

***Experiential Learning in Journalism Education –
a New Zealand case study***

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Abstract

Teaching journalism in tertiary institutions presents challenges, including how students learn to work in teams under the sort of pressure that characterises workplace journalism. This thesis is a case study of how a group of students at AUT University, in Auckland, experienced taking responsibility for producing four editions of a student newspaper as part of their journalism training.

Based on a series of individual student interviews, before, during and after their experience, this research suggests that the key factor in their learning was their being allowed, to a large extent, the power to make their own decisions about the appearance and content of their product, while still being charged with the responsibility of ensuring it reached a highly professional standard.

The realities of life as a journalist, including recognising the frequent need to prune, tighten or re-angle stories – even to reject them – and the vital role of co-operative teamwork, unparalleled in their other journalism studies, were driven home.

The two tutors, interviewed after the last edition, put some of the student observations into context and provided insights into the discipline involved, as teachers, in maintaining training as a priority, while ensuring production to deadline of a series of reputable and legally safe newspapers.

This case study suggests that while there are contrived aspects that cannot replicate a “real” newsroom – such as the students’ assignment to editorial roles without the status of real editors or chief reporters – the learning experience resulted not only in advances in the students’ technological skills but significant development in their critical thinking about the profession they were due to enter.

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I would never have embarked on study for this degree without the encouragement of my former colleague Louise Matthews, to whom I owe appreciation for getting me started on a part-time basis, five years ago, after I had watched her soldiering through and excelling in a journalism-based master's degree at AUT herself.

To the eight students who co-operated so well in the study I offer my appreciation for their frankness and honesty in describing the problems they encountered as well as the delight they experienced, in their achievements on *Te Waha Nui*. I thank my two colleagues teaching the News Production course for their willingness to make time in a busy schedule to address some of the key concerns raised by the students and to ensure I was kept in touch with issues which would provide interesting points of discussion for the research. Another journalism colleague, Greg Treadwell, also has my gratitude for his unending patience in providing technological support, and for this I am also grateful to communication studies administrator Carmel Webb. Ann McKillop, in the AUT University library went to great lengths to help me locate the most relevant books and articles I needed, always putting in the extra effort willingly and speedily – not a surprise to anyone who's ever worked with her, but always appreciated. The contribution by AUT staff member Cathy Grimsey, in typing up transcripts of all the interviews, was also appreciated, along with assistance from Communication Studies School manager Kevin Upton in hiring journalism colleagues to take over some of my course marking requirements at times when deadlines were pressing.

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In addition, I acknowledge that the AUT University Ethics Committee granted ethics approval for my research on August 14, 2006 (AUTEC Reference number 06/125).

Finally I record my appreciation to my husband Robert and my family for their love and support during the full five years, and particularly over the past 12 months.

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

.....

Susan Boyd-Bell, 2007

Chapter 1: Introduction

Five minutes before I had to front up to my first class as a full-time teacher of practical journalism, my sole colleague arrived at work. “Where are the lessons?” I asked anxiously, having already spent 45 minutes waiting for him. “In your bloody head, mate,” he replied (Geoff Black, Auckland Technical Institute, 1975, cited in Tucker, 1992, p vi).

1.1 Teaching journalism in New Zealand

Geoff Black, whose name was synonymous with journalism training in New Zealand for many years, described this experience in the mid-1970s as being typical of New Zealand journalism in those days. Faced with writing a couple of hundred lessons in his first year, Black said he sought the aid of many journalists. Though a few helped, most were unable to analyse how they went about their task (Tucker, 1992).

Journalism training, before then, had been mostly “on the job”. Now retired, the former deputy editor of the *New Zealand Herald*, Don Milne, joined *The Press* in Christchurch in May 1957 with a science degree, but got no training except what he “picked up on the job” (Milne, D., personal communication, June 5, 2007). As a graduate, Milne bypassed the three-year cadetship system, based on an in-house kitset. Promotion to junior reporter was “more or less automatic” but promotion to higher grades was on merit. “I worked in court with a guy who had been with *The Press* for 30+ years and was still J2 – I was officially his supervisor” (Milne, D., personal communication, June 5, 2007).

Though Milne’s being a graduate had helped him get a job on *The Press* he recalled that the *New Zealand Herald* in Auckland was not so enamoured with university graduates. While Milne was made science correspondent because of his degree, most of the other reporters were not graduates. More graduates came in later from Canterbury University’s journalism course, which started in 1969, and the ATI course which began in 1973. But some of the paper’s editors, including the present one, Tim Murphy, were not graduates (Milne, D., personal communication, June 5, 2007).

“There was for many years and still may be, perhaps, a strong feeling that journalists were born not made, and that the best training was on the job,” Milne said. This was an attitude that the New Zealand Journalists’ Training Board/ Organisation “struggled against for many years”.

The board had its origins in a training committee set up in October 1971 on the initiative of the New Zealand section of the Commonwealth Press Union, with the support of the New Zealand Journalists' Association. The committee introduced a two-year in-house training course, in kitset form, supervised by office tutors. "Before then training was pretty much hit or miss" (Milne, D., personal communication, June 5, 2007).

With the development of polytechnic pre-entry courses the use of the kitset training programmes lapsed and the training board's focus shifted to organising refresher courses, a regional tutor scheme and the production of handbooks. It helped in the establishment of the Waiariki Polytechnic course for Maori journalists in 1985 and the Manukau Technical Institute course for Pacific Island journalists in 1986 (Milne, D., personal communication, June 5, 2007). After the introduction of the Industrial Training Act, in July 1992, the training board went through the process of becoming an industry training organisation – the New Zealand Journalists Training Organisation (NZJTO). Government funding had ceased in 1989. The NZJTO is now a voluntary organisation, funded by New Zealand newspapers, magazines, and radio and television companies. All major media employers belong to it. (www.journalismtraining.co.nz/about.html).

1.2 Journalism education at Auckland University of Technology (AUT)

The Auckland Technical Institute (ATI) has had a number of name changes since Black's experience in the mid-1970s and is now the Auckland University of Technology (AUT). This study is sited in AUT's News Production paper – a third-year option for journalism majors in the Bachelor of Communication Studies and also for students enrolled in the year-long Graduate Diploma in Journalism.

The AUT's journalism courses had their origins in 1973 with a certificate course described in the prospectus of the ATI as a "journalism induction course".

"Two full-time 18-week courses are offered annually to provide induction into work in all news media, including the basics of recognising and disseminating news and an introduction to shorthand and typing" (ATI Prospectus, 1973, p. 33, AUT University Library Archives).

The approach to journalism education in New Zealand in the 1970s is summed up by the word *induction*, meaning a formal introduction to a new job or position, which reinforced the consensus in the industry at the time. As Deuze (2006) described it, “the status quo in the industry is the ideal one, hence newcomers only need to internalise what their senior peers already do” (p.21).

