the Bachelor of Nursing, or the Bachelor of Applied Science, or the Bachelor of IT, but that’s how it’s been framed, and that’s the narrative that goes with it. I think things are taken for granted. As a learning and teaching community, particularly within OP, we need to sell ourselves a bit better: *have* communities of best practice, talk about *how* we’re doing things, *what* we’re doing - things that have worked, things that *haven’t* worked - and what that looks like.

I do think there’s a difference between excellent teaching in a university context compared to a polytechnic. I think excellent teaching in a university context means that actually you’ve got your class engaged, and they’re interested in what you’re talking about, because they do still use the traditional lecture set-up, even for smaller classes. Practical stuff is done in a lab, so it’s separate from

the theory, and often the lab instructor isn't the person that's giving the lecture, so there's no integration. That means the learner has to be a lot more independent, because they have to make those critical links. I think that's often where a lot of *beginners* in tertiary education fail, because that's a big ask: to listen to something one day, then do something practical later in the week, and link it back. That's really hard. You have to have a phenomenal lab instructor to get those linkages really clear. If I think back to when I was at university, I can remember listening to a lecture that was just mesmerising; you wrote down every word the lecturer said, and when you read it back, it came back in his voice. I used to find it really amazing, that I could *read* in someone else's voice, but I still didn't really understand it, because he used to tell stories and I could never work out what the key points were. You couldn't make your notes coloured, and add dots and things like that, but you used to do really well in that class because it made sense, and you listened, and you weren't distracted; you were engaged. So I think, in a university setting, the really excellent lecturers end up getting what we get most of the time, which is engagement and understanding. In the polytech sector, I think we're much better at that, because we do it all the time. We put the experiential into the teaching, so that the students get the experience, which allows them to make the linkages.

There is potentially a risk of excellent teachers being moved out of teaching, because of their abilities and skills. It's a risk for the learners. The skills and attributes that you have also make you a good leader, so it's a benefit for the organisation. It's a bit of a hard one, because you don't want the learners to be disadvantaged, but you can influence the rest of the organisation, using your belief structure, and those powers that you have in higher roles, to get the outcomes that you want. I moved into a Head of School role, and then became a Deputy Chief Executive, and part of the Executive Leadership Team, so sometimes I think I'm a little bit further removed now, but I can still have that influence

over at the Head of College level. It's then a case of relying on them to have an influence. As a Head of College, I probably had more of an influence because, for both schools within it, we were doing redesigns of the degree, so I was able to voice what I thought should be in there. I probably didn't have as big a say in Sport, because they were already in that space, but in Occupational Therapy we got them to move quantum really. I was able to work with my Learning and Teaching partner, because we could both see the importance of moving into that space. And it has, for the majority of staff, reshaped how they do things. There might be two or three lecturers that don't agree that that's the right way to go, so there's still some disharmony that happens. *However*, I also think, as a Deputy Chief Executive, I have come through an academic pathway, so that gives a much greater academic voice to the Executive Leadership Team, as opposed to a business or service voice, so we've got more academic strength. Having a role looking after People and Culture, and Performance, which includes Academic Quality, and Business Improvement, it changes the view slightly, so I can *fight* when I don't agree that we're going in the direction that I think we need to be going in. I have that ability to be critical, with critical thinking and that thought process, having done a PhD and being an Associate Professor. Again, it gives me more voice than, I think, if we didn't have those positions, so I don't see it as a complete loss. I work on the 'Doctor of Professional Practice' programme, and I look after some of 'Capable New Zealand', so there are still ways that I can have those conversations and influence; it's just not in front of the learner all the time.

Going forward, I have no idea what the future holds! I really don't know. I think the skills I have in leadership are transferable, so it doesn't worry me too much actually. It *used* to worry me, that there was only one pathway, once you're in education, and I don't think there is. I think the skills and attributes you have, working with people, are transferable. So, I don't know where it will be, I don't know what the future holds; I can't even tell from the legislation what the

structure will be, in a senior leadership space. I *hope* that the reforms we're going through will *better* vocational education for the learners, so that it has more *mana* and *prestige* for those coming into education, and in the wider community. As a critical adult, you think, "Well, trades is a really good vocation. It gives you really good outcomes", but when you're a parent, listening to high school teachers, it's not even on the *radar*! I'm on the Board of Trustees at a local school, and I sit on the ICT subcommittee for the Board of Trustees. Today, they talked about 'Bring Your Own Devices' and implementing that, and they said, "The year 13 Physics class are already there. They've already got all their Bring Your Own Devices" - but that's a reflection of the socio-economic space, because they're the bright kids – "and the Woodwork class *doesn't* have BYO, but that's a different group", and I went, "Holy moly! You have just said that you are classing your classes based on socio-economic status, which is appalling! And having skills with your hands, you don't need a computer?". They probably use the computers in Design, to design what they're going to do in Woodwork, but that's not being noticed. Then they talked about the importance of capabilities, and I went, "Well, you've just said that's not even important". So, I think we do need a big mind shift out there, and we have to create *equality* in what we do, and ensure that vocational outcomes aren't just predetermined by the brains in your head. That's my wish; that this review actually does help with some of that.

In terms of teacher development, I think it has to be the same as what we have when we deliver. It should be about having people alongside the learner, working, helping, understanding, reaching, allowing people to reach their potential, because there's no *one* model. That's what always upsets me around designing workshop-type things is that, like with teaching, you've got to be able to hit the multiple people in the room, rather than the average or the 80%, because it's actually your 20% where the magic happens. So it has to be *individualised*, and it has to be in work, as and when needed, so that the benefits can be seen quickly,

and so that the development continues. Again, we've all been to lots of courses where we've sat there and gone, "This is a really good idea", and then, when you think you might need it, you can't actually remember what you did or why it was important at that time. It's not just Learning and Teaching either; it could be any of our service partners supporting teacher development. It should be about working alongside, and supporting, and building capability *when* it's needed and *where* it's needed.

If I think of meaningful objects for me, I might say running spikes, because that is probably the *only* thing that has continually shaped my thinking.



Running shoe with spikes

Defeder. (2011). Spikes shoes. [Illustration]. Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Spikes_shoes.jpg

I coach athletics, and I try and get out of it regularly. Each year, I go, “This is the last year I’m going to do this”, and then each year, I get to nationals and my athletes perform or do something that I go, “Wow! I didn’t think they were capable of that!”. Then I have a break, because it’s the end of the season, and then it gets to May or June and I go, “Actually, I really enjoy that. I *enjoy* seeing them do something that they love doing, and *performing* to their potential”, so I just go back for more! It’s really quite exciting when you can work with people that know *why* they’re there, and that *want* to be there. I still do pastoral care, but I don’t have to do the chasing; if they don’t come to training, that’s not my problem. I don’t charge them to be there, they decide if they want to be there. And you see the switch flip when they realise that, actually, the work you put in is reflected in the performance. I’m trying to teach my son that it’s the same with schoolwork! So yes, that’s kind of been the one constant over the years. I mean, I’ve got one athlete at the moment who started when he was 12. He’s now 21. He’s come here and studied with us as well, and he tells me what he wants to do at training now, and I just confirm or say, “Well, have you thought about it this way?”. I don’t coach anymore; I’m just an advisory panel for him. Again, it’s that transformation.

Mereana's Story

"I think that excellence is a reflection of many things. I think it's a reflection of people who do it as a habit; it's something they do all the time... where it's second nature to want to do things to the absolute best of their ability. And it's not just ability; it's something they're absolutely committed to. It's all about the learner and not themselves".

Essentially, I ground myself first as an educator with where I've come from, and how I was nurtured. I see my dual heritage and bi-cultural upbringing as being fundamental to my pathway in nursing and education. I'm someone that's come from a nurturing environment, where learning and being encouraged to explore were normalised within our family; speaking, asking, talking were very much encouraged by both our parents. Looking back now, if you consider where children were placed in society, probably in the communities that my sisters and I grew up in, that was really quite unique. It was the mid-'60s, in a pretty strongly blue-collar working-class suburb in the South Island, in Dunedin. Our parents weren't *formally* educated through tertiary education, though they both finished their secondary education well. I guess I came from an environment where learning and acquiring new knowledge was encouraged, so that's a base of who I am and what I grew up with. We were encouraged to think and talk, and teaching was probably role-modelled by both my parents, in that they were very hands-on parents, showing us how things worked, letting us do things, and letting us make mistakes and adjust. There are a number of formal educators within my immediate family, who I guess I saw more as aunts and uncles. At the time, I didn't know what they did really, but I knew who they were as individuals and how they also reinforced learning and teaching. A lot of it was always talking, always asking,

and allowing us to talk. I'm one of three girls, and I'm the youngest in the family, so that also gives a context of both who I am and maybe the roles that we had within the family structure. I think that's also informed how I am as an educator, and how I nurse too. I certainly have a strong sense of my identity being based on that bi-cultural, Māori Pākehā context of what I draw on in my *everyday* life, and then my professional career is very much blending what I've learned and experienced there. I guess that's who I am as an individual; what has shaped me, and what I have brought to whatever I've done in the work setting.

I guess when I came into tertiary education, it was formalising what I'd done in a number of previous stages of my life, right through from secondary school, to nursing, clinical nursing, and then formally as an educator. I do think educating, and teaching, and learning were very much part of my growing up. It wasn't *called* that, but when I look back and reflect, it was *exactly* how I knew what I needed to do once I got to somewhere like this. I drew on that quite strongly. I think that base of knowing and being, informed by my cultural context - how I was nurtured as a child - certainly gave me the opportunity to just extend on that. I wasn't starting from the beginning and trying to figure it out. I knew exactly what good teachers looked like. Equally, having been formally educated in a Roman Catholic single-sex girls' school, I also knew what was perhaps *not* advantageous

for a learner. At school, we were often placed in situations where it was quite didactic; not always though, I must say. Many of the nuns that taught us were quite forward-thinking for their time, particularly around educating and ensuring that young women had an opportunity to extend themselves, so I think there was sort of a real blend going on. It was interesting.

Like I said, I grew up in the mid-'60s in New Zealand. If you look at the socio-cultural context of New Zealand at the time, it was before there was any formal recognition by the Crown or the Government about the Treaty or Māori. The Renaissance was happening, but hadn't met its full potential, and Māori were still very much an invisible part of New Zealand society. While my father was a first language speaker, right up until his death last year, he'd had that urbanisation experience, so, when we were born, it was still very much a Pākehā-dominated community that we grew up in. However, as I said, we had a Roman Catholic education, so there was a sense of protection around what we were exposed to, particularly with regards to our ethnic cultural identity. We were clearly Māori, we had Māori names; whether or not you *looked* Māori, I think we looked very Māori for Dunedin, probably still do, but if you took us into a context of perhaps other parts of New Zealand at that time, they wouldn't stereotype us as Māori. People knew that we identified as Māori, our father looked Māori, and they knew he spoke Māori. I certainly don't remember education being *harrowing* from the perspective of my identity; I just remember it being harrowing for *all* of us. There were these unwritten rules around religion and how they expected us to practise and what we did. Essentially, though, I enjoyed the learning, and I quickly learned that, because it was safe to go home and talk about it, my parents helped me understand what it was then. I remember one example really vividly. In about year 8 or 9 Science, we were asked to draw a female reproductive system. I remember thinking this was a *fantastic* thing to do, so I drew it in huge florid neon felt pens, with massive ovaries and fimbriae. I took it to the teacher,

the paper was quickly turned over; and I was given another bit of blank paper and told, "Go and do it with an HB thin-nib pencil, in a delicate way", and I remember thinking, "But... it's this big, *powerful* organ in the body, and it makes babies, so why can't we...?". When I reflect on it, I think it could've gone really wrong, if I hadn't gone home and talked about it with my parents. My mother said, 'Well, you know, it's actually about learning the rules that the teacher has. I know that you may not agree with them, but that's how these things work', and my father was, "Well, you know, I agree with the nun. It is actually very delicate, and you should represent it like that". In his mind's eye, he was actually more in favour of it; for my mother, it was more about 'learn the rules of engagement, and you'll be fine'. I think if I hadn't had that, I could have felt really resentful.

Our parents were so good. I think there were a number of things where all my sisters and I had to do was just check in: What was that about? Why do they do it that way? What's the unwritten agenda here? But I enjoyed learning, no matter what, and it was encouraged. When we got home, we were often asked about what we'd learned for the day. My father would always say, "How many questions did you ask? What did you ask?", and I remember thinking, "That's a really weird thing to say", and I'd say, "I didn't ask any today", and he'd say, "Well, you can't have learned much!". I'd think about it, and, at some point, I realised he was probably right, because if you're not asking questions, you're not checking in, and you'll just accept *anything* they say. If you ask questions, you'll find out if they really know what they're talking about. So, although my parents didn't have a formal education in some ways, they seemed to understand a lot about learning, and I thought that was quite amazing. Later on, when I was studying teaching and learning, and all the pedagogy and that, I'd be thinking, "But how did they *know* that?". They actually learned it intuitively or they learned it probably, as many of our ancestors did, from what they'd seen around them, and how their parents and grandparents had taught them. It was all about *experiential* learning, it was

about *validating*, it was about *checking in*, it was all those things.

I liked school and I excelled at school; it was a good place for me. I think many young Māori women at that time probably wouldn't have felt that. I do know from our wider whānau that my cousins who were schooling mainly in the North Island at that time didn't succeed in school as well as my sisters and I did here. That was interesting from our whānau's perspective; here we were in the deep south, far away from probably all cultural references except for our father, but we still excelled in the academic environment. I often wonder whether it was because we had that sheltering of the religious nuns around us to act as a buffer, and what we had at home allowed us to be able to go into that, survive, and come out the other side.

I didn't know what I wanted to do as a career. My mother is a retired registered nurse, but I didn't have a pathway in mind. My criteria for a career when I left high school was applying for any course that was located outside Dunedin! Originally, I was going to go and do a Bachelor of Law, and I wanted to do that at Canterbury University. Then my parents pointed out that there was a Law School here, so that was *that* plan gone, because I really just wanted to escape Dunedin. So, I applied for Teaching, Physiotherapy, Nursing... at every stage and in every centre: Christchurch, Wellington, Auckland. The first reply that came back was for the Diploma of Nursing at Christchurch Polytechnic, so I accepted it. I remember thinking that I didn't really know a lot about the programme. My mother was still working in neo-natal intensive care at that time, back in 1980, and her circle talked about these polytech nurses, and how they weren't sure about them. I thought, "Well that's perfect, I'll go and do that course". It was like a little way of saying "If Mum doesn't like it, and it's not where she wants me, why not go?", so I fell into nursing probably not with the most solid intentions! In saying that, though, once I got there, I knew it was me. It met the learning I wanted, and it had more theory than what I'd seen from the other nurses that had gone through the appren-

ticeship model. I'd had friends who left school in year 12 and had gone nursing. They'd talk about this chaos of being on the floor, on a ward, for example, and not really having much link between what they were doing, and the *fear* of being somewhere when they hadn't actually had any theory around it, but they were on a ward on night duty in charge. It seemed quite interesting to me to be a student nurse, but no, my big plan was really just to leave Dunedin, to go somewhere else to learn more and see what was happening.

When I graduated, it was still with a Diploma of Nursing, but then Massey University started the very first postgraduate Nursing papers, around 1984-5. I was at Dunedin hospital, and there were a number of key players from the then New Zealand Nurses Organisation in Dunedin too. The School of Nursing had developed here at Otago Polytechnic, and they were also talking about postgrad. I was sort of in around the fringes of that, so I'd heard a little bit about it. The key thing that drew me here, though, was when I returned from overseas. I nursed in the UK and the States for a couple of years, then came back to Dunedin in 1987. I re-engaged in clinical practice, but I'd only been here about two months before I suffered a back injury, while I was working in one of the in-patient wards at Dunedin hospital. As part of my recovery plan, I had to take some time away from nursing, so I had a bit more time on my hands. By this stage, the Bachelor of Nursing programme was *starting* to be formulated here; it hadn't been quite introduced. The Head of School knew that I was back in town, and that I had time available, so she asked if I was interested in some work here at OP. They were developing a course focusing on cultural competency, safety, and Māori health, and I came in on a very, very part-time basis to support *one* course initially, while I was supposedly recovering from this back injury. That role gradually grew as the opportunities became clearer here, then, about six months later, with the back injury unresolved, it was a case of either change my lifestyle or have surgery, which I didn't want to do. So, I stepped away from all of that direct nursing, where I could potentially

injure my back or cause more damage, and moved more into education.

I absolutely loved that transition! Quite early on, I saw that there was an opportunity to shape and influence the future pathways of graduate nurses, more than what I could do on the floor. In the clinical environment, I found it quite frustrating that there was not an ability often to effect change, or to improve nursing care or standards. When you saw things that weren't necessarily done well, or done to the standard that you would hope for, there was very little you could do about that. In education, though, I saw that being involved with undergraduate and then postgrad was a way of affecting or introducing new ways of thinking or learning or providing that base. So, I saw a great opportunity, and I *liked* the environment; again, it was back to learning. There were new things, new challenges, people talking about new information, access to this whole world of people who were also interested in how people learned, and what they learned, and that sort of thing. It was a natural transition really. By the time I got to be a full-time staff member here, I'd had 13 years of clinical experience. That had not only been in in-patient settings: I'd worked in community, primary health, worked in an independent nurse educator role for a community-based provider, so there was a lot of consolidation in a wide range of clinical areas over that time. It just seemed like a good spot to come and share what I knew about each of those, so I didn't find the transition too hard.

Another factor is that, during that 1980s to 1990 period, I had often, by default, ended up being the 'orientating nurse'; the one who did the orientation for any new staff. So, I'd be identified as being the orientating nurse, but then I found myself *volunteering* to be the orientating nurse, because, for me, being a senior nurse on the ward, I could see that whoever did the orientation would make or break not only that person's experience, but also how they *functioned*. If they didn't have a useful orientation, it would just all fall over later on. So, I became the orientating nurse not only on my ward but on the floor that I

worked on. Quite often, I'd spend a lot of time working to bring new staff on board, and giving them the base that they needed. I was never an official mentor, or 'preceptor' as they're now called; that wasn't a term that was used. By the time I heard those words, I was on this side in academia.

Initially when I started here, I think things fitted with the way we work in clinical practice, which is checklists and making sure that everything's very specific and done in a particular order. There's a little bit of flexibility, but generally it's quite ordered thinking. I probably brought that with me, and things had to be down to the second or minute; so, things were delivered in a very particular way, and this would happen for the first three minutes, and then five minutes, and so on. If I didn't get through the list by the end of the class, I'd get very stressed that I hadn't covered some things, rather than thinking that, actually, it was fine. Now, with many, many years of experience, I *do* still have an overall plan, but whether or not I get there, the premise of what I'm facilitating is about facilitating, and using the time to uncover and to draw on the learning that's present in the room, rather than transferring it from my head to theirs. That takes however long it takes, and whatever's left over at the end becomes the students' challenge to take away in a pot and continue working on. It's about that exchange of ideas. It certainly took me a while though; it didn't happen straight away, and it took me a while to understand that I *didn't* need to be in control every microsecond of the class, and to really monitor absolutely *every* learning moment of the people I was sharing that space with. That took a while, and it only probably came as I took the opportunity to observe other skilled facilitators; I don't think I would have got there on my own. The more I put myself in the position to talk to other people who were doing similar work, the more it helped. I looked quite wide to do that; I sought out other colleagues from across the polytech who weren't nurses, so people who were working in Engineering, or in other areas, and just looking at what they did and their facilitation methods, and seeing how that worked. It did

mean I had to step out and be a little bit vulnerable though, and say “Actually, I don’t know how to do it”, which is quite hard for many people. I think it’s a bit of a nursing thing to say, “I don’t know everything, I want to become better”, but it’s important. I had to allow myself to be peer-observed too, in the classroom, and to take that sort of feedback.

Do I still see myself predominantly as a nurse and then as an educator? I guess, for me, the word ‘nurse’ has so many connotations. I don’t really like the word ‘nurse’; I do love being a nurse, but I don’t like that word. When I think of that word in my mind, I really interchange it with the Māori word for ‘nurse’, or the closest equivalent, which is ‘tapuhi’. The word ‘tapuhi’ is someone who *shapes* and *cares*, and I think that an excellent teacher or facilitator also shapes and cares for people, so, for me, I sort of see them being one and the same. I think an excellent teacher, or an excellent facilitator of learning, is also someone who cares for people. I think if you’re not excellent at what you do, as a lecturer or a teacher, you won’t really be caring for somebody. To really want the best for your students, you have to want to shape it around them, and give them *all* the information, rather than holding a bit of it back and saying, “Well, I’m the expert over here, and you can have that little bit”. If I really care, I’m going to tell you a lot, and I’m not going to worry about it, because it’s good that you know everything about this. I don’t see my primary role as being a nurse; I *do* see my primary role as being a facilitator of information and learning, about nursing and about other things, including things Māori. I think probably in my teaching, while I focus on nursing, and being Māori, I try and pull in whatever’s going to make my students think. If I have to find an analogy that links to something that they’re interested in, I’ll do it. And I’ve done that a lot, as I’ve moved through time; once I hear what they’re interested in, I can generally think “Well, I’m going to have to give you a scenario that’s based around something you’re interested in”. I’ve done some pretty wacky scenarios, based on all sorts of things, but it works!