When I began teaching the certificate course in 1987, the majority of students enrolled were school leavers, though we had also begun to accept older students, including those with university qualifications or work experience in other fields. During their six months of training, each of the 24 course members was assigned to write for one of Auckland’s community newspapers, which regularly published their stories. From time to time, some of the stories were good enough to be offered to one of Auckland’s two daily newspapers, *The Auckland Star* or *The New Zealand Herald*, for publication. After their training, which included an introduction to media law; court reporting and news writing; a week-long field trip to a provincial newspaper; two weeks “work experience” at either a newspaper or radio station; and lessons in shorthand and typing, most of the students received their certificates and were usually immediately employed either in print or radio. From then on they learned the craft of journalism “on the job”.

By the early 1990s, however, the journalism certificate programme had formed an important basis for the development of a diploma in communication studies which later became a three-year communication studies degree. The certificate itself was later transformed into a year-long graduate diploma in journalism.

These courses now attract a total of 60 or more journalism students per year, but attachments to suburban newspapers, field trips to newspapers and radio stations, internships in the industry and shorthand classes are still part of the curriculum. Media communication theory and papers specialising in television and radio journalism, magazine journalism, new media journalism and editing and design have been added along the way, together with a much-enriched approach to public affairs reporting. O’Rourke (2006) charted the year-by-year development of the new qualifications in the table below.

Table 1(a) *Historical summary*

| | |
|------|---|
| 1991 | Diploma in Communication Studies introduced. |
| 1992 | Year 2 of the Bachelor of Communication Studies commenced. |
| 1993 | Year 3 of the Bachelor of Communication Studies commenced. |
| 1994 | First cohort graduated. |
| 1996 | BCS programme review and revalidation. |
| 1997 | Master of Arts (Communication Studies) introduced. Multimedia (now Digital Media) major introduced. |
| 1998 | Graduate Diplomas in Multimedia, Journalism and Communication and Public Relations introduced. (The existing Certificate in Journalism was upgraded to a Graduate Diploma at this point). |
| 1999 | University status awarded to Auckland Institute of Technology, effective 1 January 2000. |
| 2000 | Graduate Diploma in Advertising Creativity introduced. |
| 2001 | Advertising Creativity major added to the BCS. Degree revalidated. |
| 2002 | Discussion began on restructuring the BCS. |
| 2003 | Restructuring proposal finalised and approved by CUAP. Graduate Diploma in Advertising Creativity reviewed. |
| 2004 | Year 1 of the revised BCS. |
| 2005 | Year 2 of the revised BCS implemented. Introduction of minors into the degree structure. Creative Industries major introduced. |
| 2006 | Final year of restructured BCS implemented. BCS Honours degree introduced. |

In 2007, there is a proposal, somewhat controversial and not yet fully developed or approved, to separate the journalism major out from the communication studies degree and set up New Zealand's first three-year Bachelor of Journalism. A more routine development is expected to be the conversion of the graduate diploma course in journalism into a post graduate qualification – a move which would recognise the fact that the present graduate diploma students all already have undergraduate and sometimes higher degrees in disciplines such as law or science or medicine.

The new courses, if approved, would recognise the convergence within the modern journalism industry, with students having some experience in running a newsroom as part of their learning. Experience in producing the present course newspaper *Te Waha Nui* (a Maori phrase meaning *The Big Mouth*) which is the focus of this study, could be useful as a pilot project for future planning.

1.3 **Background of researcher**

My own training in journalism was as a cadet reporter on *The Auckland Star*, beginning in 1963. At that time, other major newspapers such as *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Press* did not hire women as cadet reporters. However, at the *Star*, there were four men

and four women cadets taken on each year. We learned how to collect the weather map from the Weather Office each day; take the temperature in Queen St at noon (“Do *you* do that?” asked my incredulous mother, who had previously believed in its accuracy); collect and return the tea trolley from the cafeteria three times a day; and do the “routine calls” to police, fire, and ambulance every couple of hours. When we made these calls, we fervently hoped nothing exciting had happened because then we would have to *write a story* – a terrifying prospect. Of course, all the key contacts already had a hotline to the chief reporter in case of any real action. The most we could hope for (or dread) was a grass fire or a minor traffic accident. We also had shorthand lessons from the office typist and weekly lectures from senior reporters. The Parliamentary reporter opened his lecture with: “You girls don’t need to worry about this. Girls aren’t allowed to report Parliament.” Somehow we survived until the next year’s batch of cadets arrived. Those who stayed on – mostly the women – gradually “learnt by doing”.

After seven years at the *Star* in the 1960s, including some time as a sub-editor, I joined the *New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation* in the 1970s and worked as a reporter and sub-editor in both radio and television news before the division of the NZBC in 1975 into separate entities – Television One, TV2 and Radio New Zealand. I then worked for two years as a senior television reporter until leaving to have a family in 1977. After some years as a part-time freelance journalist and public relations officer, I began working full-time again as a tutor on the ATI’s journalism certificate course in June 1987 alongside colleagues Geoff Black and Jim Tucker.

Over the past 20 years, as described above by O’Rourke (2006), the journalism qualification was enriched and strengthened. I became journalism curriculum leader in 1996 and retained this role until relinquishing it in mid-2006, partly because of ill-health, and partly because I needed more time to work on my thesis.

Because of my own on-the-job training in a cadetship, I can identify with Sheridan Burns’ description of the process as “learning by humiliation” (1994, p.113). I was therefore interested to learn how today’s students coped with what is as near a “real workplace as we can make it. As journalism curriculum leader I had had to fight to reinstate field trips to provincial newsrooms in the BCS degree’s journalism major and my conviction has always been that this type of learning is crucial to journalism training.

The AUT courses in radio, television, magazine and new media journalism all have had practical outcomes too. Radio journalism students broadcast a series of radio bulletins on the School of Communication Studies radio station towards the end of their course, but this is not a constant requirement throughout their learning. There is no outlet as yet for the television students' stories, apart from the production of in-house bulletins at the end of the course. New media students, though, do have to submit their work to the course website and plans to involve them in contributing to the online version of *Te Waha Nui* (<http://www.tewahanui.info/>) are being implemented later in 2007.

1.4 The inception of the News Production paper and the student newspaper – *Te Waha Nui*

The News Production paper was set up by two of my colleagues in 2004, supplemented by the online version in 2005. One tutor, David Robie, had international experience in student-created newspapers within journalism training. His contribution, together with that of the second tutor, Allan Lee, who inaugurated the Editing and Design course and co-wrote a textbook for it, meant we had staff with the key skills to get the paper underway. Other tutors, including myself, volunteered to help out with proof reading and assisting in sub-editing when necessary and this was what first sparked my interest in *Te Waha Nui* as the subject of a research project into experiential learning within journalism.