I think that excellence is a reflection of many things. I think it’s a reflection of people who do it as a habit; it’s something they do all the time. It’s not something that you achieve and say “Ha! I’ve knocked it off, and now I can just go back to being a slack sort of tutor, off on the side!”. I think it’s someone that’s reached a level where it’s second nature to want to do things to the *absolute best* of their ability. And it’s not just ability; it’s something they’re absolutely committed to. It’s all about the learner and not themselves. I think that’s often the difference of what I see with some educators who have an endgame for themselves, and it’s all about getting this or that, or having some sort of recognition. In fact, excellent teachers are the people who can introduce others to new learning, and that’s at their core. They’re just the way they are, whether they’re teaching someone how to ride a bike or to understand a really complex theory, but they really want the person to understand. So, excellent teachers are people who want excellence in the people that they’re sharing their knowledge with. I think, for many people, it’s something that’s quite *innate*. I’ve thought about that a lot. It could sound a little bit arrogant, but I do believe nurses are born, not made. You can create and shape a *little* bit, but I do think that you’ve actually got something naturally within you that allows you to be part of this sort of profession. People will say things like, “I’m lucky enough to have found a job where I can do what I like doing”, and, in my case, it’s nursing, so helping people understand what’s happening, and how to care and be with people and families.

I would say that excellent teachers are quite selfless, and I think they’re quite brave people; often they step out and away from the collective of their peers, from what I’ve observed. They’re prepared to take risks. I can think of my own sense of when I have perhaps utilised particular learning tools or strategies within some of the courses that I’ve taught, and people have said, “Oooh, I don’t know if you can *do* that. Not sure if you should”. For example, and this is way back, I think I was the first person to use self-assessment in one of my theory courses. Why

not? These students have spent five minutes or five hours or five days writing an assignment, and it should be OK for them to sit with a rubric and give themselves a mark. I remember it caused quite a bit of discussion at the time, because it wasn't on the checklist of things that we'd agreed on. So I think, often, excellent teachers are prepared to look wide, they're prepared to make themselves quite vulnerable, and they're committed to not just accepting the status quo and rolling out the same course all the time. They're constantly thinking about how things could be improved. I have always gone and read the student feedback and evaluations to the nth degree, looking at the data behind it, and seeing where the cracks are. Excellent teachers are always prepared to critique themselves and what they're doing, and to see how effective that is. They clearly have to be people who are keen to search for new information about teaching and learning, and not accept that they're at the top and that's it. That's one thing I've noticed with many of the awardees, the Ako Academy colleagues that I've met; they're all prepared to just throw it out there and say, "Well, thought it was good, but maybe it's not... thought this worked, but it didn't", rather than just saying "Oh yes, this is it, and I'll just keep doing this". They're usually quite generous people, they're giving to other people, and quite happy to not hold back.

I'm using the word 'they' here to say that I'm part of a collective; maybe I should say 'we'. I do see myself as an excellent teacher now. I find it quite hard, though. That could maybe be a hangover from Catholicism and not wanting to make yourself bigger or better than anyone else, staying in your place. I think it comes more from my father and my cultural perspective of always being mindful that you are no greater than the sum of everyone that's around you, so keeping yourself in check. I found it *extremely* hard, in the Ako portfolio process, to say "I am this, I am that, I have done this"; that was very, very difficult.

When I think back to applying for the award, I had a colleague who went through the process several years before me and she wanted some assis-

tance with preparing her portfolio. We talked a lot about how she was going to approach it, and, at the end of that process, she said, "This is something you should do". I remember thinking "No, no, I don't think so"; I didn't feel like I was ready for it. Then the next year, our Chief Executive suggested that he would like me to apply, and I reluctantly said I would. I started working on it, but it didn't feel right for me at that time. I couldn't put my finger on it; maybe I wasn't ready to be under that amount of scrutiny, maybe it was a range of other things that I was working with at the time. My dad had become terminally ill and we were starting to care for him more, as a whānau. So, I placed it on hold. There was no getting away from it the following year though! Things had become a lot more settled with my whānau, so I went with it. The process was really interesting. I had a mentor to support me, and we decided we were going to use quite a different approach. We *spoke* a lot, we *talked* a lot; we'd record and then transcribe things, certainly for the first couple of sessions that we had together. Once we'd had those conversations, and I re-listened to them, and I'd heard what I was saying, then I just wrote and wrote. From start to finish, it was probably six Fridays, I think. For me, the key was the fact that we'd done that speaking process first. I'd heard the words, I'd gone back over the words, I'd listened to the words, and then they were set in my mind and I could write. It's interesting, because it's similar to the way in which I facilitate teaching and learning. It's about grounding and talking with the learners *first*, hearing their voice constantly, and then figuring out and shaping lessons to suit them. I guess that comes with the expert teacher having that ability to draw information together quickly, to suit the group you're with; to be able to pull on the expert knowledge, and then facilitate learning for others.

Winning an award was a bit overwhelming initially. I found it a pretty overwhelming thing to go through, and there seemed to be so much hoopla over it. It's a very *public* thing, and I found that a bit much. What it has done, though,

is that it's probably allowed me to give myself permission to think of things differently for the future. It's given me an opportunity and a platform, and a wider range of like-minded people, more than I ever thought I'd have access to. It's enabled me to look at teaching and learning, particularly around Nursing education, which is the area that I facilitate most of my teaching in, and think, "OK, what is it? What is it about this? What is it about curriculum? What about a national pathway forward for nursing?". It's also created a lot more of a *visibility*, in that there are people dropping into my sphere that I probably never would've met before. You're now in an academy that people go "Oh, can I get you to do this?", or "Do you want to make a comment on this?", or "Could you review this?". There's a whole range of great opportunities, which are very stimulating. It's almost like a whole new start! When I first came into education, I'd be, "Oh my gosh, it's so interesting!", and now I'm like, "Wow! There's this other whole bit there". There are all sorts of things happening with Nursing education nationally, so to be in that sort of space where you can ask "Well, where to now?" is amazing. Some people say "Oh you've got that award now, great! You can just kick back", but I see it as being just another element of my pathway, and that's really exciting.

I don't know that you can teach 'excellence'. I think there's always going to be a certain amount of theorising and presenting and providing people with foundation skills, but I do think excellence has to be part of what you see, and feel, and experience. We have to validate that a lot more, and I don't believe just in tertiary; I mean we have to validate it *right* from birth really, through to death. From early childhood in New Zealand through to tertiary, we have to be able to talk about what we're learning and how we're learning, and we have to create that environment where teachers want to give up a bit of power and actually just critique the hell out of what they're doing, and not hold it back all the time, and say things like, "Well, we're doing it because it's on the list, we're

doing it because it's good for this, and we're doing it because the minister tells us to". We have to actually *feel* it, I think; you have to actually create it and actually allow people to feel.

You can *feel* excellence. You can tell when people are in a room, where you're with somebody and you go, "Wow! I don't know what they're talking about, but they *really* want to make me listen". An excellent teacher could teach me about anything; I'll go with Maths, because I don't understand it, but I've seen excellent teachers teaching Maths and I think "Oh yeah, I get this", and if I don't, I'll listen anyway. And I think it's *that* ability; it's creating that space, and I don't know whether you can learn how to do that. I keep going back to what I saw when I was younger. I saw people treat others respectfully. I saw a marae where everyone got taught, and no-one was cut down. Yes, you could have really open debate and perhaps be told your idea's wrong, but, at the end of it, everyone came back together and said, "OK, we have to move forward". Women got to speak, and children's viewpoint was listened to. With my mum, she was very mindful of everyone having their say, and no-one speaking over other people, making sure that, if something needed to be done, everyone learned the same bit of information, or could at least take away a part, knowing that they weren't left behind by everyone else. So, I think to develop excellence, you need to *experience* it; you have to be given a chance to experience that, and to then let people talk through "Well, what made that excellent? Let's critique it, what was excellent about it?". Often, it's about the feeling people create; it's about the fact that *everyone* in that room feels like that person's talking to them, not just the back wall. I do think it's a lot about creating the experience of, or letting people feel excellence, to know how to *really* truly apply it.

It's about the feeling, I keep coming back to that. There's that saying, 'People forget what you say, and people forget what you do, but they never forget how you made them feel', and I absolutely believe that. I believe excellent teachers

create the feeling where the people that are listening or sharing the learning experience *feel* that they are valued enough that they'll listen. If they don't feel valued, it just shuts down. If they think someone's talking over them or above them, you might as well walk out of the room. I think, *now* more than ever, it's time that we really value creating a safe space for learners, particularly young learners in our country. It is so, so critical. We know how much many of them are struggling, just with being themselves or being who they are in this world, and I think we've really got to get it right in tertiary, and at all levels, to make sure they feel like they are *someone*, at every point of their learning. It's not about wrapping them up, and being over-protective. It's about making our young people feel that it's OK to be here, and that they've got something to share. We've *all* got something to share!

The wider community is so important. All the communities that I stay in, I feel safe in, and that's really important to me. I feel like I'm valued in them, and that my contribution is important enough that I can see it effecting change; those are the things that keep me in communities. I don't think it's ever the action of any one individual or any one person; I think, again, it's about feeling. I want to call it 'wairua'³; it's the feeling, which I have within all of those groups, that I'm acknowledged, and I have a sense of purpose within them. That's very much what keeps me there. It's not about having accolades or monetary gain; it's more about having a sense of purpose. I feel like I'm a change agent. I think both my parents were quite strong with that; they involved themselves in lots of things where they were change agents, or they facilitated change, so I think that's probably something that I hold quite important within each of the groups that I work with,

3 Mereana explains this (in a follow-up conversation) as being the values and beliefs that determine the way a person lives; the search for meaning and purpose in life, and personal identity and self-awareness.

whether it's nursing, OP, the Māori community, professional nursing organisations, national bodies, whatever... It's really important to have something I can contribute, to have a purpose.

Things certainly change over time. If I think back to when I started in education, those early years are a bit of a blur! Lots of things were spoken about, but I didn't really understand what they were. I had a bit of an orientation in the School of Nursing, but not in the wider organisation. It was very much a 'Stand and Deliver' couple of days, very standard. There was no-one to say, "Come and check in with me, if you ever get stuck". It was very much a case of, "Here, off you go, and good luck!". At that stage, our school did their own thing, and they immediately put in a mentor and a buddy to bring you into the curriculum, but also to be your 'go to' person, for, say, how to use an overhead projector, or how to work this, that, or the other. That was very much a Nursing School thing at the time, which has been taken more broadly across the place now, but back then, many, many people in this organisation didn't have that.

That's been a massive change that I've seen in the time that I've been in tertiary. If I think about in-service development, as it was called back then, there was always a lot of talking about *what* to do in the classroom, but not actually *how* to do it. Then it moved more into workshops where we might take something along to talk about, and now, it seems to have moved into a phase where it's very much part and parcel of that expectation of engaging at tertiary level; that you continue to learn, and continue to develop your practice. So, I think that's been 25 years' worth of just rapid movement. Financial support for that kind of development, though, hasn't really increased at all; that seems to have been consistent, from zero to not much more. That's hugely frustrating, I think, because, again, if you really want to go to that excellence level, to do what I've described, you need to be able to get out and about, and be in the 'Teaching Excellence' community. To have access to other excellent facilitators of learning

requires you to have some resource, to do that often. Fortunately, because of some of the other communities I belong to, I've been able to do that on the back of those, but I think it's very difficult if you're sitting in a role, and you're wanting to *experience* excellence, but you've only really got your organisation to experience. You have to have those opportunities to go elsewhere.

Looking ahead, I would like to contribute on a national level, particularly to support Māori educators. I think there's clearly a paucity of Māori educators in all fields, but I am seriously concerned about the number of Māori nurse educators that aren't coming forward, so I do see that there's a contribution to make there, to the national development and the pathway of bringing more Māori in to Nursing tertiary education. I'd also like to focus on providing tangible resources that can be utilised in a range of settings, not only within nursing. I do think there's an opportunity to go wide and deep with whatever information I can. Whether or not I'll launch off into any further postgraduate study, I'm not quite sure. It would depend on the timing. I think, at the moment, I have a real passion for making sure that Māori nurse education is not lost in the silver tsunami that is taking over nursing and nursing education, as it is in many sectors. Excellence and attaining excellence is great, but I think it's not much use if you don't do anything with it.

In terms of teacher development in tertiary education, I'd like to see it start from when we employ staff, before they have to ask for it, before they even have their first day in their new role. There should be a conversation about preparedness to come into the environment, whether that's discussed with the person or it appears in the job description, and that, as *soon* as they are employed, their development starts. They could have a period of time where they work with a skilled mentor, not just for an orientation or for two or three weeks. They need the opportunity to work with someone who has that ability to imbue some confidence, more than anything. Generally, they have the knowledge base,

or they wouldn't have got the job, but they need the confidence to be in the classroom environment. That doesn't necessarily need to be a formal teaching qualification to start, but I do think there's an *embedding* that needs to happen, where we create the environment where that person's comfortable enough in their role: they know the expectations, and they can look at the delivery and other parts of the courses or programmes that they're delivering, and get a sense of where they're to be placed in it. There should be a real opportunity for their voice to be heard; for them to be able to say, "I don't feel confident in big rooms yet. I'm not really sure that I'm going to be able to do it". I think often, we take people in and they're expected to run before they can walk, and we just hope for the best! All that happens there is that the learners can really be disadvantaged, and that's what worries me most. We put up with the fact that we could lose a whole group of students, by not having people facilitating learning the way it *should* be. It's a bit like with patients: if they're not well prepared, they're going to end up being unwell. These students will walk away, and then they're left with that experience. That's bad for us, but it's also bad for them and for their esteem; they walk away often feeling like they've failed yet another course, "Because I couldn't do it". So, I think my dream for tertiary education is, firstly, that we become more connected to secondary, so that we know what we're getting. There has to be a dialogue somewhere because it's like we're talking at cross purposes, from what I've seen. What school-leavers are exiting with and what we're putting on the table is still pretty far apart, and the second-chance learners or the mature learners are even further back. So, we've still got a huge gulf and I think that's one big grey area that we are starting to miss the ball on. Then, secondly, I'd like to see us preparing our staff and our educators a lot better than what we do at present.

When I think of particular items that hold meaning for me, there are a few. The first one is a little card. It's a photo image of a kete with words on it, and it's something that students created for me about ten years ago. It talks about all the

knowledge that they received during their course. I remember receiving it and thinking “That’s not got a lot to do with the course”, but when I looked at it, it was about how they *felt*: about what they’d learned, and how *empowered* they felt about being in the classroom setting that I was in. There are words to do with cultural safety, about being in a safe space, about feeling empowered, and about feeling valued. I remember thinking that was a really huge point in my teaching career; where I thought “I’ve cracked it! I’ve cracked it!”. I hadn’t expected to see students generate something as *beautiful* as that, and say, “This is our gift back to you, and we can’t weave, and we can’t do a beautiful Māori kete, but we’ve taken a photo, and we’ve put all these words on it”. That sat on my wall for a long time, and it’s been part of whatever office I’ve been in; I’ve always taken that with me. Next to that is another picture, and it’s a picture of my parents. It’s a picture of my parents, their wedding photo, it’s a photo of my dad’s cap and his glasses, and a bunch of flowers, taken when he passed away. That was the cap he always wore, and his reading glasses, and that photo sits on my desk as well, because I think that is the *embodiment* of what I really believe has made me the educator and the facilitator of learning that I am. It’s because of what they gave, and how they were, and I think that’s wonderful. So that picture is certainly there. The third photo is a photo of my daughter and my husband, who I really see as being my touchstone for safety. When I go home at the end of the day, they’re the people that keep me focused on what’s real. Yes, academia and processes and meetings and national this and that are really there, but in fact, this is my other life that keeps me grounded, and keeps me in the real world of young learners, and of what the world is ahead of us. I might go off on tangents, but I’m actually thinking “I need to listen to this young person”; they’re right there saying, “This still doesn’t work”, or “This is what people are saying. This is what my friends are saying”, “This is what we want to do”, and “Why can’t you all listen to this in education?”. So, those are my three touchstones: it’s my students, my partner and daughter, and my parents.

Richard's Story

"It's all about the learning that happens, and all about the learners; if learners are moving, if learners are growing and changing, and getting something that's of value, then you're looking at a teacher that's worth their salt".

To tell the story about who I am as a teacher, I'll begin by saying it's my dad's fault, and my mum's, and my grandmother's. My grandma was the first woman to win a scholarship to Oxford, way back when. She never took it up, because she had to earn a crust for the family, which she did by teaching. Dad's probably the critical person, though. He was born in Holland in 1928, quite close to the German border, so in 1939 at the start of the Second World War, he was 11. When the war ended, he was 18. Between 11 and 18, he never went to school, *but* he was completely self-educated. He read every single book in the local village library, to the extent that he stole his older brother's library card, so that he could get access to the adults' books, because he'd read all the children's ones. After that, he was in a position where he could go and complete an engineering qualification, completely self-taught. He came to New Zealand in 1951 or '52, on the Dutch immigration scheme. His fare was covered as long as he would do whatever job they gave him, which was shovelling sand at the brickworks. That lasted about a week, before people realised that he could do all the other calculations and things, and he ended up working for Farra Brothers as a design engineer. Then he started teaching, at what was King Edward Technical College at the time, so he was a foundation staff member of Otago Polytechnic when it opened the doors in 1966. While he was doing that and running his engineering

business, he also went to university and just enrolled in courses that interested him. He ended up doing a PhD in Philosophy; Otago University changed their rules so that he could do it part time. That's a summary of his trajectory through learning and knowledge, and he just had a lifelong love of learning and teaching.

When I came along, I think that my dad's most exciting thing was, "Ooohh, here's a brain I can play with!". From very young, I learned to think and question, and to *think* about thinking. I can *vividly* remember, for example, as a 6- or 7-year-old, crying for a whole car trip from Dunedin to Mosgiel because I couldn't convince my dad that I wasn't dreaming; you can't do it, I mean, what do you say? "Oh, that's an interesting dream, why would you dream that I was asking you that?". So, that sort of meta-thinking became a *really* critical part of how I was in my thinking, and I learned to think about how to unpack things at a young age.

At intermediate school, our teacher died on the second day of the school year. The Principal came to see us the next day and introduced our replacement teacher. She was great at many things, but could not do maths. To her credit, she very quickly realised that I *could* do Maths, so, for my whole year 7, the whole Maths class was always "Richard is going to do the maths on the board" and everybody else could ask questions, so I basically taught my cohort of Maths at intermediate for a whole year! I very quickly learned that knowing the subject is

different from being able to teach it, and helping other people understand it is a really different process, so that was sort of my first semi-formal exposure to teaching.

Another thing I get from my parents is the belief that the world is a better place if everybody helps everybody to make it a better place. My whole mode of thinking around anything is, if I can do something that makes things better for the collective, then that's where I get my real value. My being able to do something is great, but my being able to do something that makes things better for the team, that's even better. In this case, being the one in a class of 25 that could do maths, I could help the others do maths, and I got real value out of that.

When I went to university, my dad was teaching at the Polytech at the time, and they were looking for someone that could teach a Maths class. They couldn't find anyone, so my dad asked me if I was interested. Being a student at the time, I was happy to be earning a bit of money, so I went along to teach something called 'Lab Maths'. It was for people working out in industry labs, and they'd come to the Polytech to do a course where they got some fundamental content around Chemistry, using microscopes, and so on. There was a small Maths component, and I got to teach that.

I was 18 or 19, and the next youngest person in the class would have been 25 or 26. I can still remember the first class I taught. I was so nervous that I was sweating. If you're sweating really hard and trying to make chalk work on a chalkboard, it won't do it, because the friction between the chalk and the chalkboard is more than between the chalk and your fingers. Every time I tried to write on the board, the chalk would fly away. I had to think on my feet, and I got the students to take turns to draw on the board while I sort of asked everybody else "How do you think it's going?", and gave them some feedback. It turned into this interactive 'let the student drive it'-type teaching experience, purely because I couldn't do the traditional thing. After class, the students went to talk to the Head of

School and said that they liked what I'd been doing, so basically, from then on, I intentionally kept doing it. My plan had never been to go into teaching; I didn't really have a plan, other than knowing, since I was 12 or 13, that I would finish at the end of 1987 with a Maths Honours degree and a Physics Honours degree. I always knew that, but I had no idea what I was going to do with it. By the time I was halfway through those studies, I was already teaching here and enjoying it.

There have been a couple of other key turning points for me. One was putting together my portfolio for the national teaching award, and the other was being involved in the D4LS process. These two things were going on at the same time, and they both basically forced me to stop and ask myself, "How does this work? What is it I'm doing?". Up until then, I'd steadfastly refused to do any educational theory. I *knew* I could teach, and, frankly, I was terrified that if I pulled it apart, I wouldn't be able to put it all back together. I might be able to name all the pieces and understand all the pieces, but I wouldn't be able to put them back together so that everything worked.

I still honestly believe that there's an element of magic, an indescribable element, that makes teaching an art as much as it is a science. There's something that is undefinable, and I was always quite scared that, if I pulled it apart, I wouldn't be able to put it back together again. Being nominated for a national teaching award, *and* doing D4LS, made me have to take that step. And yes, I did a Graduate Diploma or something in Education at one stage, but I stand by what I said. I still think there's a lot of the intangible. You can't make a recipe; it's not a pinch of this, and a bit of that. There's stuff in there that just happens. I couldn't even say if it's a nature nurture thing. I think probably everything is a combination of both of those things. I know I've already talked about my dad, and his background, so there's that. My Mum's a teacher; my cousin's a teacher; so, whether that's nature or nurture or whatever, I think there's a sum total of all the various parts that make it work.

I would say that excellent teachers are a kind of vehicle. They have a *passion* for their subject, and whatever it is that they are communicating, there's a passion for that. Having said that, I think you can be passionate about something and still not be able to teach it, so that's not enough. You need to understand the thing that you're teaching at a level which can be broken down. C.S. Lewis said that if you can't explain something in the vernacular, you don't understand it. Good educators have that ability to talk about the thing that they're passionate about, without using lots of jargon; you have to be able to do that. You also need to be able to listen. You *absolutely* have to be able to figure out where someone else is at, be able to talk to them about the thing, understand what they understand, and what they *don't* understand, and then help to move them along. For me, those are the critical components of excellent teaching.

An excellent teacher is someone that learning happens around. It's not about how many qualifications you have, or how much theory you know; an excellent teacher is someone that learning happens around, that people learn from. It's all about the learning that happens, and all about the learners; if learners are moving, if learners are growing and changing, and getting something that's of value, then you're looking at a teacher that's worth their salt.

I'm not sure how we define 'excellence' in teaching. I think everybody can improve on everything, and then it becomes a matter of, well, how far do you have to get to be excellent? I think that some people can develop their skills a lot faster than others, and I think that life experience can just *shape* you to be in a better space to learn in any area. Through your life experiences and through your passions and interests, you naturally get to a point where it's going well. There's the desire to learn too; to be reflective, and to actually say, "I want to get better at this", and to *craft* it. In those spaces, absolutely, there are people that can help teach you, and there are people that can help you to move into those spaces, but without a lot of those other things, it's not going to happen.

I think there's also a kind of confidence thing. I remember one example, when I'd been teaching for four or five years. I'd been teaching in the Science Department, Chemistry and graduate Maths, and all sorts of weird things, and then the Construction area wanted someone to come and teach some Construction Maths. I must have been around 24 or 25 by then. As usual, I managed to get into a massive philosophical conversation with the students, rather than just teaching them Maths, and I'd started talking to them about the concept of falsifiability, so the fact that you can't disprove a negative. I basically said to the students, "Oh, there's a pink elephant that lives out on Logan Park across the road", and they were saying, "It's not true! That's not true!". I said, "OK, prove it's not there!", and they'd say, "Well, look out the window, you can't see it". I told them it was hiding behind a tree, and the conversation went on. After about 10 minutes, the *whole* class are looking out the window, and I'm saying, "Just wait, just wait", then, for some unknown reason, the Head of Department walked in. We were meant to be learning about stress or strain or something, some engineering concept, and the *whole* class is lined up looking out the window. The Head of Department arrives and says, "Ummm, what's going on here?", and some of the students turn round and say, "Oh, we're just waiting for the pink elephant, that Richard says is behind that tree, to come out". The Head of Department had the good grace to say, "Well, that's quite interesting" and closed the door as he walked out. Of course, by the time I got back to my desk, there was a note from him, "Could you come and see me, please?". I went up to see him, knowing that he was only really borrowing me for a bit of part-time work. He asked me "What's going on?", so I explained the situation, and said that I was trying to help the students ask deeper-level questions and do some thinking, and I was challenging them on this one thing. At this stage, he asked me if I wanted a full-time job! So, he was someone that valued *thinking*; not just delivering a curriculum, but actually helping people to think and stretching their minds. I guess, for me, the intangible thing

was that I actually had the confidence to do that, and I didn't feel constrained by expectations. I didn't think, "I've got to teach you this quadratic equation, and we can't have a conversation about history and philosophy of science". Letting those *other* passions in, that give spice to life, and having the confidence to go to the odd places, I think, is a big part of the intangible. You have to be able to step off the boat and not sink, and step back on again when you need to. That's a really important part of it.

I've experienced excellent teaching in the polytech environment, and at university. I had a couple of *excellent* teachers when I did my Masters. In my undergraduate degrees, it was still very lecture-based, very *non*-engaging. I could understand why students don't go to lectures and just download the stuff. I do think there's a difference between the two cultures, and the expectations of what teaching is. I think that some of that is curriculum-based; universities and polytechs are at different places on the knowledge and skills continuum. We do some degrees here, like our Engineering degree which has a lot more theoretical components than our Engineering trade certificates, and we sometimes have more things that look a bit like university lectures in those spaces. I still think, though, that excellent *teaching* has those same fundamental elements. It's about *passion* for your subject, engaging people, finding out where people are, and moving them on. That is hellishly hard to do in a classroom of a hundred, in a lecture theatre for example, so I think that sometimes the educational model makes it very hard to do what I would call excellent teaching.

If I think about applying for the national award, the first thing was being nominated for, and winning, a local OP award. After that, there's an expectation that if you win the OP one, you are available to have your name put forward for the national one. I think it got delayed for a year, so I won the local one in 2014, I think, and then it was 2016 for the national award. It was good because it gave me a year to think about it and collect more student feedback on my teaching.

I'd been teaching here since around 1985 or '86, before we had formal teacher feedback systems, but I had developed my own way of collecting student feedback, so I'd kept all of that. I wrote a draft first chapter of my portfolio, and gave it to a colleague for some feedback. They provided invaluable support around narrative, structure, and some theoretical background, while still letting me do it my way. It wasn't really about winning or not; it was about doing what's real and true, or not doing it at all.

Do I see myself as excellent? I think I do *now*. I think now I know that the thing that I do best in the whole world is teach, and I've done it long enough to know that other people find real value in it. Like I said before, how do you define an excellent teacher? It's someone that gets students on board and works for the students' good. For me to say I don't know if I do that or not would be false modesty. I do it, and however it works, it works. I'm now at a point where I'm prepared to say, whatever that 'excellence' threshold is, whether that's maybe 70% excellent, that I'm as good at it as anyone else teaching Maths in the New Zealand vocational context.

I don't think the award really impacted on my teaching at all. It *validated* the way that I teach, but it didn't change it. My teaching had got to the stage where I did very few things orthodoxly. I had very few formal lesson plans or anything like that. My teaching plan is very much thinking about what learning outcome and content we are focusing on today. So, we're talking about quadratic equations or whatever it is. I know what's kind of involved, and I know what the assessment sort of looks like. I wander into class and start engaging in conversation with the students on something that heads to that topic. If it's quadratic equations, I'll throw something in the air so that you can see the parabola, because that's what quadratic equations are about, and we start a conversation. Eventually, I make sure that I cover all the things that students are supposed to know, and that's pretty much how *any* of my teaching works. I have sort of drifted towards

that. Having won this award meant that I felt less inclined to do the formal things that I was supposed to do around my classes. My role changed three or four years ago now, and I stopped teaching. I think there are probably more stringent moderation and compliance requirements now than there were then. There are *certainly* more now than 15 years ago. I got out the door before it became really quite painful.

I'm Head of College now, of Engineering Trades and Engineering Technology, so all the welding and fabrication, Automotive, and then Civil, Mechanical, Electrical Engineering, then Construction, which is Carpentry, and Construction Management, Quantity Surveying. It's also Living Sciences, that's Vet Nursing, Horticulture, Arboriculture, and IT. Being Head of College of all that has, at one level, the academic responsibilities, but, to be honest, the two most useful bits of information I received were when I started the job. One was from a fellow Head of College, who said to me, "The first year you will have *no* idea what's going on, the second year you'll vaguely remember things, and by the third year, you'll sort of have some idea of what's happening". I've *just* finished my third year and I feel I've now got *some* idea of what's expected of the job. The other really useful piece of information was from a visiting academic, who was running a seminar the week after I started in this role. He basically said that any management job is 95% dealing with mad people, and if you take 'mad' to mean either crazy or angry, that's completely right! On the surface, I have academic responsibility and I'm meant to read everything that goes to Academic Board, and make sure that moderation processes are happening, and all that sort of thing, but most of it is firefighting. I very, very, very seldom get time to actually *talk* to people about education.

I do miss teaching. I still do a little bit when I can; I look for an excuse to do it. I've said to everybody in my teams, "If you want some Maths, if you get a bit stuck...", because everyone's a bit terrified of teaching Maths! I'm happy to do it.

I miss it; I miss the actual act of *teaching*. I don't miss the marking, and I don't miss the compliance stuff that I'm seeing. I just know that, with the work environment survey here, 'workload' comes up all the time, and that's true. Every time the Polytechnic runs a competition to name the campus dog or whatever, they're won 99% of the time by General Staff, and it's not because they're 99% lucky; it's because Academic Staff don't engage with that stuff because they simply don't have time to. Then, every time that there's a new idea of something that can happen, I get an e-mail that says "You need to appoint a champion for xyz", so I have to go off and find another Academic Staff member who will volunteer to be the 'Timetable Champion', and that sits beside the 'Waste Wizard' and the 'Ed Tech Champion' and the 'Sustainability Sister' and whatever else they have. It's all more work for academic staff, and then there's the compliance stuff, and now we've got national consistency meetings that we never had before. I've asked the people that do them, and it's about 100 hours work to prepare for and go to a national consistency meeting, and we just put that back on academic staff. Do I miss teaching? Yes, *absolutely, desperately* miss the act of being in the class. Do I miss all the stuff that goes around the outside of it? No, I don't.

I've seen a tendency for awardees to move into leadership positions. In the year that I won, for example, there were two other winners from OP. I'm now a Head of College, one person is now on the Executive Leadership Team, and the other is running the Managed Apprenticeships programme for Carpentry. When we were first approached to apply, we would have been three FTEs of teaching; now, we would be maybe 0.4 FTE of teaching between the three of us. Likewise, soon after another colleague won an award, they were moved into a programme management role. I don't know whether this is a good thing or not. If we think about excellence in teaching, then I think that leaving good teachers in teaching roles is probably better for the students. In my case, by moving into this Head of College role, I can help some other people a little, whether it's with structures or

systems or mentoring or whatever; not that I have any time to do that. However, I do think there are other people that could do those things. I suspect that leaving me teaching would have had a bigger influence on the student experience; that's my gut feeling.

I would love to be able to do some mentoring, but there simply is not enough time for it. The job I'm doing is already not do-able; if I put mentoring into it as well, it becomes even less do-able, so I have to look at where the pressure points are. What happens if, for example, I don't get my monthly finances done? Is that a bigger problem than not having helped someone that's struggling with their teaching?

In terms of the community around me, it's whānau. I'm from Dunedin; it's home, always has been. I love Dunedin. I have applied for jobs in a couple of other places at different points, but I was not very serious. They would have taken me away from Dunedin. Dunedin is family. At the Polytech, like I said before, my personal value comes from making things better for the team, so whichever team I'm part of, I'm very loyal to them. My colleagues are really important to me; other people that are passionate about teaching. I *really* love working with the Maths team. I loved it when I used to lead the Maths team. I love the people, and I love talking Maths and Education, that combination, sitting around and having a yarn to people about Maths and Education. I *love* that! That really rings my bells.

I want to make it a better place, so I find it very hard to look outside and think "Oh, there's something else I want to do instead of this". I have no concept of 'career'; I've never had any ambition to get to a particular point or a particular role. How does someone like that get to be Head of College? Because I've never, ever applied for anything; I've only ever responded to someone else saying, "Hey, I think you're the person that would make this better". If I think I could genuinely make it better, then I don't have a choice; I'll do it. The only time I stepped away from OP for a while was when I worked part-time for eight years. Between 2000

and 2008, I was Pastor in a local church. That came about because my *church* family was at the place where they all looked at me and said, "This would be a better place if you were the Pastor". It was the same thing; I felt that's where I could make the biggest contribution at the time, and make the community I was part of as good as possible. I could contribute, so I did. When I'd done the job I needed to do, then it was appropriate for someone else to step in. I came back here to OP and carried on.

I have seen a lot of changes over time. When I first started at Otago Polytechnic, there was a Chief Executive, and one other person who did all of the HR and payroll and finances, everything. There was one person who looked after the facilities, the garden, and that sort of thing, and there was someone that ran the library and made morning tea. *Every* other person taught. Some staff didn't teach full time, so a Head of College or School might have taught only 80% of the time. That all changed when computers became the thing. You suddenly had this ability to have everything on computer, but then you had to support the computers, and so on. Then there was all the compliance, all the moderation. We had to be able to document this and that, and moderate this and that. To be honest, it was very, very minimal when I started. Personally, I think it's become a bit stupid now; it's gone overboard. We now have a compliance industry that just strangles a whole lot of things. I've seen it go from very little to this other extreme. When I first started, my Programme Manager would check in with me to see how everything was going, have a look over what I was doing, give me some guidance, and so on. There weren't the formal piles of moderation that you'd send off and keep in triplicate, but there was definitely a process to ensure that there was some quality. That was all built on relationship and trust, and that's definitely changed.

The other main change I've seen is a significant change in student attitudes. It's gone from an opportunity to learn and has become almost like buying a commodity. We'd *never* hear a student, back in the day, saying, "I'm paying for this,

I'm not getting value". Now we get that quite a lot from students, even to the extent where it's "I'm paying for this, why am I not passing?", "It's your responsibility to make me pass", or "I've paid for this qualification, why are you not giving me this qualification?". We went through a middle ground of "I'm paying for the opportunity to learn, but it's still my responsibility". To me, that's where it should be, but these days there's definitely a flavour amongst learners of "I've done this day; I've prepared this thing. If I'm not getting it, it's because you're not doing it properly". That's a big change.

Looking ahead, who knows what the future holds? My hopes are that education is the best thing it can possibly be for the students, and I hope I can do whatever I can to help bring that about. Who knows, with the Review of Vocational Education, I don't think my job will exist in a couple of years. Colleges won't look like mine does; I don't think they'll be that eclectic. It makes perfect sense in an OP context, so I think it's a great group, but, once things get bigger, that will change. There might be a Head of Engineering, but why would that be me? I'm not an Engineer. There might be a Head of Vet Nursing, but again why would that be me? I'm not a Vet Nurse. I'm not *anything*; I'm an Educationalist.

If there were a national role in Maths education, that's something I could potentially see myself doing, especially if it were in Dunedin. That would be a good opportunity, and again, if my being involved would make Maths education better, I would absolutely be up for it. That's my being driven by getting value out of what's best for the whole team again. If it were just up to me, and I could do what makes *me* happy, I would teach more and manage less. If there were a role in national Maths teaching, I'd like it to be around actually doing some teaching, seeing if I could help other people teach well, and looking at how Maths works across various curricula. Some of those sorts of things would be quite interesting really.

In terms of teacher development, we need to look at dual practitioners. Like

I said before, you've got to be *passionate* about something, and then you've got to be able to communicate it. I think in the tertiary context, especially in the *vocational* tertiary context, it's about finding those people that are passionate about the thing, and that have enough life experience and natural communication skills that you know it's not a futile task trying to get them to teach. After that, it's about helping them to learn how to teach really well. I think sometimes we overdo the *theory*, and we underdo the actual just *doing*, and helping them to do. For me, I would probably have more classroom observation and reflection on those, and listening to stories and just sitting around talking about teaching: "How's it going? What did you do today? How did that work?". It is a bit more time intensive but, as Head of College, I've seen everybody enrol in teacher training and what a struggle it is, and how much workload it puts on people. It's just bloody-minded, pig-headed stubbornness that's required to get through the thing, and *most* of the people say, "Well, I got some really good stuff out of it, but most of it was a waste". When you start asking them about it, it's the academic theoretical level-7 stuff that a lot of people really struggle with, especially the trades teachers. Some of the people that have done plenty of education before that, they're good to go, but other than that it's a real challenge.

I do think it's *really*, really valuable, everyone doing teaching training or doing some education. When I first started, there was a thing called teacher training that was in Christchurch. I got three weeks, three times maybe, when I would go up to Christchurch and I would sit around with all the other starting teachers and we basically looked at this is how you teach, so how to survive in a class, what not to throw at the students, how to write a lesson plan, what moderation was required at the time, and things like that. It was all really, really practical stuff, and some cultural things, and diversity things too, so those sorts of basic issues that we deal with. We'd get three weeks and then I'd come back here for three months. As part of my teaching here, I had to do a bit of reflective practice, and

then I'd go back for the next three weeks and take some of my reflections along with me. We did classes with the class too. There were maybe 20 other people in there, doing everything from Law through to Nursing. I got to teach them Maths, and they got to teach me some Law or whatever; and then we critiqued each other. We'd talk about it: what was good, what wasn't good, what stuck in our mind, and what stuck in our craw. It was really good. *That* was quite formative; that's how I learned to formalise my teaching a bit, so *that*, I think, was really, really, really useful. I think teacher training and development needs to look a bit more like that, rather than the formal qualification as it's currently structured. It needs to be more applied. It's the way that we talk about teaching everything else here. Like I said, I did a Graduate Diploma in Education once upon a time. It was at university, and they stood at the whiteboards and wrote on the whiteboard "Don't write on the whiteboard", and they showed us PowerPoints about not giving PowerPoints!

In most areas, the Polytechnic is 100% an institution that has workplace-based experience. I mean we try and teach IT by having computers set up a lot like they would be in industry. We have students doing development, and actually developing the type of software they'd be developing if they were out there. We build a *house* in Carpentry. We get students to cook food and dish it up, and then we reflect on those things. But, at most, we reflect a bit, and there's *some* theory. My gut feeling is that in the 'teaching people how to teach' space, we've got those three elements, but the proportions are not the same as what we advocate for. We have much more theory, and then we have quite a lot of reflection, and a little bit of doing. They're actually *doing* a hell of a lot, because they're teaching full time, but that's not what we actually use to inform the programme. That's my gut feeling, that the balance could be better.

I have two items with me that are about my passion for Maths, and about things that I don't really understand but I love having conversations with people

about. I mean the very best class I ever taught was in the middle of a Maths class with students, a few times, not once, and the students say, "We want to learn more about quantum mechanics". So, we agreed to not do a Maths class and to do a philosophy of quantum mechanics class. We scheduled it a week out, so it was an optional class, and all the students turned up and it was the best thing ever! So, the first item is a Klein bottle, and the second is a Mobius strip. They're both about Maths concepts.

A Mobius strip is made by a two-dimensional shape. It's just a strip of paper, which you need to twist through a third dimension to make it a single surface. It's just this idea of being able to *play* with things. If I cut this whole thing in half, right through the middle down the length, what happens? There's still one strip.



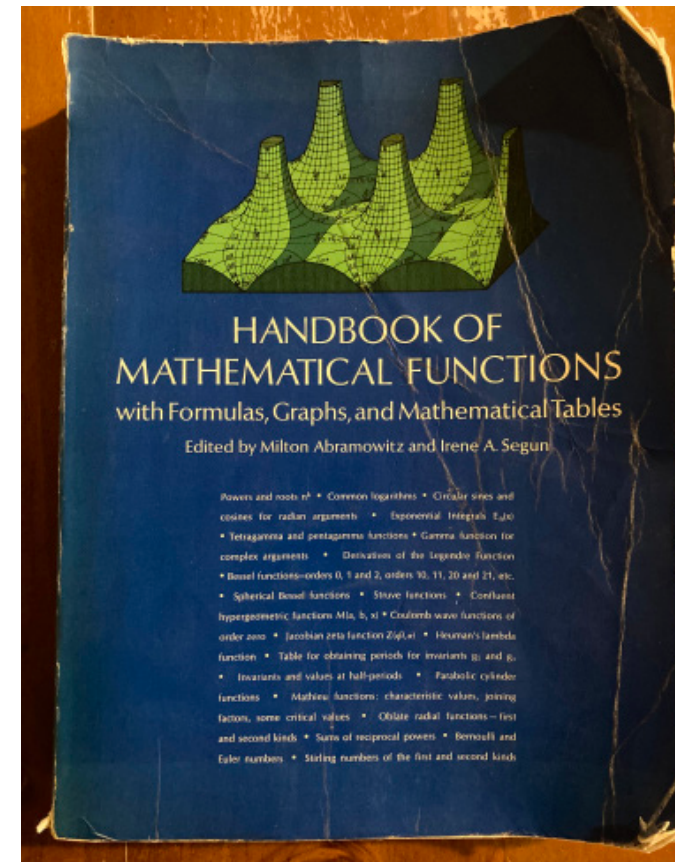
Klein bottle and Mobius strip

The real fun is, if we cut it *again*, what happens? It doubles in length; it's half the thickness but it's twice the length. It's still only one thing, and it's still got a twist in it. This is a branch of Maths called 'Topology', which is all to do with shapes and how things hang together. We don't teach it here at all at the Polytech, but it doesn't stop me from talking to people about it, because it's interesting. If I cut it a third time, it becomes *two* loops that are intertwined; one whole loop and a second, completely independent loop, but they're looped inside of each other. And you can ask questions like, "If I gave it two twists at the start, what would happen?". It's just that ability to *play* with things; to me, that's what Maths is really about, it's just playing with numbers.

The Klein bottle is a three-dimensional thing, but you can't actually make it, because you have to take it through a fourth dimension. The idea is you start with a tube, three-dimensional, and then you twist it. With the Mobius strip, I started with two dimensions and I twisted it through a third dimension; the Klein bottle, you start with three and you twist it through a fourth, which you can't do. It's a three-dimensional projection of a four-dimensional concept. It's supposed to only have one surface, so if you put something in the middle, it should come back on itself. A friend of my dad's made this one years and years ago. He was a student in the Polytech ceramics course at the time and made it for Dad. Again, it represents *playing* with Maths concepts and having conversation starters about Maths, and that's why it's always been really important to me.

Another meaningful item for me is the 'Abramowitz and Stegun Handbook of Mathematical Functions'. I started learning Maths and playing with Maths when I was a child, and my dad had this big book. It's just got everything in it: all different maths functions, and logs, and things like that. There's a small section about three quarters of the way through which is just *black*. The rest of the book is fine and then you've just got this black section, which is where I, as a child, used to thumb it. That section is the prime factorisations of all the numbers up to 10,000, so if you

look at any number, you can figure out if it's a prime number; and what numbers make it up. It's basically the building blocks of playing with numbers and, as a child, I was always at that bit of the book. I might see a taxi go past and it was number 1428, and I'd think let's have a look at that number! So, this represents, from my dad, my love of playing with numbers. It's something from my childhood.



Abramowitz and Stegun Handbook of Mathematical Functions (1964)

(photo credit: Richard Nyhof)

Adrian's Story

"I think excellence is when teachers can read a classroom and kind of work out, 'Right, so what are your aspirations? What do you want?', and work around that."