The 60 students majoring in journalism all have a chance to get their stories published in both versions of *Te Waha Nui*. Five editions are published during the year – the first as an outcome for students enrolled in the Editing and Design optional paper in the first semester and the other four as a product of the News Production paper in the second semester. About 2000 copies are circulated to various audiences – cafes and businesses in Auckland's central business district, the two university campuses (AUT and the nearby University of Auckland), wider inner city suburbs, the media industry, journalism schools and politicians. The publication is fully-funded by the AUT, although a small amount of income is earned from a few advertisements in each edition. The News Production students – the subject of this research – are responsible not only for writing some of *Te Waha Nui*'s content, but also for designing and laying out the pages, taking and processing most of the photographs, and distributing the finished

product by hand around the city and by mail to regular readers in New Zealand and overseas.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

This research is described in the following five chapters, whose content is listed here.

Chapter 2: Research Design

This describes the way the research project progressed from an initial comparative study of the work of two New Zealand journalism tutors who had produced course newspapers to a decision to focus on the student perspective on this type of experiential learning. The development of a qualitative case study methodology is described. The chapter details how the research question was found and defined, building on an initial small study. The research methods, including the recruitment of the students and the subsequent series of interviews with them are described, along with the interviews with the two tutors.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the work of authors who have defined the various learning methods grouped under the umbrella term of “experiential learning”. Some examples are vocational education, situated learning, co-operative learning and problem-based education. The prominent theorists in the field (Dewey, 1916; Lewin, 1951; Kolb, 1984) are discussed as an introduction to the work of later theorists and practitioners. The chapter then focuses on the role of the teacher in experiential learning as well as the history of its relationship with, and relevance to, journalism education.

Chapter 4: Empowerment of students on *Te Waha Nui*

This is where the student experiences enter. A major theme arising from the data is explored – the power relationship between students and tutors – and how this affected the student learning experience. A major ethical issue for both students and tutors, which arose during production of the third issue of *Te Waha Nui* and which challenged the power relationship is discussed.

Chapter 5: Experiential learning and the *real world*

This explores other themes that emerged, including how close to the *real world* the students and tutors believed the production of *Te Waha Nui* was. It identifies the range

of challenges faced by the students. The learning outcomes of the production group are described and the process of reflection – an integral part of experiential learning – is also discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the issues raised in terms of experiential learning.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

This chapter reconsiders the purpose of the study and its aim to break new ground in discussing journalism student insights into an experiential learning environment. The chapter also explores how the research question identified two strands of the student feedback – firstly the delight in their *real world* achievement, tempered by an awareness of the compromises they had to make and secondly the frustrations involved in students trying to exercise authority over their fellow students without a real mandate to do so. The size of the student workload, which also emerged as a major point of contention for the students, and AUT efforts to address this problem in 2007 provide a possible course of action for other journalism schools. After briefly comparing the relative merits of print versus online student publications the chapter concludes with recommendations elicited from the study and some suggestions for future research into experiential learning in journalism education.

Chapter 2: Research Design

2.1 Introduction

This study, sparked by my interest in a particular learning experience for journalism students, arose from my involvement, both as the former journalism curriculum leader for the university and as an occasional proof reader and assistant sub-editor for *Te Waha Nui*, in earlier years. This chapter describes the design of the research project, from the initial planning to the development of a qualitative case study methodology. It details how the research question was found and defined, building on previous small studies. The research methods, including the recruitment of the students and the subsequent series of interviews with them are described, along with the one-off interviews with the two tutors after the end of the News Production paper. Because the newspaper was managed by two of my long-term colleagues and staffed by students I had supervised, the issue of “insider” research is addressed. Ethical issues are explored, including concerns for student confidentiality and the decision-making process involving a controversial advertisement in the newspaper. The chapter concludes with a description of the data analysis and a brief reference to the themes that emerged.

2.2 Finding and defining the research question

My research into experiential learning in journalism began in 2002 when, for a paper which was part of my study for a Master of Education, I interviewed two colleagues experienced in directing journalism student newspaper production. One, from my own university, had considerable international experience in the field, and the other, from Massey University in Wellington supervised production of the student-run paper *Magneto*. I sought their views and in my paper (2002, unpublished) but cited by my colleague (Robie, 2006), described how, from a tutor’s perspective, journalism students’ learning outcomes could be improved by responsibility for producing their own newspapers. As Robie (2006) notes, I had pointed to the growing difficulty of finding suitable outlets for 60-odd journalism students trying to get their news stories published, resulting in the use of some inappropriate outlets.

At that stage the AUT’s journalism department did not have its own newspaper, though the university’s student union paper *Debate* published some of the journalism students’

stories. There had also been three occasions when students had produced a series of newspapers – once at the request of organisers of an international disability conference being held over a week in Auckland and twice for a police terrorist exercise. For the police exercises, the students also produced radio and television bulletins. Experience of how these situations challenged and extended the students was a factor in the subsequent decision to launch our own tabloid training newspaper in November 2003. The two tutors responsible for planning and establishing *Te Waha Nui* were the AUT colleague I had interviewed and another who had taught Editing and Design for many years and who had played a key role in the earlier “one-off” publishing efforts.

In the first year of publication – 2004 – I helped out on the newspaper as an occasional sub-editor and proof reader. For another master’s paper, I decided to do one-off interviews with five students in the production team and one of the tutors, just after production of the paper’s first issue. Themes that emerged from the data included evidence that the students were drawing on each other’s expertise to solve problems, rather than relying solely on the tutors, that group dynamics were an important part of the experience, that motivation for learning was increased by seeing the paper gradually take shape, that “student ownership” of the paper was also a motivating factor and that the experience encouraged team work and communication.

This research, based on six interviews, each about 10 minutes long, resulted in my drawing six “provocative propositions” about experiential learning, listed in Table 2(a).

Table 2(a) *Summary of provocative propositions*

| |
|--|
| 1. Experiential learning enables students to draw from the expertise of their peers. |
| 2. Experiential learning sensitises students towards their peers. |
| 3. Experiential learning motivates students to give more time for deeper learning. |
| 4. Experiential learning is effective where there is a large amount of responsibility and learning is completed by doing. |
| 5. Experiential learning enables staff expertise to be drawn on in strategic ways. |
| 6. Experiential learning activates greater opportunity for communication, negotiation, problem-solving and role-playing skills in real-world environments. |

This 2004 research, which became a pilot study for my present project, was presented at a conference of journalism educators in Brisbane at the end of the year (Boyd-Bell,

2004). Bearing all these factors in mind, I developed a broadly-based research question, aiming to gain a wide-ranging student perspective on the above propositions. The question was:

How do journalism students believe their skills and capabilities develop when they are given the major responsibility for producing and publishing their own newspaper to a professional standard?