I worked in kitchens from when I was 16. I was very good at school academically, but I just had a drive to work in kitchens, so I entered as soon as I could. I trained as a chef, and worked as a chef for a number of years, then I sort of fell into education when I was 27. When I first came into education, it was a foreign landscape for me. I was quite obedient in that landscape initially, because it was quite a comfortable lifestyle compared to what I had as a practising chef; it was just completely different. So, I sort of conformed and didn't really ask any questions about why we were doing what we were doing.

A couple of years into my teaching, I just kind of realised that there was an *organic* nature to learning in practice, unlike formalised education, which is organised and therefore fragmented and siloed. In my early teaching career, I taught in a trade area, and there was this concept (and there still is this concept to an extent) that theory and practice are separated in teaching trades. So, we'd go and sit down and do theory, and then we'd go do the practical stuff we wanted to do. There's no real issue getting young people involved in the practical aspect of the trade, but the theoretical part of that is switched off, and it was very much a case of the master-apprentice pedagogy, which is dominant in culinary arts. That was prolific in teaching theory, so it was just "copy down what I say", and who really cares, and move on. For me, though, I was just desperately trying to figure out how to engage kids for two hours, literally "how do we make this fun?".

In that desperation of trying to make things engaging, I came up with different approaches to teaching and learning. One of the initial tasks I set myself was a totally applied course. It was a unit standard back in those days, but it did have some theory attached to it. I thought, well, technically speaking, we don't really need to fill in any paperwork; we've just got to answer a couple of questions about the practical elements. Traditionally when it's taught, you might have an overhead transparency or PowerPoint or something; I tell you what the thing is, if I'm really good I'll put a picture in the PowerPoint, and you copy it to engage you, and that was innovation! I thought that maybe we'd try not writing anything the whole time, and just try engaging the students differently for the whole session. I looked at everything that students were expected to write, and thought about how to turn that into an *active* activity, rather than a passive one. Then, at the end, I just said, "Well, here's all the notes of what we've covered today", the bits of paper that they would have traditionally filled in. I asked the students how they felt about it, and they responded well to it. Then I just moved through each little session and tried to change it; over a period of time, I changed the whole course. My thinking was *not* informed by theory, but informed by just observing human behaviour; just looking at how people were reacting to things. The theoretical understanding of how teaching and learning works only happened much later in life. That seems to be quite a common story for some people; they're like, "Oh,

that's what that's called! I've been doing that'. So, you know, I'm very much sort of grounded theory, you might say.

When I look back on when I was at school, it was not like that! And sadly, I've got a young daughter and it's still similar in many respects. When I was studying Culinary Arts, I instantly just thought this is, excuse the French, but bollocks... it just was. The curriculum was based on a 110-year-old curriculum that hasn't changed. The actual dishes within it are primarily from that period too, developed by a French chef called Escoffier, who codified things. Cooking is organic, and cooking is based upon cultures, and all kinds of things. How can we take something holistic and organic, and subjective to culture, and say, "No, we'll just make it French, and we'll codify it this way so that it's easy"? I was working in kitchens in Dunedin, and learning all this French stuff and whatever, and I was like, "What's this got ---? And why, why are you doing this?". Then I had an exam on cuts of animals, and I had to learn the cuts in French. I'd think, "Well, if I was at work, I'd just open the book and say, that's the cut; why do I have to rote learn it?". All of that stuff was just *safe*. I remember being young, and it clicked. I thought, "I know why they do this! It's because there is a canon, a body of knowledge that is *there*, and you can be tested on it. Everything else is subjective, and they can't deal with subjectivity; they can only deal with this". So, I kind of already had an inkling that things were not right at a young stage; that way of learning that was "Well, we've got to do the theory, sit down, suck it up, fill in the book, and then there's a test".

Interestingly, I didn't finish my qualifications the traditional way. In the past, you had to do one year of full-time study, then you had a compulsory gap year to get industry experience, then you'd come back for part-time or full-time study. When I came back for my second part of study, towards the end of that, I had to go on work experience and I got offered a job at a really good restaurant, in a really good position. I was torn between my studies and this job, so I went and spoke to my lecturers. They said, "Take the job, finish your quals later!", so I

did. Five years later, I went up to Cromwell and did a couple of practical exams. They'd said, "Here's the books, study them", but what was really interesting is that I didn't go to Tech; I didn't engage in any of the theory that they did, yet I still got the top mark in the country for the theory exam. It was basically because you just had to rote learn it. There's nothing genius about it; you rote learn this thing. And it was *totally* disconnected to what I was doing in industry. I remember turning up to my final practical examination, and I had to cook *cervena*, a venison product, even though I was working in this restaurant where we had just won the national competition for *cervena* cookery. They still said, "No, you have to come and cook it in front of us on this date". I arrived, they gave me the piece of meat, and I said, "Sorry, you've butchered this incorrectly, I can't cook that piece of meat", and I realised they didn't even know what they were doing! So, from a relatively young age, I was thinking what is this thing called education? What are the powers behind it? What are the drivers? Why are these people here? Why are they allowed to legitimise this knowledge that is organic within the practice? And who are they to say that they are *better*, and they are the authority, when I can see flaws in even a simple practice level. I kind of always knew that I was asking those questions.

That's not what drew me to education though. I fell into it. My wife and I took it in turns at whose career would take the forefront. We'd been away working as professionals, then we had a death in the family, so we moved back to Dunedin. I literally just walked into Polytech to say "G'day" to my ex-lecturers, and they said, "We have a job", so I just started. I sat in on a lecturer's class. He said, "This is how we teach soup", and then I had to repeat what he did, and he watched me and gave me feedback on it, and that was my education. Later in that first year, I went to Teachers College. It was *amazing* because I did a one-week intensive course and learned about motivation: student motivation, basic concepts of motivation... Up until that point, I'd thought everyone was in the class to be

like me, and of course they weren't! So, all of a sudden, I learned about affiliative motivation, and intrinsic, extrinsic; all those reasons why someone's there in class, and I was like, "Oh! They don't want to be like me? OK, maybe they want to be like them!". The deeper understanding comes much later in my career, but that was a real moment for me.

We have a saying in our school about when you transition from a cook who teaches to a teacher who cooks. Some people never transition, but that's the identity transition that you have to go through. I've seen myself as a 'teacher who cooks' for a *long* time now. At a basic level, that's what you're employed as, and some people kind of forget that. You have a responsibility at least to redevelop your profession in that sense. One of the challenges we have in our profession, and it's probably the same in others, I suspect, is that, traditionally, there's a persona that they recruit, because the curriculum is so French, and is so dominated by fine dining and all that stuff. So, they recruit males who work in fine dining, and then the system perpetuates itself. Those people are very successful as professionals, and come in saying, "Naturally, I'm a leader". But, as a lecturer, you've got a lot to learn, and that's a hard blow for somebody. It's like, I *know* you're really good at your craft, you're just terrible at engaging with students. Some people can't deal with that, and they have to move on; some people get it, some people muddle their way through it...

For me, I think, initially, I came in from industry and was more of a gatekeeper. I had that notion of "I am here to honour the needs of the industry, so I'm going to be the gateway between 'No, you won't make it' and 'Yes, you will'". I was very functionalist in my role; it was very much "the *purpose* of this education is for you to enter into this industry. I will help navigate who enters, so that those people don't have to worry about it". That was maybe my first year or two. Then you start realising that, actually, you're dealing with people, with humans and emotions and all of that. You can continue to put up the big brave façade or you can be,

"OK, yes, I can add emotion in there and I can connect with you". With me, as I was experimenting with different things, I was lucky because I was working with somebody senior to me in a programme, and he was a disobedient thinker too. Because I'd been successful as a chef in industry, I got away with challenging things a bit. If somebody's been in education for a long time, they're like "Oh shivers, maybe this is the way it is", but I was kind of playing with things, because I knew I could get away with it. Sometimes, I was doing it behind closed doors; I would literally shut the door and do some crazy stuff. You're kind of doing it in secrecy, because it's not the norm. Everyone else is there with their overheads and stuff, asking "How fast can you write that is legible enough that I can read it and tick it?". That is the game, and there's no learning happening. It's what I call 'the performance of education'; you're just performing, you're not really educating!

My skills, my teaching skills and my awareness, have definitely changed over time. I think in the early days, my approach was very much informed by observations and things like that, where *now*, I tend to be informed by that, *and* by an understanding of the theory which is going on too, which can help explain things at times and make sense of it. That aspect has definitely changed. It's interesting; we get some people who come to our school, other polytech lecturers, who need to upskill to teach on diplomas, and they're very interested in the pedagogy of what we do and how we do it. For me, I think it's not really *skills* that I've developed, it's actually a philosophy. It's your philosophy that's the driver; once you unlock that part of things, then you can make change. Otherwise, you're just filling people with little tips and tricks. It's a whole mind-shift between, say, structure and agency: Who is in control of education? Is it you and all your structures, or are you truly giving students some *agency* within a structure? *That's* the stuff, *that's* the skills you need. To some extent, as a team and as a school, that is our philosophy. Within our team, there are people who are very pragmatic, and there are structuralists and functionalists as well, but we all know each other's

strengths. There are some things that we teach, for which there are definitive answers, like food costing, so you need people who teach like that. It's black and white, there's no grey (unless it's how you interpret the figures). You've got the real pragmatists too, who are all "Great! How do we make it happen?", and then you've got your structuralists as well, so that keeps the balance in check. I think it works really well. In the early days, there could be tensions with that, because these kids were running around just doing whatever, and some of us would be saying, "It's OK, this is learning", while others were, "No it's not! They need to be doing xyz". Those tensions do exist, but, I think, as a team, as a group, we've got a good mix and we know it.

Thinking about 'excellence', it's a funny word. It's interesting because the Ako Academy is doing a whole review of their Mission Statement around this at the moment. What does it mean? It's so woolly and fluffy; it's totally subjective! But I think, for me, an excellent practitioner is somebody who can facilitate some form of transformation in a learner. That happens at different levels, for different people, you know; for some people, transformation is just getting a job. It's about breaking a cycle, and that's huge! I think excellence is when teachers can read a classroom and kind of work out, 'Right, so what are your aspirations? What do you want?', and work around that. That whole concept that we're all going to go out and we're all going to work like this or do this or whatever, I bought out of that a long time ago. So, I think excellence is really that ability to see, and understand, and develop strategies around that. My lens is always clouded, or however you want to view it, through humanistic principles, which again come back to agency. Of course, in the early part of my career, excellence was about getting my students a job, and seeing so many students working at reputable places, and all that kind of thing. That would be how my first portfolio read; I got that first award when I'd been teaching for six years, which was the minimum time before you could apply. I still thought that my role was more about *training*

than true education, so yes, I'd trained these people and they're doing well, and they're enjoying their education. There's definitely a place for that, because the Tertiary Excellence Awards are open to the ITOs as well, and those spaces are training spaces. They're not wondering, "As a plumber, are you feeling fulfilled in your life?"; there's no self-actualisation. It's about the really pragmatic stuff; this person can plumb a house. I think great teachers are ones who can do that, but who also make the student feel like they're becoming part of the profession, and that professional identity is developed within their learning.

The first time I got nominated to apply for the Tertiary Teaching Excellence award was after a student nomination for an internal OP award. At the time, I was experimenting with videos. It seems so weird now, but it was a big thing at the time! I was filming our demonstrations in the kitchens, and I was putting them on YouTube, making them freely available. There was some conflict in our thinking, because you're torn: "If we put these things on YouTube, students won't come to class", or "If we put these on YouTube, another Polytechnic will steal them and use them". It was that 'deep control of knowledge' thinking. But it was innovative at the time, and we managed to then get them onto an iPod which had just come out, so there was a bit of 'whizz-bang and wow' stuff. We were doing good things with industry too, and had good relationships and all that, but I think when I first applied, there was a whole thing of "Oh, you're the techno guy". I really *hated* that for a long time. When I first started here six years before, I didn't even know how to turn on a computer, so a) I couldn't believe I got an award for this, and b) I really hated that, "Ahhh, you're the guy with the technology". For me, it wasn't about technology at all; pen and paper is technology. I got paired with a mentor to help me think through my application; we'd talk about things, then I'd go away and write about them. I remember her saying, "There's a little bit of theory in it", and I didn't know about theories: Surface and deep learning? OK, what's that? Oh, yeah... That was my first apprenticeship in writing

really. It was fascinating, because three of us were due to write portfolios, but the other two couldn't get it done in time. With chefs, though, the mindset is very much "It will happen", to the point of killing themselves - that's one downside to the profession. So, I managed to write this thing, whatever it was, 8000 words back in the day, and supported it with some video. Then yes, I won; I just got lucky or whatever it is, I don't know. I felt quite strange for a long time. You'd get invited to go and talk to people, but there are not many males in the trades who are recognised for good practice, which I didn't realise. It's weird; they'd say, "Oh no, we've got heaps of *females* that can go out and talk about this, but we need a bloke who can go and talk to plumbers, and talk about doing things differently". I'd go and talk to these plumber guys, but they'd just attack you; it was *horrific*. I remember going to one place and the Head of the Trade Centre took me to talk to the staff. There were 40 blokes in high vis, basically, and here's this chef talking about how you can do things differently in the classroom. I mean, I was doing things like, instead of writing down how a process worked, I'd get students physically acting it out. So, I got these trades guys doing, well, this is bread, and this is how we make bread, so physically, you act out the parts of the process. They thought it was complete and utter nonsense; they'd say "You know how we get our guys engaged? On day one, we get the senior guys to water bomb the new entrants, and we have a big water fight... The young fella gets initiated, you know". I'd think, "I'm different; you're different". They might say that's the ideology, and you can't change it. Well, recruit better, I say.

The experience of applying for the award as a team was very different. We were nominated by another staff member that time. It was much more difficult to present a collective voice, having to get all five voices, and get them to weave in a way that sounded connected. There are individual voices too, because everyone has to own it. Our mentor was really good in that situation; we had lots of conversations, and then she helped us to create the shared voice. I think if we

hadn't had that, it could have been like an elephant designed by committee!

We'd worked as a group for a long time, and the weight behind our application was this whole new pedagogical approach to our degree programme. I think that's where they were like "Wow! This is quite fresh and innovative, and student-centric". We'd designed the programme, and had got it approved. We wrote about our understanding of what we were doing, and had a bit of theory behind it. I think that was useful, that we were saying "Here's why we did it, and here's how it links" and so on. In some ways, that part was easy; it was just illustrating examples of good practice. There are not many teams that have won a national award, but most of the ones that *have* won have come out of Hospitality, which is interesting. We've recently completed some research with industry, looking at capabilities. What's the number one thing they want? It's teamwork.

In terms of whether the award has had any impact on me, I would say the immediate impact, the simple impact, is that I felt comfortable to open the door, and say, "I'm not a weirdo anymore!". I'd say the award gives you 'cultural capital', that little thing that means people can say, "It's not wrong, what they're doing. It must be right". So, there's a sense of self-empowerment that comes from that. I've been on the Executive for the Ako Academy for a number of years now, and I think that Academy members are always asked what they are giving back: What's the impact? What's the change? But the actual impact is more personal, it's internal; it's hard to measure but there's a sense of self-confidence and self-belief. On top of that, when we say "Well, we're going to break new ground and do a single degree. There's never been one in the southern hemisphere, let's just go for it", it gives you that confidence to believe "We can do this!". I think that's very internal.

This year's the first time I've been invited to *review* applicants' portfolios. There's a new process, because, in the old days, they had quite a wide panel of people who'd review the portfolios, and then get into a room and have a big

argument and fight it out. From what I understand, it was quite political, with some dominant voices which shaped things a bit, so they've changed the process. Now they send portfolios to people in the sector, people who understand the specific sector. Those people score them, and then they go to another sort of committee who then work through them. We'll see what happens this year...

I'm not sure that excellence can be taught. I believe it's a philosophy. I think you can tinker around with helping people come up with new teaching, but, ultimately, teaching has to come from a philosophy. I've looked at teachers who are maybe not the best, and I've seen processes come in and help refresh them, and they try doing some new stuff, but it doesn't tend to last. I think it *has* to come from within, personally. Because I'm so humanist in my approach, I believe there are people who look at things more through that lens, and their philosophy is what drives them. For me, the people who I think are great teachers are people who genuinely come from a position of care. One of the great downfalls of what I think are good teachers is that they care too much, and they self-sacrifice at the expense of themselves. I think people who come from a position of genuine care, and are doing things in the best interests of their learners, tend to make great teachers. It's not just, "I'm here, I'm filling this function within this structure". It's interesting with the Review of Vocational Education on at the moment; some people are like, "Oh well, we'll just let that unfold and what will be will be", whereas I'll say, "But we can influence it to an extent. We can have some say". I think you can see that carried through into a classroom; you can see how there are some people who think, "Well, this is what I need to do, and this is my function". Have you not seen that things are changing, and that you should be reacting and trying to move with them? But they think it's not part of their role.

I've been at OP for 17 years now. Without doubt, it's the students that keep me here. There *has* been a tension in my teaching career; that point when you go from serving the industry to serving the student. That's actually something

that the Minister of Education has noted about the Polytechnic sector is that, deep down, the ideology is to focus on the student, whereas ITOs focus on the industry. We need to balance that; I have this dual identity which I talk about all the time. It's about still having authenticity and a sense of mana really within the industry and those relationships, and having to honour their needs, and then having to then work with the student and help with *their* aspirations. So, I act in different ways in those different environments; when I'm with industry, I will talk and act in a certain way, and then, with my students, I will talk and act in a different way. It comes back to the cook who teaches or the teacher who cooks, and almost maintaining those two identities. You *have* to. I work closely with people who understand what we're about, because we've only got so many graduates, and there are *hundreds* of workplaces. In some ways, we can be selective of who we choose to work with, because there are still some places that have a sort of 1990s, 1980s mindset of how to deal with things. Millennials aren't prepared to put up with that anymore!

Things do change over time, of course. For example, when I got into this, I didn't know what it was called at the time, but I knew it felt good; I looked at the unit standard, and it said, "Must make a broth soup and a cream soup and a purée soup", so students had to make these things, and they had to make it *twice*. Then the judgment criteria said, "as per industry requirements". I looked at that and thought, "OK, so what everyone else does is goes "Well, here's the book written by Escoffier, and we'll take a recipe from each, we'll show you, you'll make it once, you'll make it twice, and that's quality, that's good". I thought, "But it says 'as per industry requirements'; that's the establishment's requirements. I'm the establishment, so I can say what it could be". So, my early experiments with the practical nature of things were, "If I teach you this concept of what a purée soup is, and I show you it and you make it once, we can tick that. The second time, I'll allow you to interpret that concept any way you want and create your own, for your own inspiration, maybe there's a chef that inspires you or whatever".

The students got into that, and we started videoing them, because it was really amazing; there were so many different interpretations of what they were doing, and we'd invite industry people in to see what the students were doing. Then someone said to me, "That's called project-based learning", and I thought "Wow! Is that what it's called? It's a thing? They just like it!". What I'm getting at here is that we were doing this back then, *before* it became popular. Now we see a *lot* of project-based learning in my discipline. We were maybe five years ahead of anyone, at the time, and we just trickled it right through our whole programme. We prototyped the degree in our certificate programme, before we designed the degree; we prototyped how students would engage in this stuff. We realised that we could only go so far with the certificates, but the degree, the Bachelor of Culinary Arts, would allow us to have project-based learning right through it. So that was a really big development for us. Recently, we've been working on holistic marking schedules. We look at the learning outcomes, and what As, Bs, and Cs look like in the learning outcomes, then we'll have an in-class activity for students to do. We also allow them to do *post-class* activities to reflect and demonstrate their learning. There are other forms of evidence they might have too, maybe from a workplace, so we're making this really open with as many opportunities as possible for students to demonstrate learning outcomes. Our plan is that this can easily transition into a work-based model as well. It's still simulated, it's not truly organic and it's not truly authentic, but we're trying to get into that space.

Culinary education tends to be glacial at best in terms of change; project-based learning is the first thing in a hundred years! There are challenges everywhere. At a school or department level, it might be philosophical barriers in terms of what the educator believes and sees their role as. Really, those are actually challenges about power and control of knowledge, and who is the authority on knowledge; *that* is your number one challenge, without question. At an institutional level, your challenges are more structural. You have a CEO who's saying, "This is brilliant, this

is the future, go do this", and then you get into it, and find that there are technical or structural challenges. So, then you have to find the people in the system who know the grey areas or know ways around things. You'll find, again, that there are people who just go, "No, it's black and white, it's like this", and then others who say, "Well, it is like that; however, we do have the power to do this as well, and therefore, we can do it this way". Those networks are important to figure out. In the profession, there's often an attitude that a Polytech is 'Wally World': go there, tick the box, get your qualification, you've got your ticket for life! That's a weird mindset. There have always been people who are anti any formalised education, which probably comes from their own experiences within that form of education. I wouldn't blame them, going to Tech and learning something from 110 years ago! I was in a class the other day, with level-3 students, and they were learning about something called 'turning' a vegetable. The lecturer there couldn't do it, and I said, "Oh, turning? I used to do that in the 90s. You do it like this", and showed them. A student asked, "Why are we doing this?", and the lecturer said, "Good question, but I'm just filling in for somebody else. We're doing it because you have to do it". I asked her if it was in the learning outcomes, and she said of course it wasn't. This is why I left this world! It's not meaningful, it's not used in industry, it's not practised. But the problem with our discipline is that it's not regulated in any way. With plumbing and carpentry, for example, it's regulated; there *are* rules, there is a truth, this is how you do this. Cooking is so subjective. Do you brown the meat? Do you throw it in a pot? Do you do this? And people come into *our* world, and now we say, "The only way of doing it is the way this guy did it 110 years ago". Their response might be, "That's not how we do it at work"; it is crazy! That's why, in our degree programme, there are no truths. It's all about if somebody responds well to the product, then who am I to judge? I don't necessarily *like* it, but it doesn't matter; I'm not the audience. It has to be fit for purpose.

My motivation has changed over time too. Once upon a time, like I said, I wanted people to grow up and have the great career that I did, and it's been very fortuitous for me. I've been very critical of the fine dining world, and its narrow lens on things, its behaviours, and all that kind of thing. *However*, I worked in that world, and that world opened doors for me, so I have to acknowledge that. I think now, though, for me, it's that whole thing about human development, and human growth. I've seen people who've been in gangs and been working as prostitutes, and they come and study, eventually getting their degree after five years. It changes their life, just by *breaking* the cycle of getting a job. They might be a B or C grade student, but how can you compare that to somebody who's an A+ student, who's cruised through education, and it's all been for mum and dad? That's how I view it. My younger self would probably say, "Oh, you big softie!", but eventually, with time, you really realise that it's this 'catch and release' thing. You've only got these people for a short period of time, you know, but the reality is the content and practice they're going to have for out there in the world. You can maybe teach them some concepts, maybe teach them some professional skills - survival skills, the soft skills - and the *confidence* in themselves to succeed, and that's pretty much all you can do.

I don't know what the future holds. It's interesting because I've asked myself this a bit recently. It's probably not so much counting ramekins and doing those kinds of things. I'm probably getting to a point where I will maybe move away from operational things. Technically, I'm an academic leader, which just means I get a whole lot of headaches; it's nothing glamorous, but it comes with a title! I'm more in the postgraduate space now, so I'm probably wanting to spend more time with mature learners who are looking at doing different things. Transformation is a big thing for me; you tend to see more of that in a mature student, and I'm a bit more inspired by that these days. The school kid who's doing it because mum and dad want him to get a degree, I call it playing 'little shops', and I can

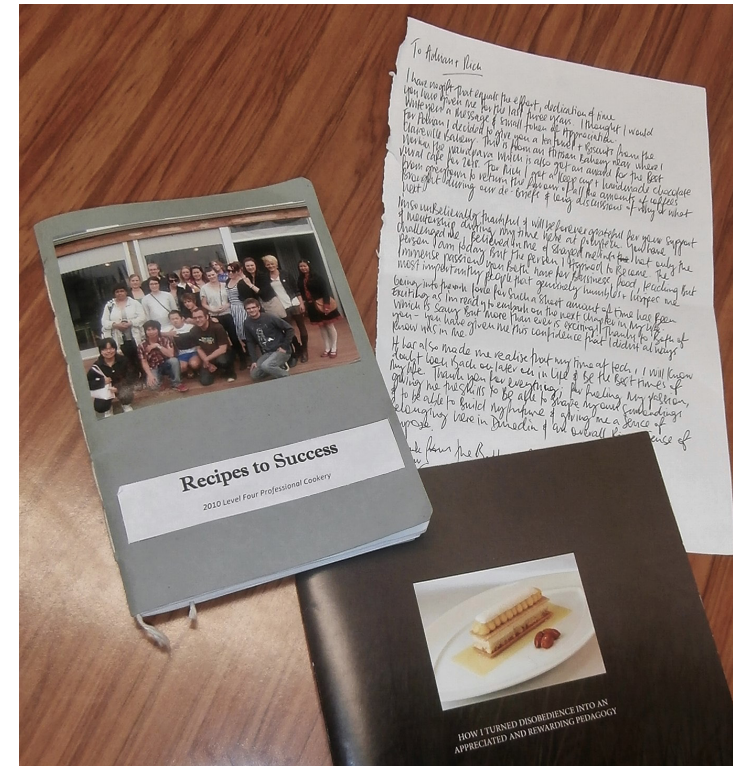
see its limitations, so I'll probably be moving more into the postgraduate space.

In terms of teacher development in tertiary education, at a basic level, it would be good to just have some! It doesn't happen in every institute, so I know that Otago Polytechnic is blessed by that. I went through Teachers College and did a Certificate in Adult Teaching. It took me five years; it was *painfully* slow. I think I would like to see teacher development that is more reflective of the philosophy and culture of the school and of the programme. I feel that there's a disconnect at the moment; the development is very theoretical, it's still heavily text-based, and still performing to certain expectations, as opposed to being student-centric. Teacher education should *embody* those principles. If you are a new teacher, what are the issues in your classroom? What are the theories that can explain that? We don't need to know about these other theories that you may put away somewhere in your knowledge bank or not. You learn all this stuff, but what's the problem in *your* world? It's very Freire-ian, but I believe in that; that way, the teachers become interested in what is going on in their world, and explaining it, and that can create more intrinsic motivation to become curious later. The role of teacher education is not to say, "I've taught you this, and you've got these basic skills now"; it should be to make teachers curious for the future, and to *ignite* curiosity. Once I started seeing, "Oh, there's a theory that explains that", and "There *is?*", it changed for me. So, its role should be to ignite, not to box tick.

I have a couple of things that are reflective of my journey. They're not very technical, but they're basically personal stories. The first is from when I was still teaching at a trade level. It's a recipe book from students, but they're quite different recipes: For example, one is a recipe for a market, "Take 10 kgs of stress, 42 hours of no sleep, 2 cups of ...", that kind of thing. Others acknowledge that there has been a transformation; there's some quite personal stuff in there too. There's one that says, "I think it's a great opportunity for young people who have

no ambition or goals in their current lifestyle to step into a challenge and enter the world of possibility'. Some students included personal family recipes, like 'my grandmother's secret recipe'. So, for me, it encapsulates a little bit of their stories, and that's just really personal. There's a letter from a student, which is basically a 'thank you': "you have given me confidence that I didn't always know I had in me". You feel very touched, you know, when students give you this sort of thing. They're unsolicited, and it's really quite nice.

The other thing is my most favourite and treasured item, without question. This has an *amazing* story behind it. It was created by a patisserie chef at a place in Auckland. He was 64 at the time. I first met him when he came down to our conference in 2016, and he did a workshop with us. In that workshop, they were talking about design and how it works, and this guy said, "Oh my god, I've just met my people; I've just met people who understand how I think, I can't believe this!". Because he worked at this institution in Auckland, they'd pressured him to do his degree for ever and ever and ever. He just refused to do it, and he walked away. After that workshop, he said "I want to come and do my degree with you guys". And he did his degree with us through accreditation of prior learning. But what's most powerful about this is his story; the story of him, and his upbringing, and his experiences in education, and the people who believed in him. We showed him some of Welby Ings' thinking, and he went and approached Welby, and had some conversations with him. Then he developed this beautiful book, which is the story of his life, and it's *all* about humanist education. It's basically a lot of the things I believe in: "Can a disobedient teacher positively influence a disobedient learner?". He writes about things like 'assignment disobedience', which "concludes with a word count slightly larger than was specified... Some (assignments) are required tasks, one completes them to obtain a grade that serves to increase one's ability to pass a subject, but occasionally we enter into an assignment with something deeper than a desire to score; we see the inherent value of a ques-



Treasured stories

tion and exploring it, and we forsake limitations that might constrain the richness of our commitment". And basically, it goes through telling the story about him, and it's beautiful, and it's poetically written. There's this beautiful picture of him "forced to hold a pencil the wrong way round, I am left-handed", and then you see the humanistic principles that are coming through, and role modelling from people, and where he learned these things. What he ended up doing was opening up, in his teaching, about his acts of positive disobedience. He's a *remarkable*

individual, a remarkable, remarkable person. But the thing that is amazing about it is that he thought education had failed him his whole life, and then he finally felt like, "Wow, there is a place for me in education. There is a way that I can express myself". He created this book when he was 64; he had no need to really do this, he did it because he *wanted* to do it, and it's just a *remarkable*, remarkable story.

It's something that I just dip into occasionally, and it's beautiful, beautiful stuff. I share it with my colleagues every now and then: "Oh, just have a read of this", and they go "Wow!". It's guided by principles but, basically, it's guided by *values*; his whole world was guided by these values, and so you don't really need to theorise around whether or not it's correct. It's about doing the right thing, and, for me, that's without question one of the most remarkable things I've ever read.

Daniel's Story

“There really haven't been many years when I haven't done any personal self-development at all. I've always had something on the go, and I think it's a good way to be in the shoes of the learner, and not only in the shoes of the facilitator or teacher. I think it's a good way to be.”

I describe myself as a Swiss-born Kiwi. I came to New Zealand in 1980, at the tender age of 20 years old, and I've been here pretty much since then – I had a 10-year stint in Switzerland, Australia, Brunei, and India, but then returned to New Zealand in 1992. I think I've always been a person who looked for adventure, and different experiences, and that was the main reason why I left Switzerland. Before that, I'd been working quite a bit in hotels. I started my chef's apprenticeship when I was 15½, in a ski resort called Pontresina, just next to St. Moritz, one of the bigger ski resorts in Switzerland. It was 4½ hours away from home by train. I can still remember my dad dropping me off and leaving, and there I was in staff quarters. I didn't know anyone, and I started work the next day as an apprentice. It was in that vocational education setting, really hands-on learning; mainly workplace-based, with an eight-week block of tertiary college every year. That's how I started. I have quite extensive experience in the workplace, as a chef in the hospitality industry, working my way from apprentice all the way to Executive Chef-level with Hyatt International. I was Executive Chef to the Sultan in Brunei for more than five years, then in New Delhi at the Hyatt Regency, then returned to New Zealand, working in Christchurch and Queenstown in executive chef/manager roles in hotels.

After 24 years in the industry, I realised that I wanted a better work-life

balance. I already had a connection with the Head of School here at OP; when I was Executive Chef in Queenstown, I did assessments for the apprentices on the Cromwell campus, and I also had a lot of apprentices that came either to Cromwell or to Dunedin for their block courses. For me, it was always kind of closing the loop a little bit: Having done my own apprenticeship, having had experiences in the hotel industry as a chef, then as an Executive Chef, bringing it back to having apprentices to kind of close that loop. I always believed that I had the opportunity to learn on the job, being taught by great chefs, so I wanted to support apprentices getting their qualification as a chef as well. So, in 1999, I had the opportunity to come here for a job interview, and got the position of chef lecturer. I started in January, up in the Tennyson Street building. We had a great little team up there, and the Joseph Mellor restaurant was very well known in those days.

We still had the old City and Guilds qualifications, and the New Zealand 753 series at the time. The external assessment for that used to be a three-hour exam, and if you didn't get at least 50%, you failed the whole qualification. That always made me a little uncomfortable. If, for example, it had taken the course marks from the two years into consideration as well, maybe with a 50:50 weighting, and in total you needed to get 50%, I probably would have agreed with that.

But for it to be totally exam-based, I think that's a bit *tough* for students; the possibility of being disappointed was pretty big. Anyway, probably a year or so after I arrived, we started looking at unit standards, and thinking about moving from an exam-based final assessment, to more continuous training and learning and assessing. We used unit standards for quite a few years. We saw them as more a system of assessment of your capabilities in context, and also an opportunity to re-sit should you have a bit of a blunder somewhere, if I can say that. In 2016, we started looking at the development of our *own* qualification, moving away from the *National* Diploma in Hospitality Management, which was unit standards-based, to a New Zealand Diploma in Hospitality Management, with our own courses, and our own programme. I think that's when we changed the whole thing again, flipping everything on its head again, and starting over. So, from an educational point of view, I've now got 20 years of educational experience, along with 24 years of industry experience. That's quite a substantial amount of work, that I can now bring into this present role, and it's been a big journey with ups and downs.

Before coming into education, I would say that mentoring was important for me. I think the mentoring role is a big part of hospitality, because it's quite a tough environment. When I was doing my own apprenticeship, *my* chef was a keen cross-country skier. He always encouraged us to ski in the winter, and we had local ski races that we took part in, and he wanted us to be involved in the local community. In the summer, it was running events; there were 10 k runs and 15 k runs, and half-marathons. I always enjoyed that, because he always reminded us that, in this industry, you have to look after your health; if you don't, you can't do that job on a 10- or 12-hour basis like we do in hospitality kitchens. So, for me, the mentoring always started from there, and I appreciated that kind of thing, that somebody actually looks after your well-being outside of work and not just in the workplace. He was a hard taskmaster, don't get me wrong! He was pretty

tough to work for, but that nurturing and mentoring maybe made up for some of the toughness that you experienced, especially as a 15- or 16-year-old. So, giving that back to my apprentices and mentoring them was certainly one of those things that I took very seriously. I remember one apprentice who actually started off as a breakfast cook. I worked with him during breakfast to get the standards to the level they should be at in a hotel. He was a real rough diamond but, eventually, I was able to offer him an apprenticeship. Then, after three years, he was actually a very good practitioner in cookery, and I think that was a good example of how you can mentor somebody who *could* have gone off the rails, if there hadn't been somebody there to maybe get him on the straight and narrow, and show him the way.

It was just after my own apprenticeship that I started mentoring others. I was working in Montreux, in the Swiss-French part of Switzerland, and I was only just 18. I had a role where I had to train other people, the apprentices for one, but also the younger commis chefs. I remember one of them was 24 years old; I was 18 and his so-called supervisor, so that was a bit challenging at times. How do you mentor somebody that's actually older than you? What kind of leadership style do you have to be able to show to achieve that? I think that's probably where I learned that you have to work *with* people and not expect them to work *for* you, because that's really not the way to achieve it; it's more about you working *with* them and you having a common goal. The common goal for us was to run that section of the kitchen as effectively as possible. I think that was quite a good little indication early on of how I wanted to lead and manage things in the future, when I think about apprentices in the workplace, *and* my staff in general, but also in education. I know when I said, 18 or 20 years ago, that "My students are my customers", people looked at me like I'd lost the plot: "They're the students!", but I always said that, without them being here, bums on seats, I wouldn't have a job, and without them being happy and satisfied with what I

do, I wouldn't keep my job. That feedback from the student was already really important to me back then. I always felt that they are my customers, and I look after them as I would do in the workplace.

In the 1980s, I worked for American companies for quite a bit: the Hiltons, the Sheratons, the Hyatts. There was a guy called Ken Blanchard who came and basically said, "Why don't you invert the pyramid? Why do you run hospitality with this hierarchy of the traditional pyramid 'Kitchen Brigade' system? There are other ways of doing this, and this is why I think it would work". That really appealed to me because, again, it says, I'm now serving my staff, and the managers or supervisors in my team, to, in turn, serve the customer. I always feel that the terminology 'serve' is misconstrued a bit, because, to me, it doesn't mean subservient, and I think that's the part which people think it is; but in hospitality, we are a *service provider*. Sure, we've got products with that, your food and your beverage, but overall, the product and the service side of hospitality can't really be separated; they're very often linked, so food comes with service. To me, it was always important that I was able to make sure that my staff and my supervisors really put the emphasis onto the customer, and not onto me, because now the customer is on top, and not the manager. I always kind of felt that my role was to make sure that they've got everything they need to do the job; that they got the training to do the job, that the support mechanisms are in place, that they got a work-life balance to be able to do the job. If I can do that as a manager, they in turn can look after our customers.

It's the same thing with our students here; I kind of try to bring that work-life balance in a bit, and make sure that they've got everything possible to do their learning, their tasks, their assessments. Moodle is a good example. We set it all up during the D4LS process and, in my view, we now have an excellent Moodle structure for the students to use as a resource to do their learning outside of class, with activities for maybe pre-reading or for revision after a session. I think

that all works really well together. I remember when we were looking for a way of assessing the capstone project of the 'Management in Action' course, and we looked at the Class Notebook option. That has been really successful as a space for the students to use as a platform to share and collaborate in, and then have the individual portfolios, which are assessed. I thought that was a good way of facilitating the learning and making a difference, and putting it in the context of what they want to do today, rather than me telling them what they *should* be doing. It's about actually facilitating their learning and *guiding* them towards the successful completion of a course or a programme. I mean, one of the photos I've got on my wall is a graduation photo of my class; to me, that's the ultimate, that's the outcome, that's what I'm striving for, seeing them on the day, graduating with their Diploma in Hospitality Management. You just feel as proud as punch! That day is one that I wouldn't want to miss. We have a little reception here, pre-graduation, then you walk the walk with your students, and you sit on the stage when they come across; it's *brilliant!* We take those special days and those experiences with us all the time in life, don't we? And those experiences over the last 20 years of teaching will stay with me, there's no two ways about that. To me, that's sometimes worth more than, say, working internationally as an Executive Chef, earning double the money that I'm on here. That's not what I'm all about, and that's where I think you have to be honest with yourself about what motivates you.

Another thing we've set up is *tracking* where our graduates go. Again, we use technology, but this time it's Facebook, where we've set up an alumni page. Each year, our graduates are invited to join the alumni, and then I can track where they're at workwise. For instance, out of the 23 students that graduated during 2017 and 2018, I know that 17 are still working in the industry. That's quite a good outcome in anybody's book because the industry is quite tough. We know why some have left: further education is one reason, a better paid job in a differ-

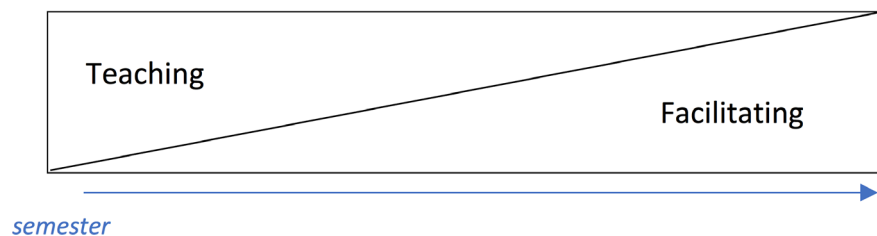
ent industry is another reason, so there are reasons why people leave. But we know exactly where they are at, and it's really quite satisfying to see such a high percentage still actively involved in the hospitality sector, either as supervisors, duty managers, or in management roles. That alumni page is a great resource for them to have as well, because of the network that exists there. Of course, Instagram has taken over a bit in that scenario recently, so for us it's a way of maybe thinking about how we do things in the future.

In terms of critical moments for me, I would say they've probably been around the *changes* in education. Moving from the City and Guilds and 753 series of Cookery qualifications to unit standards was definitely a turning point, realising how you can do things differently. Then, again, moving from unit standards to our own programme development was another turning point. That was probably a major one for me, because the D4LS process enabled us to really look at things. It wasn't about throwing the baby out with the bathwater, but actually saying "This is how we do things at present; are there better ways of doing it?", and looking for gaps, with support from facilitators who each brought a fresh pair of eyes to things. Although they are part of Otago Polytechnic, from our *school* point of view and from my *programme* point of view, they were looking from the outside in. So, that enabled them to say, "Would you consider a different way? Here are one or two things that you *could* consider". I felt supported if I looked for a different way of doing things, and I think that was quite evident in our development. If the facilitators gave me suggestions, and I looked at different ways and said, "OK now, *this* is how I think I could do it", they were supportive of that. It may not necessarily have been the way in which *they* would do it, but it was more around how they thought it would work for me in context with my programme. Another major element of that was having the *autonomy* to make changes. I know that Phil Ker talks a lot about that with the vocational education review at the moment; the importance of having autonomy to be able to try different things.

I think the biggest turning point was making our learning project based. We always kind of *dabbled* with it in the unit standard qualification, but the nature of unit standards is that they are quite prescriptive, so it's very difficult to put them into project-based learning. There are some ways; we tried some and were quite successful. The International Dinner is one example that we still do here all these years later. Being able to look at unit standards that were management focussed, for instance, and actually turn them into a project for the students was great. In that case, it was a group project, so they researched international cuisine in groups and then the presentation was two weeks of dinner at our *Manaaki* restaurant. So, I was able to think outside the box, and think about how I could make this project-based, applied, real-life scenario learning, with paying customers, 60 covers every night. That's quite a lot for the students, with the amount of experience they have. Situations change all the time too, so you get the dietary requirements, for example, which sometimes you are aware of, sometimes you're not, or I remember one occasion when students wanted to use the old pizza oven around the corner there, but it rained on the night, so it was a case of, "What do we do now?". It's all those kinds of unexpected situations. That's what you want students to do, to be able to think on their feet and have that reflection-in-action, "What do I do now?". I think that was a great way of implementing a unit standard, but it was much more difficult than it is today, with the courses that we have developed.