The “professional standard” element of the question is reflected in the fact that, as well as being distributed to university campuses and inner-city shops and cafes in Auckland, the newspaper is mailed to what could be considered a very critical audience – including politicians, media industry offices, other journalism schools, and a wide cross-section of the community. The responsibility for getting things right and demonstrating their skills in what has become a “showcase” for their journalism training weighs very heavily on the students, as my research shows.

The newspaper has also already established something of a reputation for excellence. In 2005, as Robie (2006) points out, *Te Waha Nui* won the student section of the Wallace Award in New Zealand for its coverage of the general election, leading to its being declared the best regular student publication by the Journalism Education Association of Australia – “the first time that any New Zealand publication has been successful in the annual awards” (Robie, 2006, p.33).

The research topic could have been widened if it had not been limited to only one cohort of the students involved in this type of learning. My initial plan was to canvass the opinions of the 26 students who had previously taken the News Production paper, by means of an emailed questionnaire, to attempt to gauge the usefulness of the experiential learning to their subsequent industry careers. Because of the need to limit my research to a manageable amount of data and give it a tight focus, I abandoned this plan. This left some interesting unanswered questions as to the longer term effect of participating in a student-run newspaper.

2.3 Research methods

I decided to seek qualitative data rather than quantitative because of the nature of the research. The aim was to describe the student experience of this method of learning, aptly referred to by one of them as *blood, sweat and tears*. Though I have pointed to some commonly-held opinions among the students, statistics in this situation would be meaningless and far from interesting.

My research methodology needed to be one that encouraged individuals to reflect on and describe what they had experienced. This emphasis is clearly part of qualitative research, which Merriam described as starting from the assumption:

...that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social world. Qualitative research is interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed. Qualitative research implies a direct concern for how experiences are lived, or felt, or undergone (Merriam, 1998, p.6).

As a case study involving only eight students, my research clearly has many of the advantages that Cohen and Manion (1994) note. Adapting the conclusions of Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis (1980) they point to case study data having “strength in reality”. They say case studies are “down-to-earth and attention holding, in harmony with the reader’s own experience and thus provide a ‘natural’ basis for generalisation” (p. 123). Their view that case studies can represent discrepancies and conflicts between the participants’ viewpoints was certainly borne out during this research. Another important aspect they pointed to was that the data in case studies can be presented in a more “publicly accessible” form than other kinds of research report.

The case study is capable of serving multiple audiences. It reduces the dependence of the reader upon unstated implicit assumptions... and makes the research process itself accessible (p. 123).

I relied only on interviews and did not attempt to enter the *Te Waha Nui* newsroom or observe the students’ behaviour while they were working there. I would have considered this too intrusive in a situation where people were operating under deadline pressures and in some cases having stressful experiences. I confined myself to interviews, apart from one occasion when I was invited to sit in on an ethical discussion. I was concerned to keep as far removed as possible and approach the interviews without bias or pre-conceived opinions.

As Holliday (2000) puts it:

Although the deeper social world is not quantifiable, its 'real' nature can be established with sufficient weight of description. Substantiation is gained via minimal researcher interference and bias... (p. 20).

I was concerned to establish a rapport and a feeling of relaxation for the subjects during the interviews but, though it was necessary sometimes to probe for more details about complaints and reasons for dissatisfaction with the learning process, I was scrupulously careful about not responding to these with inappropriate comments of my own. In the context of small numbers in the production team and a desire to represent mainly the student voice, I sought their stories of trials and triumphs, in order to draw out interesting and useful themes. My pilot study had pointed me in certain directions for interview topics, but some themes emerged more strongly than I had expected and this helped me to structure the research results.

Data collection

I tape-recorded the interviews in order to encourage a chatty "story-telling" response from the subjects. The questions for all the interviews are listed in Appendix A. I never considered the option of a questionnaire for the group because I felt this would be almost certain to limit the length and therefore the detail of their responses, particularly as they already had a very busy timetable. Similarly, I rejected the option of focus groups because, in a learning situation that would almost certainly result in some tensions among the students, this may have limited the honesty and detail of some responses. The other factor to be considered was that some students had less confidence about speaking up in a group..

Recruiting the students

There were 10 students enrolled in News Production in 2006, compared with 14 in 2005 and 12 in 2004. I hoped all 10 would agree to take part. During the first week of the course I arranged a time for an independent staff member to explain the project to the students, hand out participant information sheets and seek volunteers to take part. In that week and the following one, two of the students were not present because of illness so, as I was not able to complete the first interview with them, I excluded them from the study. Indirect information about them, however, became available when the eight students who had consented to be interviewed were asked to comment on their fellow students' progress. Unfortunately for my research, the two students I had excluded were

described by several others as being among those who made the most progress on the course, so their exclusion from the interviews was disappointing. However, an important factor was that both editors agreed to participate, as their experiences as student leaders were needed to ensure multiple perspectives were included.

The student interviews

The recorded interviews with the students were done individually and discreetly in my office near the *Te Waha Nui* newsroom. There were a total of 24 interviews, mostly carried out at three stages of the course. One student missed the second interview because of absence overseas and I did an extra interview with one of the editors to confirm the veracity of information about him from other students. Drawing on Tolich and Davidson's (1999) three-part interview guide I used individual semi-structured interviews with introductory questions, a list of others based on recurrent themes and a set of generic prompts. I made a point of asking the students at the end of each interview whether they had additional comments to make and that technique often proved fruitful. I confined myself to asking questions and prompting. I did not comment on the students' opinions and did not ask them to comment on what each other had said. The interviews varied in length from 10 to 30 minutes or longer. Some students gave notably shorter answers to similar questions. The final interviews were generally longer than the earlier ones. Just under nine hours of interviews were recorded, including those with the two tutors.

Timing of the interviews

The first student interviews were done two weeks into the course to establish why the students had opted to take the paper, broadly what they expected to learn, what they perceived as the tutors' role and how much input they expected to have into key editorial decisions. Additional questions were addressed to the two editors about their approach to their role.

The second interview, planned to take place after the first edition of *Te Waha Nui* was published, largely followed up on the key issues – student decision-making, the role of the tutors, team work and communication, stress and deadline pressures and what the students had learned from the experience so far. Because the first editor had decided on a different market focus than usual – Auckland's central business district area – a question about the impact of that decision was also included. This interview aimed to

record the students' reactions to their first big achievement and convey, among other things, their emotional response.

I did not attempt to record interviews after every edition of the paper as this would have made my project very intrusive for the students and resulted in more data than I could cope with. I also did not feel there was any research advantage to be gained by it. A significant time gap of about six weeks before the third interview allowed time for the student experience to build so that there was scope for them to become aware of what had changed.

The third interview was therefore scheduled in the last stages of News Production, after the final edition for the year had been produced in mid-October, but when the students were still completing the last assignment for the paper. By then, as well as the standard learning experience and difficulty questions, other issues had arisen, such as a battle to get the third edition out on time and controversy over the image in an advertisement. As mentioned above, one of the student editors agreed to a fourth interview in March 2007. This came about because transcripts of the third interviews were not completed until some six weeks after they were recorded. It then emerged that, while several students had mentioned a resignation threat, by this particular editor, over the controversial advertisement, he himself had not revealed this information during his interview. In the fourth interview the editor confirmed the information and explained its context. This was very important to the research because it indicated the students' strength of feeling about the advertisement – an important ethical issue – but I thought it should not be used without sourcing that information to the editor.

The tutor interviews

When planning the tutor interviews I was informed by my involvement, however limited, with the way *Te Waha Nui* had been run in previous years and the research papers I had written. In addition, the interviews I had previously done with the two New Zealand journalism lecturers, as mentioned above, helped provide a basis for my questions. I interviewed the two tutors in my office after the News Production paper had finished. The questions for them were intended to put the student comments in context and elicit both background information about the course and more information on themes emerging from the students' learning experience. This was also important for triangulation techniques in my study, further explained in Section 2.4.

Interview transcription

The interviews were transcribed and typed by a university staff member who had no familiarity with either the students or the tutors. The transcripts and original tapes were returned to me and I eventually checked all the transcripts against the tapes to ensure their accuracy, get a feeling for the students' emotional involvement and decipher the odd word or phrase missed or misheard by the typist. Where direct quotation has been used in the research it is verbatim, apart from some correction of grammatical errors and a light edit. Quotes from the interviews – the majority of which are in Chapters 4 and 5 – are reproduced in italics.

2.4 Quality criteria

There are some conflicting views among researchers about reliability, validity and triangulation when applied to qualitative, rather than quantitative research. Golafshani (2003) argued that the most important test of any qualitative study is its quality and cited the view of Eisner (1991) that a good qualitative study “can help us understand a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing” (p.58). But he also noted the argument of Stenbacka (2001) that since the reliability issue concerned measurements it had no relevance to qualitative research.

Golafshani (2003) disagreed with this view: “The idea is most often used in all kinds of research”(p.601). He cited a question posed by Lincoln & Guba (1985, p.290): “How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?” and the answer asserted by Healy and Perry (2000) that the quality of a study in each paradigm should be judged by its own paradigm's terms. In the paradigm of a case study such as mine, the subtlety and complexity of the case in its own right, as Cohen and Manion (1994) pointed out, is its strength.

Golafshani went on to quote the view of Lincoln & Guba (1985) that in qualitative paradigms the terms credibility, neutrality or confirmability, consistency or dependability, and applicability or transferability were the essential criteria for quality. They maintained that “dependability” in qualitative research closely corresponded to the notion of reliability in quantitative research. Seale (1999), also cited, said examination of “trustworthiness” was crucial in ensuring reliability.

In discussing validity, Golafshani said that although some researchers argued that the term was not applicable to qualitative research, “they have realised the need for some kind of qualifying check or measure for their research” (p. 602). Many researchers, he added, had developed their own concepts of validity and had adopted, instead, terms such as “quality, rigour and trustworthiness” (p.602).

For my research, the aspects of dependability, rigour and trustworthiness had to be closely borne in mind. When considering the quality of the data I gathered, I decided a factor of over-riding importance was the degree of trust existing between me and the students. Though some, no doubt, avoided answering questions as fully as they might have, and refrained from “naming names” at times, I had no sense that their answers were anything but truthful, from their own individual perspectives. There was also a considerable degree of confirmation of commonly-held opinions about their learning experiences. The methodology, involving recording the interviews, having them transcribed but also listening to them again, editing excerpts to be used as the basis for conclusions and returning these to the participants for confirmation or change was as rigorous as I could make it. I also sought reinforcement from all the participants, when controversial views or strong criticisms emerged, as well as their descriptions of positive learning experiences.

One of the recognised processes to test validity is triangulation. This, as defined by Cohen and Manion (1994), is “the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour.” (p. 233). Quoting from one of Denzin’s early works (1970), they listed six types of triangulation; see table 2 (b):

Table 2 (b) *The principal types of triangulation used in research (Denzin 1970)*

| |
|--|
| Time longitudinal |
| Space cross cultural |
| Combined using more than one of the three principal levels used in the social sciences - individual, group and organizational |
| Theoretical drawing upon competing theories |
| Investigator involving more than one observer |
| Methodological which uses either the same method on different occasions or different methods on the same object of study |

For my research, time triangulation was a major factor. In contrast to my pilot study, when a small number of students and one tutor were interviewed, on one occasion, I saw an obvious need to track the progression of student experiences, from their expectations two weeks into the paper to their reactions after the first edition went to press. The final interview took place at the end of the process, when they had only a final reflective assignment to produce. As mentioned above, I did not consider the option of using personal observation of the students' newsroom performance as another source of data, for reasons of intrusion and possible pre-interview bias.

The other means of triangulating the findings was to interview the two tutors. This was done after the completion of the student interviews so that observations and concerns raised by them could be addressed by the tutors and put in context. This was useful in order to address some of the student criticisms of how one of the tutors dealt with an ethical issue.

When weighing up the question of how much data to reproduce in the form of quotations, I chose the "middle ground" option described by Thody (2006) – quoting a substantial portion of them. She noted that qualitative researchers must retain multiple voices and sources.

The polyvocal world that qualitative research seeks to convey is naturalistic, complex, varied, expansive and cacophonous (Thody, 2006, p.129).

Discussing subjectivity, she challenged the view by Fail, Thompson and Walker (2004) that "sadly, qualitative, interpretive research data cannot provide facts and figures." Thody (2006) redefined the word "fact" in qualitative data, as "another voice, each voice producing part of the picture."

Each voice is a complete 'fact' in itself and represents the truth as seen by that respondent... The perceptions of one voice may conflict with those of other voices but that does not make any of them incorrect (p.130).

2.5 Relationship of researcher to subjects

I was careful to take into account the effect of my relationship, as the journalism curriculum leader up until the previous semester, with the students and also with the tutors, both long-time colleagues of mine. In the event, I don't believe this inhibited

anyone from being forthright in their views, but some obvious precautions had to be taken.

As Mercer (2007) pointed out, “insider” research can raise dilemmas involving informant bias, interview reciprocity and research ethics (p.13). In acknowledging the advantages of an insider researcher’s familiarity with the social setting, she questioned whether heightened familiarity “leads to thicker description or greater verisimilitude” (p. 6) and raised the issue of whether this made insiders more likely to take things for granted or “assume their own perspective is wider than it is” (p. 6).