When we were looking at redesigning the programme in 2016, the turning point was thinking about capabilities. I knew the *technical* knowledge and abilities that my learners had to grasp, to be able to meet the graduate profile, things like managing a hospitality facility, managing marketing for a hospitality facility, even human resources and so on, but we also started looking at transferable *skills*, to help students in future career choices, be it in a management role, say, in hospitality, or if they moved to a different industry. That was really the starting

point, when we looked at *both* and said, "OK, we need to include collaboration, because they have to work within teams. We need to be able to put in there that they need to communicate with each other, so how do they do that in a group? What's *appropriate* communication, and what is inappropriate at times as well? What is verbal? What is written?...'", trying to get students to understand that there is more than one way to communicate; it's not just via Facebook, there are other ways of doing it too! And in a business scenario, there might be more *appropriate* ways of doing it. That really helped us. We could allow students to be *creative*, so, although they had to make sure that those technical skills were part of the project that they were planning, they could also show creativity. Towards the end of a project, of course, they have to be reflective, which meant critical reflection had to be incorporated as well, so we always work with that as a kind of a benchmark. Then, with project-based learning, we knew that it wasn't about us anymore, showing students how to do something, which they then had to repeat, to the same standard that I showed them. It's actually more about *their* projects, and that automatically gets better buy-in from the student point of view. My role changes from purely teaching, to a mixture of teaching and facilitating, remembering it's a level-5 qualification, so I can't expect them to know it all. I do need to teach some parts, but I can facilitate others. Over the one-year full-time programme, I tend to do more teaching at the beginning of the semester, and facilitate less, and then towards the end of semester, when the capstone comes up, I facilitate more, if not all, and teach less, so it looks like this:



At every stage of that, we have pop-up experiences, so for the first pop-up experience in the training restaurant, I do a lot more teaching and less facilitating. In the middle of the year with the café, it's probably a 50:50 kind of chart, and then at the end of the year, when we run the food truck, it's much more *them* and a lot less me. By that stage, the students *know* the management processes, and they *know* how to manage an experience for the customers. I've taught them the marketing, the finances, the communication, the management procedures, the standard operating procedures, and cookery techniques, all that kind of thing as well, so now it's actually for them to implement that. Then there's also a reflective project on the end, that I've implemented. I got a big kick out of that this year too; the financial information feedback that the students put together was absolutely amazing! We'd talked in class about how to pass financial information on, but it was quite a basic profit and loss account, with a couple of pie charts, and they came back with so much more! I've put examples of their work up in my classroom now. That's one example where the facilitation becomes such a pleasure, because the students went way beyond what my expectation was; that's the understanding of finances of when they run a business themselves, all the way from marketing to product development to implementation and control. I couldn't teach this in a classroom, or I would bore them to tears with pie charts! The standard is just so high! If actual hospitality managers in the industry did *half* of this, there would be more successes in hospitality, and less places would go bankrupt after two years. I mean, I mentioned before about graduation, when I get a real feeling of satisfaction with what I've done for the year, but there are these moments too. Students presented their findings to hospitality professionals that I brought in, and these practitioners were gobsmacked! "Wow! What an absolute breadth and depth of information they bring back"; they were just really, really impressed. That sort of thing feels good, when you see your students doing that. I still think it all stems from the basics, and it's applied. *That's* when they do

their learning, it really is. It's their *own* project, and that's when you get the buy-in, I think. That's all down to that incredible turning point of what we were allowed to do, with the autonomy we had, and hopefully continue to have, here at Otago Polytechnic. There *are* other ways of doing it. We've got our commercial outlets here, and those let us make it happen for the students, so that they can apply their learning. There is still classroom time, absolutely, but the set-up is very much a collective environment. Students are working in pods, they're working together on their projects, and I can go from one team to the other and support them in that. It is not set up like a traditional classroom, say, with PowerPoint slides on the board, so it is very different. It's been just great to be able to do that in education, and to see the impact that it can have.

When I think back to my transition from being a professional in hospitality to being an educator, it was really hard at the beginning. I mean, in the industry, you've got the 'train the trainer' kind of systems, so you learn how to train somebody to the standards of your hotel, whether it's a recipe or the way that something is done, say, the buffet that's set up in this way for breakfast. That's all very one-sided in some ways, because it is the international hotel standards that you are here to implement, and part of that is training your team according to those standards. When you come into a classroom, there are so many different aspects to think about: students' learning styles, disciplinary issues that can arise, the different *maturity* levels of students, you know, because we've got mature students that come for a change of career, which is very different to a school-leaver of 18, but you have them in the same class and the same scenario. That was a big learning curve, thinking "How on *earth* do I manage that?". I remember when I started, and I asked someone, "Where are your training manuals and your resources?"; "There aren't any"; "*What?! What do I do then?!*"; "Well, you teach towards the learning outcome at the end". OK, that sort of made sense to me. When I started, it was Cookery and students had to pass a

three-hour exam. I thought I should investigate what's in the exam, and what's involved, and work out how I could support the students to get to that, then I was told, "And then the rest you just do what you would expect in the industry", and that was my brief. I remember thinking, "My god, where do I start?". I mean, I didn't even know how to put a *lesson* plan together!

Off I went to Teacher's College. I did that over three years, I think, on a part-time basis, night classes and Saturdays usually. I thoroughly enjoyed that. Our teacher was fantastic! He was a real stickler for the idea that what has worked in the past will work in the future as well, so the lesson plan, the organisation, the classroom set-up, the temperature, the shades, or lighting. You could see he was organised, and how his set-up was always important. When you arrived, he had a cup of coffee in one hand and a cigarette in the other, and he's standing outside having a smoke, but inside the classroom everything was organised. That suited me too, because I'm that kind of organised person as well; I'd rather spend half an hour longer in the morning, setting up my class, the board and everything, and *then* have a coffee and wait for my students. I'd rather do that than being last minute, running in with my USB stick, being flustered! Another thing that I had to learn quite a lot about was probably how to deal with classroom discipline. In the workplace, it's easy: you pull them into the office, and you criticise them in private, and you kind of compliment them in public. That's always a principle I stuck to anyway. But if you do that with a student, that could majorly backfire, so you have to be quite careful of how you do things. Our teacher at Teacher's College always had a good little saying; he'd say, "If the behaviour of a particular student influences your teaching, or other students' learning, then it's lecturer or teacher-owned and you have to do something about it. If it doesn't influence you and the other students are still learning, well, it's student-owned, let it go". So, for example, if you're not getting upset about someone's behaviour, and the other students are still engaged, it's too bad for that student who isn't learning

because they're on their mobile phone. I always think about something I used in the industry, called the 'circle of control', so what I've got control over, I can do something about; what I haven't got control over, I can't, and I look at education in the same kind of way. That was a tricky transition though, because you want to do the chef thing, "Come on, put that phone away!", you know, but you can't do that.

The next step was doing my level-7 Graduate Certificate in Adult Teaching and Learning, here at the Polytechnic. Again, I had really good mentors and facilitators in that process. Then I did my Bachelor of Applied Management, in Food and Beverage Management, which was great, because with the reflective tools, we actually went back to our industry experience, and also part of our educational journey so far, and looked back and said, "OK, I did this; why did I do it?". Finding the theory that actually links with that process, procedure, management style, strategy, or whatever, and then evaluating how you linked those things, and what you learned from that, and so on, was really good. I quite enjoyed that kind of process, and it also put me back into the student/learner role. When I think back, now I'm working on my Master's project, over my 20 years in education, there really haven't been many years when I haven't done any personal self-development at all. I've always had something on the go, and I think it's a good way to be in the shoes of the learner, and not only in the shoes of the facilitator or teacher. I think it's a good way to be.

My skills have obviously broadened over time. At the start of my career, I was purely focused on the kitchen, and the management of the kitchen, of the team, of the standards, of the recipes, of the food, of the menu. I know that's still part of what I do, teaching in Hospitality Management, but there's also the other side, the service side of things. Thinking about the *overall* experience of the customer is important, not just the narrow perspective of a chef, so I think that has definitely changed, that view that the hospitality experience is more than just the food. The other thing, I think, is realising that an old dog can learn new tricks. It's kind

of, you know, looking at things and saying, "Yeah, OK, my knowledge is important, but is it actually still that *current*? And if it's not current, how can I bring it back to be? How can I update my knowledge, how can I improve my understanding of my subject?". If I can bring that into the Hospitality Management context... I did a trip to Switzerland, a few years back now, which was called 'industry development leave'. I don't know if it still exists, or what it's called now. Basically, for eight weeks, you were able to go back into the industry that you came from, and review what's happening today, what's current, what knowledge can I bring back to my students, and so on. That was a really great way of getting ideas and seeing what was actually still current and still happening, and what things had changed. So, for example, now when I teach Marketing, part of marketing is the information system where we get customer feedback. At the time when I was in the industry, we usually used customer feedback forms on the table, so it was a hard copy, pen, tick boxes, giving feedback, or it was maybe in the customer's room. Sometimes, you might get verbal feedback from the customer at the table, and/or maybe an email from them, or a fax then, or a phone call. But that's all very different to what's happening nowadays: customer feedback forms are very rarely hard copies, they're more digital. Feedback systems have changed, so you've got Facebook, if you have a Facebook business page, you've got TripAdvisor feedback, and so on, so it's very different than what was current when I was in the industry. That's just one example of how things change and how you have to keep yourself current. You might also think about things like the fact that it's not all good being digital either, because we're kind of over-researched, and there could be a bit of a technology *fatigue* coming in, and then that system doesn't work. At the moment in our café, there's a digital option for people to give feedback, but there's *also* the hard copy, and hard copy has had about 75% *more* uptake than digital. We think everybody wants digital nowadays; well, sometimes not!

That ability to adapt to what is in front of you is part of excellent teaching,

in my opinion. You need to be able to adapt to what's in front of you every year, and with every group. I think that you need to look at different techniques all the time too, so one thing that works for me is my trusty pastry paper, as we would call it in the industry, with post-it stickers, and marker pens. Being able to listen to students is important, obviously, but a lot of the students are not always willing to share things verbally. They're quite happy and keen, though, to fill in a little post-it sticker with what they think about the topic, and put it onto the poster so that their voice is heard. I think that's important; sometimes we don't listen to the people who are quiet. Those shy ones, the quiet ones, the ones who are maybe more introvert than extrovert, the ones who are not loud and brash



Collaborative tools - paper, sticky notes, and marker pens

and whatever else, they're quite often ignored. I think that putting them into a bit more of a level playing field means that everybody can have input. We can put it onto the board, and we can discuss it together. That was another great thing that, again, I discovered during the D4LS process when we used post-it stickers to brainstorm around different elements. If I come back to project-based learning, I actually *want* students to brainstorm, I want them to collaborate, and that's a really good tool to do that.

Another thing that I think is important is the reward. We humans, we want rewards, don't we? I mean, sometimes, I'll just buy a bag of lollies on the way in, or do a little 'market research' with students using treats they like. I remember



The importance of rewards

this one day, probably about four years ago, when I brought in the little mini chocolate bars. I'd bought half of them in the Dairy Milk, which is Cadbury, and half of them in the Creamy Milk, which is Whittaker's. When I said to my students, "OK, just a little market research... You've got two baskets of chocolates here. Would you like to grab one?", 75% grabbed the Whittaker's chocolate, because it was after all the bad news about the palm oil with Cadbury Dairy Milk. Maybe three or six months earlier, before all that news hit New Zealand, the split would probably have been maybe 50:50. Anyway, it's also that reward of saying 'thank you' to the team. I used to do the same thing in industry. If we had a busy service, say 200 covers, and everybody was flat tack, after the kitchen is all cleaned up, I'd come in with a tray of beer and wine for the chefs to say 'thank you'; that reward, that gesture saying 'thank you very much, I do appreciate it', it's quite important.

We applied for the Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award as a team, so, again, it was about collaboration and team effort. That's one way in which we have a good team, because we all kind of complement each other. We've got different backgrounds: a good balance of backgrounds in restaurants, backgrounds in hotels, some in finances, like myself, and some who have a background in food and beverage roles. Then we've got some of the team who are local, or from New Zealand, one colleague from the UK, and me from Switzerland. For our portfolio, it was really good to bring all of that together, and to show our thinking through the development of the Bachelor of Culinary Arts programme, which we then subsequently rolled out and got the award for. So, it was a real collaboration, and everybody brought different skills to it. It was a big thing; there was the *OP* recognition, and then there was the national recognition as well. Going up to Wellington was certainly a highlight for us, and going to Parliament for an evening like that, it was quite special, I have to say. It also added to our bond within the team; I think there's that bond that you develop over something like that. I'm quite pleased that we did it as a team; for me, it's almost more satisfying

that it was a team award. I'd won an Otago Polytechnic 'Excellence in Teaching' award the year before, as an individual. I really appreciated that as well. It was the students that put me forward for that, so it was nice recognition from my *learners* that they obviously appreciated what I've done, but it was an individual thing, and then the national award was more about the team. I'm proud of both, and very pleased and satisfied that we achieved this award for the team. It's pretty special.

For me, the main impact of winning is the ability to go to the Ako Aotearoa symposium every year; that's been the biggest gain, I would say, and I can draw inspiration from there. Mingling and networking with people who are excellent in teaching has been fantastic. There's what we can learn from each other's presentations during the conference, but also just through chatting over a coffee or whatever it might be, and the workshops, the dinners together at night... It's just been really, really good to get different ways or different perspectives on what people do, and see the research behind it too; the research to support different ways of teaching or systems to put in place for student success has been really, really good. Each year, we also get to hear what the government's vision is for the upcoming year; what their ideas are, and where they see education being in 10- or 20-years' time in New Zealand, so that's good too. Although the current review came out of nowhere; nobody had talked about a vocational education review!

I would say one common characteristic of the award winners, or of excellent teachers in general, would be that they are familiar with research; they read research, or they go to conferences, and it informs their teaching. When I first started here, as I said, there were no resources, and there was a lot of ad hoc stuff happening, quickly trying to scramble things together before you run into the classroom. I always knew there had to be a better way of doing it, and through the D4LS process and in my Master's project, I really saw how important it is to use research to inform your teaching: how you put teaching together, and what

resources you could maybe use as an example for the students. It's not about thinking there is only one way of doing things, but having a good understanding of what research is out there, how I can facilitate learning, how I can change my thinking from being the 'know-it-all' teacher at the front of the classroom, to the one that has *some* knowledge, and that can facilitate the learning of the students in many other ways. I think that's probably the main characteristic of excellent teaching; don't just do it ad hoc; *think* about it, *plan* it. . .

Do I think it's possible to develop others to be excellent teachers? Yes, I think I do. It probably comes back to that mentoring again. This year, for instance, I've had the opportunity to co-teach the first course in the Diploma, which is 'Introduction to Hospitality Management'. Being able to mentor somebody through a course like that, and showing them the way that you're doing things is one way that you could maybe *encourage* them to look at things in different ways: Make it your own, by all means, but this is how I do it, this is where I find it best to think about facilitation rather than pure teaching. I think that can work. We also do a lot of cross-moderation of each other's work, so pre- and post-moderation, and again, there's a lot of coaching and mentoring going on in that way as well, especially when you look at assessment material. Maybe you have an idea and you can say, "Well, you know, could there be *another* way to assess this? Is this maybe too much written work? Can we do it a different way?". We've talked about doing a *viva*, for example, which is just a verbal assessment, especially when we think about the writing ability of students, particularly in *academic* writing. Of course, we have to be aware of those capabilities and technical skills; as a manager, you need to be able to read and write reports, so you still need to bring those skills in, but can you maybe do it in a gradual way throughout the programme, so that it's stair-cased for the students. The Graduate Profile, if we're honest with ourselves, is what they need to achieve by the end of the programme, but they don't have to do it right from the beginning, do they? So, we can think about

different delivery and techniques that suit the students *more*, and support them through their learning.

I take my hat off to people teaching in a university context. I don't know how they do it in a lecture theatre of 400, I really don't. I think excellent teaching is different with smaller groups. They might have that at higher levels at a university, say with postgraduate courses, but here at OP it's like that right from certificate level, and I think class size makes a big difference. We *know* our students, we know their ins and outs; sometimes we know more than we actually want to know, but that's all about that *trust* they have in us, so they can actually unload and tell us how they're feeling, and how the situation outside of Polytechnic might be affecting them. For instance, some of our students work for demanding employers that want them at work all the time: "What do you need polytechnic for? I can teach you everything you need to know!". Students being able to talk to us about that kind of thing is really important. I would say, for us, the difference in excellence is that we *know* our students. We've got an intimate knowledge of their thinking, of their backgrounds, their health, their issues, outside influences that they have to deal with. . . I think that's a huge difference. There's also the project-based learning, and experiential learning that I talked about. Once you've built that trust and that 'team spirit' within your class, then I think the project-based learning works, because the students also trust each other, and there's a more collaborative way of working on projects. If they understand why someone maybe can't be there *every* single time, because of work commitments or family commitments or whatever, that understanding is also there in their groups and their teams through that project-based learning, because there's that mutual respect.

In terms of the community, I definitely think that what keeps me here is the students and that yearly intake. What did Forrest Gump say? "Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're going to get", and there's always that first day with a new group of students when you think, "OK, it's a chocolate

box here, what am I going to get this year?”. Also, when you go into restaurants now, or you’re in a hotel, and you see your students everywhere, it’s just *brilliant*, it really is! Seeing that success that our students have later on, not just while they’re here, is obviously part of it. You see them graduate and then you bump into them again in a restaurant, maybe three, four, five years later; it’s incredible. I walked into the ‘Crab Shack’ up in Wellington, and heard the restaurant manager as I walked in, saying “Oh, hi Daniel!”. It’s really good to get that kind of buzz. We do work hard, and sometimes we may not get the recognition for it, but in the end, it’s work that I enjoy and that keeps me here. I think if you’re happy within yourself with what you do, and you get that really positive vibe from the students, that’s the main thing. On a personal note, my family is here in Dunedin too. I’ve got my oldest son here and his kids, and that’s certainly something that keeps me here, and keeps me grounded, and my wife supports me obviously, so that’s important. I also enjoy the outdoors, particularly mountain biking, and skiing. We’ve got such a great environment here; within five minutes you’re out of town and you’re riding somewhere on a hill and there’s nobody around. That probably also summarises my kind of life philosophy, I guess. I’ve always believed that health is the most important thing, family second, and work third, because I think, without having good health - and nowadays, mental health is a big part of that as well, not just physical - you can’t have a good family life, and without *that* support and good life, you actually can’t perform in the workplace to an expected level either, so I think those three things are always connected, and I’ve always believed in that. Maybe that’s where the mentoring from my chef comes through: you *need* to look after your physical health and your mental health first. It’s key.

Who knows what the future holds? I think about that far too often! My hope is that I can build a good succession plan for the New Zealand Diploma in Hospitality Management. That’s one hope, one goal, and that’s why we’ve started that co-teaching and mentoring already. I don’t want to be here forever; at some

point I’ll say, “Hey, I’m starting to think about retirement. How are we going to do that?” I don’t want this programme, that we’ve put so much work into, to fall over because of a lack of succession planning. If I can have a programme that is sound, that makes financial sense for the Polytechnic to keep, and makes sense for the learners, and I’ve got a succession plan with team members that will gradually take on more and more of the programme, then I think that’s my goal. I’m thinking of applying for ‘four for five’ leave too; I do like that idea of refreshing yourself, and then thinking again about what you’re going to do next. That might be moving to a part-time role, for example, or might be looking at the subjects or courses you teach on. I think that would be something that I could see in my role as well, so not just mentoring and succession planning, but also looking after what *I* would like to do, thinking about how I can sustain myself for the next five years before I retire. That might be around my passions and motivators *outside* of education, so mountain biking comes into play straight away. I’m doing the Tour Aotearoa in February, cycling from Cape Reinga to Bluff. That’s 3000 kilometres of road with my mountain bike, being self-supporting, carrying all the gear and everything, so that’s quite a personal challenge. I could see myself wanting to do things like this in the future, not to try to break records or be the best at something, but more for the experience of doing something like this, pushing yourself for 100 Ks every day, over 30 days⁴, and seeing how you cope with that kind of thing. I think it’ll be interesting to see.

With teacher development in the tertiary context, one thing I’ve found lacking is teacher observation; I’d definitely like to see more of that. In our department, I think we do a lot well, for instance, with moderation, with co-teaching, and with coaching and mentoring, but I think that observation, from the outside in

4 Daniel actually finished in 26 days, on March 14th, 2020; having cycled 120km a day on average.

again, would be something quite valuable. The last external observation I had was 17 years ago! To me, it's a *must*; you need to get somebody from outside of your team to come in and actually critically evaluate how you teach, and it may have to be more than one session, because a practical is very different to a theory class, for example. For me, that is something that would really add value to our teacher development. Some departments here have two teachers, two lecturing staff in a class, but, in our area, that's not so much the case. A bit more of a uniform approach, and consistency across approaches, throughout the Polytechnic would probably be a good thing. That might be one downside of self-managing teams; allowing people to run their departments with quite a bit of autonomy is great, but sometimes the consistency can fall behind a bit. Mind you, I know that I'm more a systems person, so I feel it's a *disadvantage*; a creative person might think "No, it's good - We don't like consistency!". Finding a balance between creativity and planning, maybe that's the key.

Steve's Story

"I love being able to share my practice. For me, it comes back to the food; I've always loved it, I'm always passionate to learn something new about it, and I really enjoy sharing that experience."

Before I came into teaching, I did 20 years in hospitality, like every other chef lecturer. I started a wee bit late in the kitchen side of it. When I first left school, I did an apprenticeship as a welder; spent nearly two years getting my trade certs and all the rest of it. I sort of fell into hospitality by working at a local pub, in a little place called Kopu, just outside of Thames. They needed someone to wash the dishes and clean the floor, and it was a bit of extra cash for me. Next minute, I was there every night, either serving pints or working in the kitchen. I was around 20, and no-one could shut me up, so it was kind of a natural fit to be in a bar somewhere, talking to people and all that sort of thing. I knew almost straight away that was the field I wanted to be in, and I was lucky enough to have fallen into it. I dropped my welding and moved back to Dunedin. I decided to work at the Shoreline and the Southern Cross, and then I went into the THC chain, and it all snowballed from there. Once I'd spent a couple of weeks even in that little pub in Thames, it was pretty obvious what I was going to do for the rest of my days.

I was more on the management side initially. I started off in the kitchen, then jumped behind the bar. The bar led to reception, which led to reservations, and then to Duty Manager, and on and on it went. I always wanted to go back to the kitchen, but was never either allowed or given the opportunity, because I was the one that held the Duty Manager certificate, and the one that knew the floor-

plan for the fire-exit, and so on. Eventually, when I transferred to Mount Cook in 1995, I decided that I wanted to specialise a bit more. Another reason was that, as a manager, I was dealing with a *lot* of chefs, and a lot of European chefs that had a wealth of knowledge, and I was trying to tell them what to do without me actually being qualified to do that. I thought I'd take a couple of years off and get my qualifications, but again, as soon as I went into the kitchen full-time, that was it; I knew I was going to stay there. I gave up the managerial side of it, and about \$30,000 a year at the same time! I just delved right into it. I was a real sponge; everything revolved around food, as it still does really. It's a pretty easy topic to talk about, because we all do it. I did my time in some really good places; rose up the ranks and got to be Executive Chef in a couple of hotels and the Christchurch Hospital and that sort of place. It was a *fluke* coming to Polytech. One of the old lecturers asked me to fill in on a practical demonstration, and I thought "Oh yeah, just once". That was ten years ago, then a position came up, and here I am. Seeing a bit of passion from the students, seeing them not having seen something before, and knowing that I could pass that on, was really cool. Even as chefs, too, we learn something every day about the food itself, or how it's cooked, or the mechanics of it, and to see the students bring their own things in, and for me to be able to have a conversation and share my experiences, that was really appealing.