Certainly, as referred to in the discussion of trustworthiness in 2.4, I felt I gained from having credibility and rapport with my subjects – a fact that Mercer believed may encourage a higher level of candour than otherwise. Whether my informants would have given more to a detached outsider “than to someone so intimately bound up with the life of the institution and so enmeshed in its power relations” (p.7) will never be known, but my impression was that my research was not inhibited by issues such as a reluctance by the students to criticise my colleagues on occasion, or vice versa.

One aspect of Mercer’s paper which surprised me was her warning that many authors strongly caution against the interviewer revealing personal opinions, during interviews. Perhaps it is a temptation to do so in studies like Mercer’s, involving university political issues of great personal interest to the researcher, but interviewer neutrality was a priority in my case and personal views, though sometimes strongly felt, had to be withheld.

The students

The students were eight of a total of 60. None of them had been in my writing group in the first semester or in the field trip I took out of town for a week early in the second semester. I made sure I was not involved in assessing any of the students’ work during the research period in the second semester of 2006, apart from marking a straightforward “question and answer” court reporting test at the end of the semester for all the students in the News Practicum paper, a compulsory paper which I headed. I have not been consulted or asked to give references to prospective employers for any of the students and decided prior to embarking on the research that if this situation arose I would refer the query to a suitable colleague. Though I could have taken up my usual

role as occasional proof reader and assistant sub-editor on *Te Waha Nui* to get additional information about the students' performance during the semester, I believed this would be inappropriate. I preferred to keep aloof from the production process and rely completely on the interviews for my research. I am not even aware now of which student received the highest marks in the paper.

My colleagues

A more difficult issue was the relationship with my colleagues – both of whom are long-term associates and friends. Costley and Gibbs (2006) pointed out that research involving work colleagues raised issues of ethics different from those where the relationship of the researcher to the researched is “more transitory, informal and definable”. Work-based researchers, as they noted, work with colleagues who are temporarily transformed into research subjects and later returned to the role of colleagues.

The issue we attempt to clarify is that, given this relationship, how should the researcher behave when the findings... might affect or even injure those to whom the research has a special professional, functional or emotional bond (p. 89).

Arguing that this issue is not well-explored in the literature on professional ethics, (p. 89-90) the authors cited Aristotle's linking a concern for well-being with intellectual virtues and claimed the “virtuous” researcher would undertake research not just to prevent harm to others but to do good.

...we argue this can be manifest in a sense of caring for those who are being investigated and extending this caring beyond their ‘use’ in the research project to their generalised well-being (p. 93).

Certainly the knowledge that, as Preedy and Riches (1988), cited by Mercer (2007), described it, that “fruitful professional relationships....[have]...to continue after the research has been completed” (p.8) was a factor for consideration when a course of action by one tutor attracted considerable student criticism, but I addressed this dilemma by ensuring that his side of the story was well explored and explained.

2.6 Ethical considerations

Another important ethical issue I recognised in advance was how to deal with issues of confidentiality involving both students and tutors. When the students were recruited for

the study they were advised that their real names would not be used in the thesis. However, with such a small team, whose names are published in the newspaper anyway, complete confidentiality is problematic. This particularly applies to the two editors, who were advised that though their real names would also not be used, it would be impossible to conceal their identity completely because of their editorial role. The participating students all signed a consent form acknowledging these concerns. The tutors also signed a similar form. The tutors, however, are aware that in journalism circles in New Zealand and Australia at least, because of their profile as members of the university's teaching staff, their identities will be obvious to some colleagues. This put a considerable onus on me, as the researcher, to deal diplomatically with some of the research material. The students, asked to comment on such matters as teamwork and communication, were offered an open invitation to criticise their colleagues. For the most part, though the students indicated that not everyone in the group had shared the workload fairly, no names were mentioned. The only times names were used was when the students commented on each other's progress, always positively. They were also invited to comment on the relative effectiveness of the two editors, which resulted in some criticisms. The editors also commented – not always in a complimentary fashion – on each other's performance. This means that within the research group the editors at least will know what others thought of them and there is no way of disguising this information. My guiding principle here was relevance. The way the editors were seen to have performed their role was, in my view, very much a part of the experiential learning.

One unforeseen ethical issue arose during the research – student and tutor controversy over an advertisement planned to be included in the third edition of *Te Waha Nui*. This controversy, in which the tutors took opposing views, was valuable in that it opened the students' minds to an unexpected ethical issue. Though, as mentioned above, one of the tutor's actions at that time came under considerable criticism from some of the students, this criticism is balanced by the discussion in Chapter 4 which clearly sets out the tutor's explanation for the way he approached the issue. I particularly appreciated the frankness of the tutors in this matter. The head tutor was particularly helpful in ensuring I was aware of this issue at the time, enabling me to be an observer at one of the student/tutor discussions about it. I took no part in the debate or, obviously, in the subsequent vote on whether to use the advertisement.

2.7 Conclusion

In analysing the data, I extracted the main themes from the interview responses and arranged them under topic headings. From the plethora of possible themes, I eventually grouped the topics into two categories and assigned a chapter for each of these.

A question about the role of the tutors gave an early indication that most of the students were surprised by their apparent “hands-off” attitude to the content of the newspaper. The way this situation eventually played out gave rise to perhaps the most prominent theme in the research – the empowerment of the students as part of the learning experience – and its limitations. This is discussed in Chapter 4.

The other theme to emerge was the issue of how much the learning, aimed at replicating “real life” in a newsroom could be achieved in a university setting. Key findings in this category related to the students’ learning outcomes, along with the important element of reflection, an integral part of experiential learning, yet difficult to encourage in a time-pressured project.

Other topics relevant to this included the student workload, recognised by both tutors and students as very heavy and a cause of some resentment by the students. Another was teamwork and communication, acknowledged by the students as a vital factor in the experience, yet difficult to bring about in an environment where students cannot always be at the coal face because of other learning commitments. Similarly deadline pressures and the resultant stress were perhaps unevenly experienced because of varying levels of commitment to the paper. These topics are discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Tell me and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I will understand. – Confucius, (circa 450 B.C. cited by Oxendine, Robinson, & Willson (2004, p.1).

3.1 Introduction

This chapter's opening quotation, attributed to Confucius, provides one of the more succinct definitions of experiential learning, drawing attention to the student perspective, which is the focus of this research. The chapter reviews the literature on experiential learning: an umbrella term for various learning methods (Zinkiewicz, Hammond & Trapp, 2003). The prominent theorists in the field are discussed as well as the role of the teacher and the history of, and relevance to, journalism education.

3.2 Experiential learning theory and journalism: a new research path

Brandon (2002) highlighted an important gap in journalism education research -the learning environment in which it takes place - and produced a useful, if ambitious, series of suggestions for fruitful new research paths. Starting with the origins of journalism education during the late 19th century when journalism classes were focused on teaching students to be printers, she chronicled its growth through to the early 20th century when the University of Missouri started the first journalism department in 1908. Four years later the prestigious Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in New York, funded by Joseph Pulitzer, opened.