There have been a couple of critical moments for me over that time. One was up at Mount Cook, when I was thinking about going into the kitchen. We were all sitting around, and we were late for lunch, so the exec sous-chef whipped up a summer truffle pizza. That pizza would've probably been worth 60 dollars, with summer truffle just grated over the top of it. We sat round with a little glass of red wine and ate this truffle pizza, and I thought, "This is the life, this is what I want to do". I wanted to learn more about it, like why the truffle, and where's it come from? And again, being that sponge, I wanted to learn everything, so off went the manager's tie and on went the whites. Another *huge* moment for me was when a colleague in Art and Design was doing a project and wanted us to tell stories about our career path. She made a little video as part of her presentation. It was when I was talking with a colleague then which really cemented it for me, when you realise that you're a teacher that cooks, rather than a cook that teaches. *That* was a huge turning point! When I heard that, that was when I realised that it's not *all* about the food; it's about communication and getting students motivated, and so on. It had taken about ten years to reach that point, but that's my real focus at the moment: self-determination theory, and Ryan and Deci's work on motivation. Those little turning points, or those little 'eureka' moments, have been markers all the way along to where I am now.

The transition from chef into education was pretty seamless for me. I've got to admit though, the attitude has changed 180 degrees since I first started. Initially, I brought the industry attitude with me, which was very behaviourist. It was "Do what I say, do it this way and that's the *only* way". It took a while but, ten years down the track, I realised that the more constructivist role you have in our line of work, the better it is. Everybody brings their own thoughts to the experience, and it becomes richer just by itself. It was a bit of a gradual shift for me, when I think about it. I went from being a welder, stuck under a welding helmet and not talking to anybody, through to serving in a pub, through to sharing lots

of different experiences with people that hadn't had that opportunity before. It was a gradual progression, and one that I definitely resisted for a long, long time, because that hierarchical system in the chef's world is ingrained in you. It takes a lot to turn that around for many chefs.

I do still find that my manner changes when I'm with industry colleagues, compared to when I'm with Polytechnic colleagues or students. There's industry speak, and it's still a very blunt, harsh place to work. That's improving with time, but we know the lingo, and, with 90% of people in the industry, we know what their attitude is going to be towards things like overtime, weekend work and night work, and people not turning up, and so on. I think, because we've seen that shift, our focus as educators now isn't on *telling* people what to do anymore; it's actually about facilitating their learning and being able to inspire someone, rather than jumping on their back or trying to throw a spoon at them! Yes, there's a difference between how we act with the industry compared with colleagues and students here at Polytech, but I think we're actually the bridge or the buffer between them, and I think we can influence both sides.

When you come out of ten years flipping pans, you think you know everything. There's a very ingrained, Francophile way of looking at things that comes out of working in big kitchens where the French way is the only way, and you've had that ground into you. Most kitchens, for a *long* long time, were based on the French way of doing things: the *mise en place*, the brigade system from Escoffier, and all that sort of thing, and there wasn't any other way of doing it. Practice in New Zealand was built from that French tradition. European chefs were brought over to put that framework in place, and no-one changed it, from when we started in the mid-1800s in little cafés at whaling stations and things like that, until probably the 1980s. That was when you started to realise that the most important person in the kitchen was actually the dishwasher, and if you look after them, then the rest of the kitchen works just fine, but if you yell and

scream and start chucking things, you're not going to get far at all, *especially* today where people, students, colleagues, just won't put up with that rubbish! And the more that you're involved in education, and the more people you meet and the experiences that you have, you come to realise that you know nothing; you know a little sliver of the French kitchen and that's about it!

For me, excellent teaching is about depth of knowledge, the relationships that you build at every level, and the respect that you earn, through people knowing that they can learn from you, I guess. There are a lot of excellent teachers in our department. I wouldn't describe myself as excellent yet, but I'm working on it! That might be part of my personality, and that's something that I've got to realise, and not beat myself up over. I still want to strive for the best; build patience and build up a skill set that *I'm* happy with, which I don't think I'll ever attain. Our field is so wide, and encompasses so many different cultures and everything else, that you've got to be open every day to every new idea, whether it comes from a first year, just-in-the-door student, right through to a professor visiting from another institute, and everything in between; you've got to be open to those ideas.

We're still learning from each other too. We do a lot of team teaching in our area. There might be two people on a paper, for example, because one's doing the kitchen side and one might be doing the classroom content, then we swap around, depending on our interest and proficiency in whatever part of the craft that we're trying to deliver. Each person in the team has their own specialty, and we can *draw* from that. I would say they're *all* excellent teachers, in my mind.

Applying for the Teaching Excellence Award as a team was an interesting process. We had help from a mentor and were also able to draw on the experiences of other people who had applied. We looked at the framework that needed to be followed, gathered evidence together, wrote our biographies and all that sort of thing. It was a team effort. I don't think it was a *huge* problem

having five people's voices in the portfolio; we all pretty much sing off the same song-sheet anyway. We all started with that very behaviourist way of delivery and those French foundations, and we've all seen ourselves come out of Plato's cave! We've all experienced that shift to being open to accepting other ways of doing things, at different *times* perhaps, but we've all got there, or are nearly there, so we were all on the same wavelength.

Having said that, I was a bit reluctant to accept the award when it first came through. It was a *team* award, and, at the time, I was teaching on levels three and four, and in charge of level three, but the Bachelor of Culinary Arts guys were the ones that were moving us forward. I had a lot to do with the programme in the background, but not much direct delivery. I sort of felt that I was a bit on the outside, so I wasn't sure why I should receive the award. I brought that up with the other guys, and they insisted they wanted me in there. It was something to add to the CV at the time, more than anything else, to be fair, because I really didn't know much about the awards. Since then, obviously, I've learned a lot more about them, and I am grateful for it, but, at the time, I wasn't too sure whether I should accept it or not.

The reward itself was fantastic. I was able to buy some gadgets that saved my sanity, halfway through a Master's, that I enjoy very much. I've had a few health problems which have meant that I haven't been able to fly for a long time, and I haven't been able to go to a lot of the Ako Academy conferences every year. That's not ideal, but I have been able to read the material that has come out of those conferences, and that's really worthwhile if you're looking at bringing new ideas into your practice.

I don't know if it's possible to teach others how to be 'excellent'. It depends on what stage you're at personally, I think. If you're just coming into education directly from the very strict regime of a big kitchen, then nine times out of ten, you're going to be a little closed-minded to new ideas. I think it takes time to

build your skill set, and to move away from thinking that there is only one way of doing things. I think it takes time and practice and patience and all those different things. I don't think you can just *become* an excellent teacher overnight, because you don't know what you don't know! It's about building up that skill set and building up that knowledge; without doing that, you're looking at a lot of things from just one perspective. I think it comes from life experience too, but until you've done those things, like setting up in front of a classroom full of 40 new students, you don't know what that's like. If you do it by yourself, and you're very insular, you're just drawing on what you know. But if, like we do down at Culinary Arts, you pull together and draw knowledge and experience and conversation from each other and from the class, then you're always learning and growing. Until you experience that, I think you're pushing a boulder uphill if you try and do it yourself.

The community here is incredibly important. I get to work with what I love every day; it's a playground for chefs here! We get to do everything from restaurant work to demonstrations to food truck to out-catering, all sorts of thing in such a safe environment. You very rarely get to do that in industry. When you're an Executive Chef in those bigger places, you're just trying to get things done and put out fires all the time. Here, we see people grow every day. It's a very privileged position to have, and one that lets you be a lot more creative than it would be in industry. We also have a very close relationship with teams in other institutions too. I think we're all in the same boat, and we're all trying to see things a little bit differently.

I've had the opportunity to sit in on a few classes at university and saw how different that context was. I was talked *at* rather than feeling I was part of the conversation. The information was there, but the onus is definitely put back on the student, just because of sheer numbers. I would much rather work in a place like we do, where we have close contact with *all* of our students, nearly one-on-

one sometimes, rather than our students just being a number. I appreciate that there's a lot more to it than that, but you can't have a conversation with 600 people or so after a lecture. For me, those people are missing out on something.

We're very lucky at Otago Polytechnic; our CEO lets us have that freedom to be able to deliver at that high end, without the usual constraints such as a purely unit-standards-based curriculum, that is so ring-fenced and prescriptive. We look at things differently and can be in a lot more creative space. We have our certificate courses, which are *fantastic* at levels three and four. Even though they're not fully bound by those constraints, by unit standards, they are based on them and delivered in a much more open way. Then in the degree programme, we've got our students for three years. We can build up a skill set, around not just the *mechanics* of food but the reasons why we do things, and the people behind it, and the conversations, and we tell the stories. We have a little more time to do that project-based learning, versus unit standards which, again, are very set and controlled.

There are other constraints too, of course. We only have three kitchens, and every programme is rolling through there at some point, sometimes with two classes, so there are definitely time and space constraints to manage. That's something that every food or hospitality outlet deals with though, so modelling how to deal with those issues is probably a good thing for our students in the long run. We all wish we had more space! It takes a lot of storage to be able to deliver the way we do. We have *hundreds* of props and thousands of dollars-worth of equipment that all has to be stored and cleaned, and rotated through classes, and all that sort of thing. That's a huge job and probably a little bugbear for all of us, but it's nothing that can't be resolved; we find a way round it.

That shift to project-based learning is one of the main changes I've experienced in the learning and teaching community. It makes learning much more relevant to industry. In year two of the degree programme, for example, *everything*

is project based. We go out to the community, like the food community around the region. We do events; that could be a table of 30, or it could be something down at 'New New New Brewery' for 200 or 300 people, it really depends on the context. Our focus has moved away from "Here's the dish, this is how you make it, you repeat it, tick a box" to "Here's a brief, interact with these people, see what they want, make it happen", so we work with real customers and real clients. We're also working with 'Provenance Lamb' at the moment, a supplier that celebrates regenerative farming and that sort of thing, and we're working not only with the growers but with their suppliers as well. We work with industry, bring them in to give feedback to students, and that can then culminate in, say, a degustation menu down in the restaurant for invited guests from our sponsor or supplier. We're dealing with real-world people, with real-world problems and real-world financial constraints, which you don't *often* get at a polytech-level.

I love being able to share my practice. For me, it comes back to the food; I've *always* loved it, I'm always passionate to learn something new about it, and I really enjoy sharing that experience. We can run a class and do a bread morning, or we can bring in a pig and butcher it down to all the restaurant cuts. Then we see that knowledge walk out of the door, and see the conversations happening around what we've just done. Knowing that the students are going to benefit from this right through their careers, that's what motivates me.

I'm not sure what the future holds, especially with the polytechnic sector going through a transition. I think we have to get even closer than we are now with industry, and I think that in-house or *on-the-job* qualifications, if you like, and working with people on the job is going to be a lot more prevalent in the future, rather than just turning up at polytech maybe. For me personally, my last goal was to pass my Master's. I've done that, so the next goal is to integrate some of the work from that back into my teaching. We're also lucky enough to have a Professor in our department who is very good at making sure that we have

some research time. I'm really interested in student motivation for learning, but the more I read, the more that other things come up that are interesting, so that's evolving all the time. I love learning too, and I think it helps in your practice as well. For example, if you think you know how your student is motivated, or how your colleagues are motivated, and they share your interests, you can add to that motivation. Another goal is to make sure that I have another couple of courses that I'm interested in delivering. As we go along, though, I know there'll be something else that will come up; there'll be another goal that I want to achieve. So, it's a moving goalpost all the time, rather than setting goals each year. We don't know what's going to happen in our industry from week to week, let alone year to year!

In terms of items that are particularly meaningful for me, there are a few things. One is the video I've mentioned, in which we tell stories about our career path, and that realisation that 'I'm a teacher that cooks' now. Another huge one



At Noma in Denmark (photo credit: Steve Ellwood)

is this pair of photographs. I had the opportunity to deliver a conference paper over in Graz in Austria. I left there, went through Vienna and up to the Czech Republic, then to Berlin and over to Denmark. While I was in Denmark, I was lucky enough to eat at Noma, which is rated the best restaurant in the world at the moment. So, I'm sitting there at Noma in Denmark, 9.30 at night, feeling pretty pleased with myself: "Right, I've done it, I'm here. I'm at the best restaurant in the world!". It has two Michelin stars, and has been voted the best restaurant in the world by every publication.

I'd just finished a 14-course degustation menu that was cooked to perfection, and the service was fantastic, and I was sitting there thinking, "But the best thing I had to eat today was the hot dog from a stand on the way to Noma". And I couldn't stop thinking about this bloody hot dog! It had freshly chopped shallots, and the gherkins were pickled just perfectly, and the bun was perfect, and everything else... And I sat there and thought "You know, I've just spent probably 400 Euro on a meal, and I'd be just as happy with that hot dog!". That was another eureka moment. I realised food is so subjective, and it doesn't really matter if you've got two Michelin stars or not; the hot dog can be just as satisfying.



Danish hot dog (photo credit: Steve Ellwood)

That's something that I've carried through into my teaching, where I can show you how to make a *pâté en croûte*, I can show you how to seal off lamb racks with a *fantastic* herb crust, or cook a piece of blue cod to perfection and charge \$40 for a main course, but until you know your customer, what *they* want, and what would be right in their context, a hot dog might be just as good. My students can *completely* relate to this story; it's part of their shared experience as well. Maybe we've just cooked a lamb rack or cooked a piece of blue cod or tried something on the grill, but they had a Big Mac breakfast before they came in, and that's exactly what they wanted. I've realised that it's not necessarily all the French systems and the two Michelin stars that are the important thing; it's *everything* about food and the shared experience, more than what's on the plate.

The last photo, of course, is that truffle pizza; this is where it all started for me!



Summer truffle pizza (photo credit: Steve Ellwood)

Tony's Story

“What I didn't like about education is that someone else tells you the rules, you don't go and find it for yourselves - and I guess, for 23 years, I've been trying to push students to go and find it for themselves.”

I've been here at Otago Polytechnic for a long time now; I think I'm in year 23. I don't know why this year in particular; but I've been reflecting on it and thinking "What have I done?". Let me go back a step...

I hated school, with a severe passion! I struggled with reading and I think, because of that, I was disengaged for lots of classes. Also, at a younger age, I was really good at sport, and that's all my school was interested in, me being the professional sportsman; I was professional in a couple of sports when I was younger. So, I just wasted away probably two years of my life not really doing any studying, but *because* of that, because of not being in school, I spent a lot of time in art galleries, at museums, at the movies, at parks, learning about other things that I was interested in. I realised that there was a disconnect. I wasn't interested in school; I didn't see the point in it. I had no idea what career I wanted to do, probably be a sportsman, but I didn't think I was good enough to maintain that. I say all this because, when I eventually came into teaching, I came with all of that in the back of my head.

In terms of the hospitality industry, my parents ran pubs; they were still in hospitality virtually until the end of their life, so I grew up in pubs from the age of about seven until I left home when I was thirteen. I don't know whether it's a learned thing for me, because to me, working in hospitality is a learned thing; you can either do it or you can't do it. You can fake it for a bit, but not keep it

up. I think something my family has, and something I maybe picked up from my parents is empathy. That's a word I hate actually, 'empathy', but being able to empathise is something that we have. There's a need to please, and a never-decreasing ability to keep on giving or to give back.

Originally, then, I was going to play sport, but I had a stupid accident on a squash court which stopped me doing anything for about six months. A friend at a running club told me her mother taught on a Hospitality course, and suggested I look into enrolling, just for something to do. So that's what I did. I hated every minute of it! For someone who couldn't write, I used to write lots and lots of complaints, about the structure of the course, about our teachers not following what was going on in the world, and things like that. When I left there, it was in the mid '80s, during the miners' strikes in the UK. There were no jobs where I was; I think the unemployment rate was around 20-something per cent, so I moved to a small seaside town, and originally got a job as a cleaner. I was employed on the same day as a new chef who, at some point during the night, took virtually everything out of the room that they'd given him - television, bed, everything - put it in his car and drove off! And that's how I became a chef! I'd done the hospitality course, which I'd fallen into as well, and it feels like it was all accidental, but I found that I liked it. I'd done ballet as a kid, through until I was 18, when I fell and broke my elbow, and there was something about the movement

in a kitchen that had a dance thing to it, and a rhythm that I really enjoyed. It also appealed to that empathetic side of me, wanting to please people, and to my learning new skills and trying to master them. There's a Picasso quote I use a lot at the moment and it's on my wall: it's "Learn the rules like a pro, so you can break them like an artist". That's *definitely* something that I'm trying to get across in my teaching, and it's something that I really like, learning how to do something, so you can then create it.

Fairly quickly, and I don't know where this comes from, I went from being just a chef, to wanting to lead people, take charge of people, and *protect* the people I was with as well. That led to me running a multi-million-dollar business in London by the time I was 25, which gradually progressed to running big conference centres and things like that, with 20 to 30 staff reporting to me.

One of the things that I've *always* encouraged people to do is to get extra learning - that's part of me being a chef - and we set up a programme working with a local disability group who also ran the restaurant. They'd come to us and get more training, and we'd see if we could then staircase them into full-time professional jobs. It was setting up that sort of thing that probably gave me the confidence to want to go into teaching here. I would *never* have been given the opportunity in the UK; I don't have the right qualifications, and it's hard to get into those sorts of things over there. It was still a bit of a shock when I got the job here! I realised pretty quickly that everybody was doing things from a book, and that was not what I wanted; that's what I *didn't* like about education - someone else tells you the rules, you don't go and find it for yourselves - and I guess, for 23 years, I've been trying to push students to go and find it for themselves.

I did a lot of mentoring in London, and was happy to show people what to do and give them that responsibility. I'd be quite happy washing dishes whilst they did the ordering, bookwork, or whatever I'd delegated! There has to be more to work than just turning up and doing a job. Giving people responsibilities and

that ability to develop themselves is *always* something that I'd wanted. When I was playing in teams and doing different sports, you're always trying to develop other people around you, and to not be afraid of giving people feedback. There's a saying that 'feedback is a gift', and I try to get that across to my students. They often assume feedback is something negative, but it should be seen as something that's going to be of benefit to them.

I eventually met my wife in London. I employed lots and lots of New Zealanders, and had a sort of affinity with the New Zealanders because they worked hard. My wife's a journalist, so she loved London, but I'd had enough of it and managed to drag her back to New Zealand. After a while I fell into a job here at OP. It was another lucky accident; I was second choice for the job and the first person didn't want it, so it's like it was meant to be!

If I think about critical moments or key turning points for me, there are lots of times being told off that come to mind immediately, for doing something that I shouldn't have been doing or for standing up for other people. There was also this one teacher, probably the only one who actually saw some potential in me at school, who was prepared to *pay* me not to play sport, which I loved. He knew that I wasn't interested in money, but he wanted me to study. I remember him saying to me, "You've got a brain, you're not really using it!" and he was trying to get me to university. I was a bit overwhelmed by that, but I didn't really give up sport; I just wasn't in that mental space. I was 17 or 18, sport was potentially my career, and I just didn't enjoy the education system. Why would I give up something that I really enjoyed, to potentially go into something that was just a dead end for me?

The transition from professional chef to educator is something you see a lot of new staff struggle with. I remember a long time ago I was working with a colleague and looking at different learning styles. I must have given a presentation around then, and I remember saying that it's a transition from being a chef

who teaches to being a lecturer of Cookery. It is a *heck* of a transition! I guess mine was almost forced on me, in that, when I first started here, I worked with another lecturer who did all the practicals, and I had to do all the theory. I spent *hours* and hours and hours inventing all sorts of stupid games to try and get this theory across, and I wasn't in the kitchen for most of the first year I was here. I guess I started making that transition then, thinking about things like "What's the best way that people can learn x, y, or z?", "How are they going to remember it?", "Is it useful? Is it relevant?". I was given a copy of the textbook that I'd had at polytech, when I'd done hospitality 15 years earlier. I remember thinking, "I think the world's changed a bit since this thing was first published in the 1970s, so it must be out of date". At the time, it was *just* the beginning of the internet, and things were starting to appear on there that you could print off (that was about the only thing you could do with them then), so there was a widening of information beyond just books. But even then, it was just reading material and looking at pictures; there was no interaction with them, and filling in gaps is just as boring as reading! So, I'd think about how I could make things a lot more active. I did some stupid things with cheese, I know that much! Because a lot of the students come with no understanding of food, you have to go right back to the beginning. I think I left some milk out to curdle it, and then I strained that off and fed it to the students, saying "This is cheese, this is cheese"! It isn't really, but it's that understanding of where the flavours come from in cheese, and how, if you keep this for longer periods of time, if it's dry, or if it's just slightly different temperatures, slightly different ages, slightly different bacteria. I was basically explaining the process, even if you're probably not meant to feed sour milk to kids! One of my colleagues probably took it further than I did when he had students pretending to be puff pastry and things like that!