Until then, Brandon (2002) reported, practical training by professional news people was the norm. The opening of the Columbia school brought about a radical change to the curriculum, with the teaching of liberal arts and sciences and debates about the balance between those subjects with journalism. Discussions about that issue, together with the later introduction of theory into journalism courses and the question of whether journalism should be taught by staff with Ph.D qualifications continued into the late 20th century, and to some extent are still relevant today (Deuze, 2006). Brandon (2002) noted, however, that none of the major journalism education studies she cited from the 1980s through to early this century have focused on the conditions of the learning environment - a vital part of the learning system. The experiential learning approach,

she argued, offers a way of assessing the quality of the learning and, through understandings of the process, “breaking new paths” (p. 62) into the study of journalism education. Drawing on the findings of Honey (1992), Brandon suggested researching the extent to which journalism courses contain characteristics which meet Honey’s criteria for benefiting the students.

Table 3(a) Criteria for research into journalism courses (Honey, P.,1992), as cited by Brandon (2002, p. 65)

| |
|---|
| Do they address career development needs? |
| Do they encourage initiative? |
| Do they offer training that would lead to different job positions? |
| Do they allow input? |
| Do they use mistakes as learning opportunities? |
| Do they provide frequent feedback on performance? |
| Do they encourage use of knowledge gained in other learning settings? |

Brandon (2002) envisaged a comparative study which would include the views of employees in the news industry as well as presently enrolled students involved in campus media and internships. She advocated examining the learning styles described by Kolb (1984), as they affected journalism classes and using the models of Lewin (1951) and Joplin (1985) “to test the effects of feedback in the transfer of learning principles to actual work situations” (p. 65).

3.3 Learning methods

The typical undergraduate is no longer a full-time residential student who contemplates a wealth of ideas on some grassy knoll at his or her leisure. Instead, the nation’s undergraduates are increasingly nontraditional students, many of whom struggle with a full course load, part or full-time jobs, commuting and raising a family (Tsui, 2000, p.436).

In making this observation, Tsui suggested that it was “no wonder” (p. 436) students often tried to minimise effort to get a good grade. She cited the finding of Kuh (1999) that only about a third of full-time students in higher education in the United States devoted 40 hours a week to class and study – which in itself was a 7% decline from the previous decade. This, Tsui (2000) noted as “distressing downward trends which are

antithetical to efforts to develop students' abilities to think critically [and] need to be reversed" (p. 437).

In an exploratory qualitative study of four United States campuses to begin gauging the level of critical thinking among students in higher education, Tsui (2000) concluded that one of three important factors was an institution's epistemological orientation. Two of the four schools, which scored highly on a critical thinking scale, she found to have made more use of class discussion, small group work, student-led inquiry, and peer review. By contrast, the two schools with low critical thinking scores relied more on lectures and had less classroom questioning or discussion. Students commented that some professors were behind schedule and "just wanted to lecture and get out" and students not wanting to "look like an ass" in front of others, by asking questions (p. 429). Tsui reported some strong support among the students for the lecture-based approach, with one reasoning: "If you spend too much time asking people questions, then you can't get through the material" (p. 430). From a less pragmatic perspective, Kolb, 2000, cited in Coffield, Moseley, Hall and Ecclestone, 2004) claimed that lectures are preferred by students whose strength lies in learning by reflecting.

A review by Coffield et al (2004) of 71 learning styles in the United States, the United Kingdom and Western Europe, divided the field of learning styles into three linked areas: "theoretical, pedagogical and commercial" (p. 11). They commented that the field of learning styles research as a whole is "characterized by a very large number of small-scale applications of particular models to small samples of students in specific contexts" (p. 11)

This has proved especially problematic for our review of evidence of the impact of learning styles on teaching and learning, since there are very few robust studies, which offer, for example, reliable and valid evidence and clear implications for practice based on empirical findings (Coffield et al, 2004, p. 11)

However, they categorised 13 of the learning styles as major models and credited Kolb with developing one of the most influential, based on his theory of experiential learning, described in 3.4.

3.4 What is experiential learning?

One must learn by doing the thing, for though you think you know it – you have no certainty, until you try (Sophocles, 400 B.C.E. cited by Rogers (1983, p. 163).

Explaining that “knowledge results from the combination of grasping experience and transforming it”, (Kolb, 1984, p. 41) defines learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience”.

Kolb’s starting point for his theory of experiential learning and his ‘Learning Style Inventory’ was his dissatisfaction with traditional methods of teaching management students. Having observed that some students preferred activities like exercises, and others liked formal lectures he tried to identify individual learning differences (Coffield et al, 2004, p. 69).

Kolb (1984) proposed “a model of the underlying structure of the learning process based on research in psychology, philosophy and physiology” (p. x1). He argued that experiential learning theory offered the foundation for something substantial and enduring – “an approach that is soundly based in intellectual traditions of social psychology, philosophy and cognitive psychology” (p. 3).

It offers a system of competencies for describing job demands and corresponding educational objectives and emphasises the critical linkages that can be developed between the classroom and the ‘real world’ with experiential learning methods (p. 4).

Kolb (1984) acknowledged the contribution of Dewey (1938) who he says attempted to bring some understanding to the growing conflict between “traditional” education and his “progressive” approach. Many of Dewey’s ideas had since been adopted as universities moved to provide more opportunities for the poor and minorities, creating a need for educational methods that could translate “the abstract ideas of academia into the concrete practical realities of people’s lives” (p. 6).

At that time Kolb (1984) also pointed to a marked trend towards vocationalism in higher education,

spurred on by a group of often angry and hostile critics – students who feel cheated because career expectations created in college have not been met and employers who feel that the graduates they recruit into their organisations are woefully unprepared” (p. 6).

Kolb (1984) also reviewed the tradition of experiential learning stemming from the research on group dynamics by the “founder” of American psychology, Kurt Lewin. Kolb pointed out that although the scope of Lewin’s work, over three generations, was vast, it was his work on group dynamics and the methodology of action research that had had the most far-reaching practical significance, particularly planned change interventions in groups and complex organisations.

Kolb reviewed the Lewinian model of action research and laboratory training beginning with the concrete or “here-and-now experience” followed by collection of data and observations about that experience, with conclusions of the analysis fed back to the actors in the experience for their use in the modification of their behaviour and choice of new experiences – a four-stage process.

He noted its similarity to Dewey’s model, pointing out that they suggested learning was “by its very nature a tension and conflict-filled process” (p. 30). He went on to broadly define learning as “*the* major process of human adaptation” (p.32).