Any opportunity to do things differently to what the system is, I've taken. I did the first *Capable NZ* assessment in New Zealand, for example, with a Cookery

student. With every qualification that I've worked on, I've always changed how we did things, trying to move it from being a case of "Right, this is your assessment" to "OK, we're going to do something and your assessment is going to fall out of it"; that's been another guiding light for me. Assessments don't have to cause stress and anxiety. I was reading someone's portfolio recently, who was doing an Accreditation of Prior Learning for our Bachelor of Culinary Arts. The student said that she'd sat in a maths exam and, by the time she'd filled her name in and tried to do some of the questions, she realised that she couldn't, then she sat counting the tiles. I can remember doing virtually the same thing! Life *isn't* a one-off test, for the most part; it's a *longer* race than that. Moving away from that 'one off' where you need to know everything and then forget it completely as soon as you walk out the door, and sticking to something that can be built upon and will develop your skills and knowledge, that's a much better learning experience. *That's* why I want to change these things. I went through the university, too, for a couple of years, and hated every minute of it. There was enormous pressure on us in exams. I remember one Statistics exam when someone complained about something and *everything* just fell out of my head! I sat there in the exam, thinking "Oh God!", managed to cobble something together, and got maybe a B-, but it doesn't have to be like that. I don't think that 'one off' thing is real, and it's always been something I've wanted to change.

A few years ago, I came across Ken Robinson's work, and he supports a system called a 'Learning Record', which is almost an *agreed* conversation with a student as to *what* they're going to present and *how* they're going to present it. That's where I'm trying to get things to go, whether it's with on-the-job learning, or in the classroom, because it makes a lot more sense; it's owned by the student, not by me or whoever the teacher is. It should be about the student. Another realisation for me, a couple of years ago, was that it's not just about gender or ethnicity or whatever. It's about how you think as a person, and how introvert or

extrovert you are. There's a scale, of course, and we all move up and down that scale. Where people sit on that can make a huge difference to all sorts of things: classroom discussions, presentations, how they approach activities. So, it just gets more and more complicated in what you're trying to think through when you're setting up an assessment.

My opinions about my own skills haven't really changed over time; I still think I'm rubbish! I know I'm not the worst, and I don't pull myself to pieces, but I'm always thinking things like, "Ugh, you did that half-assed!" or "You've winged it again!". I know there's a *lot* of reading and watching things that allow you to get to that stage, so there's that tacit knowledge bank in there. It's scary the number of times that students will say to me, "Why do you *know* so much?", because it's somewhere in there...

I was reading through our Award portfolio recently, and it has a lot of theories and models in it. I can see *sort of* where I fit into those, but then I'm writing a reflective piece at the moment for my Master's, and it's making me really look at how I teach. It's not the easiest thing to define, and it's not a logical way of teaching. I spend a lot of my time giving feedback, and it's quite deconstructive. I guess that one of the things that I struggle with is that I'm constantly pulling things apart, and expecting the student to put them back together again. That, for me, does have a negative aspect to it, a negative gearing to it that I don't like. But then someone pointed out that all I'm doing is analysing things in a different way, and *allowing* students to see different aspects, so there is a positive side to it. That is one of the things that has concerned me about my teaching, though. I don't go in there to be *liked*, and I don't go in there to be people's friend. I don't tend to know a great deal about the students, because I bounce across so many courses, but people seem to like me for some reason. Either it's my sense of humour or they can't understand what I'm saying! Another thing I struggle with is that I'm very right-brained; I think in a right-brained way. I have to see the whole picture,

and I struggle with the sort of linear way in which some people see things; the "If we do this, this will happen, then this will happen, then this will happen", whereas what's going on in *my* brain is "Well, there's all of *this*, but you've missed all of this". Giving students only one example of something is just leading them down a smaller and smaller path. I see that with students sometimes, in that they don't get a fence to work within, and so they're just out wandering in the fields; "lost in the woods" as one student described it. In my mind, that's because the programme has been set up in a very linear way: "You do this to get to this, to get to this". There might be some variation, but I'm saying, "There's all these possibilities". How do you stop students from just getting 'lost in the woods'?

For me, an excellent teacher is someone who is able to adapt their teaching, mentoring, guiding, whatever you want to call it, to meet the students' needs. I think a good teacher can also write good assessments and good outcomes, and match the two up. It can be really hard to be a good teacher on a *horrible* programme! And I think that's a skill that's sort of lacking, that ability to write a course so that you can then follow the whole process right through to assessment. Evaluating a course too is an important step, so I guess a good teacher, a good lecturer, will be someone that has that full range. I also think you have to have passion for what you're doing, and be able to convey that passion in some way, shape, or form. I think being able to relate to the audience that you're working with is vital, and to treat students as adults, not kids. That can be a big step for them, to be expected to work in that way, but it's important. I would say you need compassion, but I don't know if you can teach others to have that. You also need to be good at telling stories, and I don't know how you teach that to everybody either. Storytelling is, I think, slowly becoming appreciated as a way of getting information across, rather than relying on textbooks. It's going back to the traditional way of transferring knowledge, in a way that *works*. It's how we retain information, it's how we used to do it in the dark; you had to create the pictures

in your own brain, in the caves at night, or wherever it was. And textbooks don't work for *me*, so there must be other people out there that they don't work for.

I sort of hope there's not a huge amount in common with excellent teachers; you want that broad range of people, with different ways of doing things. I think, ultimately, you've got to have the students' best interests at heart in the end. The self-centredness of some people, I think, stops them from being good teachers. You've got to question their motivation sometimes. I know everybody's got their own map of the world and how they come at things, but I can't really think of anybody within our department, for example, who is just doing this because it's a job, or just waiting for something else to come along. A lot of us have been here for a long time and are *deeply* committed to the things that we're doing, so I guess I'm lucky in that regard. That's why it's hard to say what makes a good teacher. There are lots of examples around me, and they're *all* different. Some are very engaged with the students, some are very unengaged; some are completely unsympathetic, some are very empathetic; there are good storytellers, and bad storytellers... so, I don't know. It's hard to define 'excellence'. There's something in the back of my brain that I've read, and I would probably say I'd prefer to think about 'reflective' teachers, which we should be anyway. If you can get teachers who are reflective, and learning from that, that's key.

Applying for the Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award as a team was an interesting process. It was sort of cobbling together five stories, and five lots of examples into one portfolio. I felt a bit outside of it in some ways, not fully on board with the system. I'm the one that's always picking apart how we're doing things, whether it comes down to the wording of assessments or the structure of things. With the portfolio, what we presented as "This is what we're doing", I was still on the side, "But we could've done this, and we could've looked at it like this", so I felt slightly detached from it. I know that's just my nature, and probably what one of my roles is within the school, to pick at things. Honestly, reading through it all, I

can understand why the examples were chosen, and I was involved in quite a few of the ones that we used, so I'm happy to have the award. I was a bit detached from the whole thing though, as I said. I'm not big on awards, I don't do things for praise or to have a badge, I don't put initials after my name, I'm still Tony. So, it's not really my thing, but it is good for the department.

When we won the award, we were promoting the Bachelor of Culinary Arts programme, so it was a great promotional tool. I've really enjoyed everything that Ako Aotearoa does too; it's a good organisation. I think it might have been pointed out a couple of times that the conferences are sort of talking to the people who've already been recognised for their practice, though, rather than the people who actually need to hear that there's other ways of doing things, but being part of that Ako community is great. Every year, you go to the conference and you hear things that, maybe in the back of your mind, you're thinking of doing, or that give you a whole new view of something. I think the papers at last year's conference were particularly good, and I *hope* that we are going down that storytelling, traditional way of learning, appreciating that a lot more.

Do I think of myself as 'excellent'? No, not at all. Again, it comes back to the sport, and constantly being picked apart. I played American football for a while, in the States, and being filmed throughout a five-hour session, for example, and then having every single movement being picked apart, it makes you realise the level of detail that you need to reach to be really good at something. What's going on mentally is important as well; having quite a lot of counselling and having all that picked apart too, so, yes, that is my nature, to pick things apart. Even if something is really good, I have to give feedback on a couple of things that weren't right. It always amazes me doing meals, particularly the meals we do for the charities, that I'm constantly picking things apart, saying "Oh that's horrible" or "Oh, we could've done this or that", but people just *love* the food. You give it to them, and they think it's the best thing ever. I guess you've just got to accept

that; others may see me as excellent, but I don't. And I don't think the award has changed the way that I teach. Has it made me less reflective, or more complacent? No, I don't think so.

I don't know if you can teach others to be excellent teachers. I'd be wanting to show them that there is a way for *them* to do it, rather than saying, "Well, if you do this, this is how you're going to be excellent". It's not like that; everybody's different. I think it still comes back to that 'reflective' thing, and being able to *question*. If you're not questioning what you're doing, you're never going to advance or get closer to excellence, so I don't think it's possible to 'train' excellence. It's a bit like a perfect meal; you're never going to create the perfect meal, there's always something you could change. And if you do create the perfect meal, you may as well stop and never eat again!

I think there are probably more excellent teachers here at OP than any other place I've seen. I think we also push the boundaries as well, and I *know* that that's confronting for a lot of lecturers from other polytechnics who come and do their 'Assessment of Prior Learning' with us. They just don't really understand the process of "Go and discover it for yourself" over "Tell me what to do, and tell me which box I need to fill out, and what you want me to say". That self-created learning is probably of more benefit for our students and anybody in the long term, in the real world. We've just changed the way that students do assessments, for instance, so that the assessment is continuous, and spread throughout the whole course. I've always wanted to push the boundaries, particularly around that and how it's done. But often you need someone else with more experience. I'd not been taught how to do this, so I'm reliant on books or the internet to give me ideas. I think the balance of the team that we have works really well. We don't know where we'll be allowed to go, as a group, but we're *definitely* trying to all push the boundaries in certain ways.

The community at OP is really important to me. I've been given opportuni-

ties here that I'd never have had growing up in the UK, and coming from a lower-middle-class family with no education; I probably would've been in the hospitality industry as a Chef for the rest of my life, until I keeled over or my liver exploded or something! Polytech has been incredible to work for. I was just talking to a colleague on the way in this morning; we were talking about people who whinge about having meetings at 3 o'clock on a Friday, and don't see all the positive things they have through the Polytechnic. Dunedin keeps me here too; I like Dunedin, I like the size of it, the scale of it. I enjoy this whole place and the opportunities that it's given me. I don't engage a *lot* with the hospitality community. I find that you go out, you have a few drinks, you start talking, and it's the same old conversation, or it tends to be a bit of a busman's holiday. And there are lots of issues with the hospitality industry at the moment, and everybody just wants to talk about their problems with staff on drugs, or staff committing suicide, and that sort of thing. I think those are the big challenges that we're facing at the moment.

When I think about the opportunities that I've had here, there are so many examples. We recently donated some meals to the neo-natal clinic, I've run a course on vegan food, I've probably been around the world three times, doing various things and various conferences. I've done a degree and I'm doing a Master's now. I'm sort of autonomous. People aren't quite sure what I do, but I do a lot, according to them. Those are the sort of things that I've really enjoyed about the Polytech, and it almost seems that, after 23 years, I'm just getting to the start of something. I've mainly been focused on teaching and now, I guess, doing a Master's and teaching on a degree programme, you have to start doing research. I can see that being the next ten years *easily*, involved in the stuff that I'm interested in, and having *that* opportunity is amazing. It's something that scares me too, particularly with what I'm planning to do with my Master's, which is to look at marae kitchens. I know there's a lot of learning about the culture that I need to do before I even get to marae kitchens, being the token white colonialist who

says the wrong thing all the time. There are other opportunities too; we keep getting our building rebuilt, and I've been a consultant on that, on how the kitchens look and all that sort of thing. Where else would let you do that? What other job gives you anything like that?

I've seen a lot of changes too, over time. I was here when unit standards started, in 1999, and that changed quite a few people. They shifted to thinking that teaching was suddenly a tick-box thing, and I know people who still think, "So what box do I tick to make sure that they pass this assessment? Where do I take marks off?". I can understand the reason for that kind of competency assessment, and I've read quite a lot about it and what its value is, and achievement standards and all that. It did change some people, and that's something that I rebelled against, and people that worked with me also rebelled against it as well. To me, it was doing a disservice to people. I think when we started to look at learning styles and how we're making sure that we're meeting everybody's learning needs, that had an effect. It widens your view on teaching. Probably the biggest thing for me though was D4LS. That was a *real* learning curve for me, because it really did get into the nuts and bolts. How do you transfer something onto paper to start off with, that enables you to reflect the students' learning? That was probably one of the best experiences around learning that I've ever had. I know everybody else complained about it, and it must have been a horrible job to be involved in, trying to facilitate those conversations and getting that constant feedback, but I learned a lot through it.

We need to stay away from what they do at universities. I have a very close friend who teaches first-year courses at the university. In semester one, she teaches around 230 students, then maybe 150-odd in semester two. She uses a lot of the techniques that we do, and she has an Ako Aotearoa award as well for her teaching. I can see similarities in *personality*, and there are some very good teachers there. But I do think there's an issue with research fellows coming in and

doing teaching. I think the worst one I had, in a half-hour lecture, said "Ummm" 142 times! I just stopped listening to what he was saying, and I was just ticking off 'umms'. I think there are a lot of discussions at the university about the fact that you have to have a teaching qualification to teach here at OP, and they see us as leading the way in teaching and in developing teaching skills, and teaching excellence as well. Even though they've won more awards, it's not really supported there. They don't hire people based on their teaching skills, but on their research skills. It's a different way around; teaching is almost seen as a hindrance to their research, but I guess that's universities.

For me, my motivation, my passion is seeing that realisation in the students, over time, that changes whatever they're doing, and seeing that transition. I think probably the *best* experience I ever had was working with a group of Trades Academy kids. Most of them weren't doing that well at school, or weren't even going to school, and that transition from the beginning of the year to the end of the year was just *immense*. At the end of the year, we were expected to come out and give a speech to their parents, because we were doing a lunch for the parents, and I just couldn't speak! It was lots and lots of little things: most of them had jobs, or they were turning up to school, or they'd sorted out Army, Navy, whatever they were going to do... *That's* the thing; getting to the end of the journey, and realising where they've come from. They're having discussions about what they're doing in the industry or what they're doing with food, and there's an interest and a passion; they've found something that they really enjoy, they want to know more, and they want to ask questions. *That's* one of the motivations for me. Part of that reason why people get into the hospitality industry is that it's a family, it's the gang, it's the foreign legion; we don't care where you've come from, you're going to be doing this with us. So, there's a real pirate-ship mentality in kitchens, which has its downside as well, with all the issues that our students have got. It's different with degree students: Food is not their sole focus, they have to

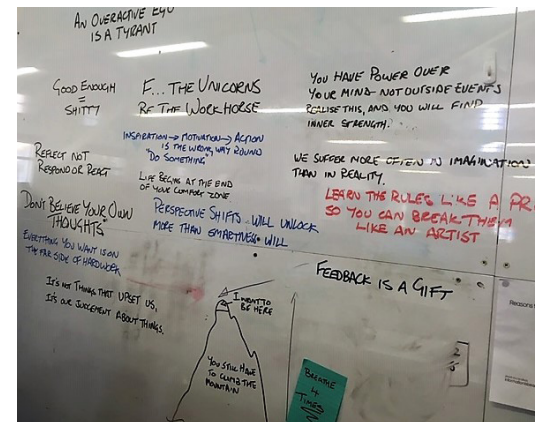
learn how to reflect, how to present, and how to do so many other things. With the certificate-level students, we're just talking about food, cooking food, and working in a kitchen; that's their real passion and drive.

I don't know what the future holds. With the current review of the sector, we're not sure what our role is going to be with people in the industry, for instance. We're already looking at how we can offer a suite of programmes, from certificate level right through to doctorate level, to anyone who's in industry. There are also 200 apprenticeship students in hospitality, I think, across Central Otago and Otago. I think that is something that is going to be the *norm*; we're not going to have as many classroom students. I think it's good that people are learning in industry, but there's a downside to that as well, because working in industry is a knowledge spiral that gets smaller and smaller; there's no new information coming in to the person who's running the place. One thing we're trying to figure out is how we can move people around, so they get more of an experience. For me, it's that blended individualised learning; for years, I've never understood why a student can't come here and pick a course from Nursing, a course from Vet Nursing, one from Art, a bit of Sport or whatever, and make that into a degree. It may not be that exact path, but I think we should be able to make a tailor-made course for what the student wants, a real sort of 'pick and mix'. For the students who've got a job, it relates to the job, and is of use to them in that job, whatever it might be, whether it's making pies at Jimmy's or working in a top-end restaurant. It's relevant to them, and they own it. I know knowledge is power but, for me, having knowledge is an *enabler*, and it gets people to where they end up, particularly nowadays. Having knowledge is a way out of grotty kitchens for a lot of people, into different jobs, different worlds, different ways of thinking; it's an *enabler*.

In terms of teacher development, it's tricky because we're all so isolated; we don't really see what everybody else does. You almost need to have that ability to

tag team people around, just to see what other people are doing. Staff Development Days give you a very brief insight, but you want to spend more time just to see what's going on. I know that, financially, that would be a nightmare, and time management would be a nightmare, but learning from each other is something that I don't think we do enough. Lots of teams are bashing away trying to get the same funding, or trying to solve the same problems. For example, I was talking with a colleague from another department about online portfolios, and they have an online portfolio they like. He would love to come and talk to us about it, so that's made a connection which is good. The more we can do that, the better. I do try to get into other departments; I do bits with Sport, I've done bits with Nursing, Occupational Therapy, anybody who can see a use for a kitchen. Collaborative things are usually better than individual things. If we can get them here so they can see what we do, hopefully they might ask us back, and we can learn from each other.

When I think about meaningful items, I have this board that sits behind my desk. I'm a bit of a collector of sayings, and I put them on this board; they might



Whiteboard full of sayings I find meaningful (photo credit: Tony Heptinstall)

not be sayings, but they're just a way of getting things across. It's surprising how many of them are about not believing your own thoughts, which is a real problem for lots of our students. So, 'feedback is a gift' is one of those, and 'reflect, not respond or react' is another. I guess they're a sort of reminder of the things that I use with the students a lot.

My world outside of education has always been about trying to understand what and how people learn. So, for example, I haven't had any mental health problems, but I have had lots of counselling; just trying to figure out all sorts of things, like death and religion, and that sort of thing. I've always been interested in how I work and how other people work, and most of these quotes will come from people who have shown an insight in some way or another. If I can share those insights with my learners, then all the better.

Glossary

D4LS	The Designing for Learner Success (D4LS) initiative at Otago Polytechnic was an organisation-wide project (2016–2019) focusing on the redesign and redevelopment of all vocational and degree programmes to improve learner success
DPP	Doctor of Professional Practice
EDC	The Educational Development Centre, a predecessor to Otago Polytechnic's Learning and Teaching Development team
four for five	A leave option at Otago Polytechnic, enabling staff to be paid 80% of their normal salary for a set period, in order to accrue 'four for five' leave. For example, staff can apply to work for two years on 80% salary, and then take 6 months leave (also on 80% salary), or work for four years and take 12 months leave, on the same basis
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent (1.0 FTE is a full-time position; if full-time were 40 hours per week, then 0.5 FTE would be 20 hours per week, and so on, for any proportion between 0 and 1)
GCTLT	Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Learning and Teaching
GDTE	Graduate Diploma in Tertiary Education
hui	The Māori Dictionary ¹ defines 'hui' as a "gathering, meeting, assembly, seminar, or conference"
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ITO	Industry Training Organisations
ITP	Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics
kaupapa	Principles, values. The Māori Dictionary defines 'Kaupapa Māori' as "Māori approach, Māori topic, Māori customary

practice, Māori institution, Māori agenda, Māori principles, Māori ideology - a philosophical doctrine, incorporating the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of Māori society”

kete A traditional Māori basket, typically woven from the leaves of New Zealand flax

mana In Māori culture, the word 'mana' has many meanings. Here, it encompasses the idea of prestige, influence, status, and respect. The Māori Dictionary defines 'mana' as “prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, spiritual power, charisma... a supernatural force in a person, place or object”

marae The Māori Dictionary defines 'marae' as a “courtyard - the open area in front of the whareniui, where formal greetings and discussions take place. Often also used to include the complex of buildings around the marae”

noa In Māori culture, the word 'noa' has many meanings. Here, it captures the idea of something common, normal, or everyday. The Māori Dictionary defines 'noa' as “free from the extensions of tapu, ordinary, unrestricted, void”

OP Otago Polytechnic

Pākehā A Māori word for New Zealanders who are primarily of European descent, or for any non-Māori New Zealander. The Māori Dictionary defines 'Pākehā' as a “New Zealander of European descent - probably originally applied to English-speaking Europeans living in Aotearoa/New Zealand”

tapu The Māori word 'tapu' has multiple meanings. Here, it is referring to something sacred or spiritual (in contrast to 'noa'). The Māori Dictionary defines 'tapu' as “sacred, prohibited, restricted, set apart, forbidden”

TROQ The Targeted Review of Qualifications, conducted by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. The review, which began in 2008, “aimed to ensure that NZ qualifications are useful and relevant to current and future learners, employers, and other stakeholders” (New Zealand Qualifications Authority. (n.d.). NZQF timeline; <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/studying-in-new-zealand/understand-nz-quals/nzqf/timeline>)

whakawhanaungatanga The Māori Dictionary defines 'whakawhanaungatanga' as the “process of establishing relationships, relating well to others”

whānau The Māori word 'whānau' is often used in New Zealand to talk about family, but can also represent the extended family, close friends, network and/or community. The Māori Dictionary defines 'whānau' as “extended family, family group, a familiar term of address to a number of people - the primary economic unit of traditional Māori society. In the modern context the term is sometimes used to include friends who may not have any kinship ties to other members”

1. Moorfield, J.C. (2003 -2021), *Māori Dictionary*. Te Aka Online Māori Dictionary. <https://maoridictionary.co.nz>