Kolb described three broad development stages of maturation: acquisition, specialisation and integration (p.141). In the specialisation stage of development, he said, the person achieved a sense of individuality through the acquisition of a specialised adaptive competence in dealing with the demands of a chosen “career” (p.143).

One’s sense of self-worth is based on the rewards and recognition received for doing “work” well. The self in this stage is defined primarily in terms of *content* - things I can do, experiences I have had, goods and qualities I possess (p.143).

Kolb’s approach has proved “highly productive” (Coffield et al, p. 69) gauged by an experiential learning bibliography he assembled in 2000, listing 1004 studies, including 430 in the education field and 207 in management. He is not without critics, however. For example, among 15 Kolb critiques cited in Pickles (2006), the “idea of a nice set of learning stages” was dismissed as not equating to reality from a training perspective (Forrest, 2004, p. 4) and Dickson (2000) noted that in its application to experiential education Kolb’s research base was limited in relation to people of different backgrounds.

Later researchers have used a wide variety of terms to define experiential learning. Itin (1999) described it as “the change in an individual that results from reflection on a direct experience and results in new abstractions and applications”, (p.92). Experiential learning, he said, belonged with the student and didn’t necessarily require a teacher. Psychologists Zinkiewicz, Hammond & Trapp (2003) also pointed to the focus being on individual learners rather than on the learning material itself, making the central notion of experience “the key to learning and personal control” (p.31).

Itin (1999) attempted to distinguish between the terms “experiential learning” and “experiential education”, often, as he pointed out, used interchangeably, for example by Kolb (1984) and Kraft (1986). Itin described experiential education as “a transactive process between an educator and a student” (p. 92) and noted that, though this type of education would maximize opportunities for experiential learning, the use of the word “education” implied the presence of a teacher.

Similarly, Joplin (1986) distinguished between the terms, but for a slightly different reason. “Experiential learning” she defined as involving the student’s personal perceptions and beliefs whereas “experiential education”, according to her thinking, involved a debrief which needed to be made public – through group discussions or class presentations so that the “public nature of the debrief also ensures that the learner’s conclusions are mirrored against a greater body of perception than his alone” (Joplin, 1986, p.157).

Assuming that there is a distinction to be made, it could be argued that from the perspective of the student, the term “experiential learning” is more appropriate as the learning can be more expansive than that which is intended through a deliberately “educational” process.

For example, Joplin’s (1986) five-stage “hurricane style model” of an experiential action strategy for teachers included a “focus” stage which she said should be specific enough to orient the student but not too specific to rule out unplanned learning as most experiential programmes expected and intended students to learn things their fellow learners did not learn (p. 156).

In the context of a journalism class producing a newspaper, a more focused definition is provided by Brookfield (1983), cited in Smith (2001), who described experiential learning as being undertaken by students who are given a chance to acquire and apply knowledge, skills and feelings in an immediate and relevant setting, sponsored by an institution and used on training programmes for professions.

Another definition by Oxendine et al (2004) has even more resonance. They describe experiential learning as “a cyclical process that capitalizes on the participants’ experiences for acquisition of knowledge” (p.1).

This process involves setting goals, thinking, planning, experimentation, reflection, observation and review. By engaging in these activities, learners construct meaning in a way unique to themselves, incorporating the cognitive, emotional, and physical aspects of learning (Oxendine et al, 2004, p.1).

The key reference to the emotional aspects, omitted from some other definitions, is also emphasized by Dewey (1916), who, when stressing the importance of the social environment in the learning method, commented:

It is truly educative in its effect in the degree in which an individual shares or participates in some conjoint activity. By doing his share in the associated activity, the individual appropriates the purpose which actuates it, becomes familiar with its methods and subject matters, acquires needed skill and is saturated with its emotional spirit (p.22).

Researchers use a variety of related but sometimes distinctive categories in which to place experiential learning. These include vocational education, situated learning, co-operative learning and active and problem-based learning. These will be discussed separately.

Vocational education and journalism

Dewey (1916) was an advocate of learning by doing; he linked understanding with doing, believing that education through occupations combined within itself “more of the factors conducive to learning than any other method” (p.309).

It calls instincts and habits into play; it is a foe to passive receptivity. It has an end in view; results are to be accomplished. Hence it appeals to thought; it demands that an idea of an end be steadily maintained, so that activity cannot be routine or capricious. Since the movement of activity must be progressive, leading from one stage to another, observation and ingenuity are required at each stage to overcome obstacles and readapt means of execution (p. 309).

Vocational education, though, was not just “trying to give a technical preparation for industries and professions as they now operate, much less by merely reproducing existing industrial conditions...”. It then risked becoming trade education... “an instrument of perpetuating unchanged the existing industrial order of society, instead of operating as a means of its transformation” (Dewey, 1916, p.316).

In journalism education this warning is particularly apt. Pointing to a global debate about whether journalism education “should exist at all”, Deuze (2006) referred to an underlying historical consensus among journalism practitioners “that the status quo in the industry is the ideal one, hence newcomers only need to internalize what their senior peers already do”(p.21).

On the other hand, universities committed to the “academic” way of doing things questioned the validity of adding vocational training to otherwise “theoretical” study programmes:

Such Platonic ideas of either the profession of journalism or the “nature” of the university obscure the more complex and continuous character of the relationship between thinking and doing, reflection and action, theory and practice; these binary oppositions function extremely well to dig fictitious trenches to separate the social systems of journalism and the academe (Deuze, 2006, p. 21).

To illustrate the issue, Deuze (2006, p. 21) went on to cite a number of educators around the world including Raudsepp (1989), in Canada, who described journalism education “as neither fish nor fowl”, feeling itself “unloved by the industry and tolerated, barely, by the academy”, Dennis (1988), who called the debate between the profession and education “a dialogue of the deaf” and Gaunt (1992) who considered the “deeply entrenched antagonism between ‘professionals’ and ‘college graduates’ as a significant feature of journalism training in Latin America and the Caribbean”.

This dilemma – the pull between theory and practice; between the university and the newsroom - is a key one in journalism education which Deuze proposed must be conceptually addressed by “more intensive, rigorous, cross-cultural (next to cross-national) research” (Deuze, 2006, p.23).

The link between knowledge of journalism theory and how journalists learn the practical aspects of their job is the factor of critical reflection, according to Sheridan

Burns (2004), who saw reflection as “the cognitive bridge” (p. 6) between the theory and the practice:

It is through critical self-reflection that journalists develop self reliance, confidence, problem-solving, co-operation and adaptability, while simultaneously gaining knowledge.... In writing a story that is at once ethical, accurate and attractive to the audience, journalists are held to high benchmarks of thinking” (Sheridan Burns (2004, p.6).

Journalism students develop a sense of “professional efficacy in their ability to negotiate the dilemmas and complexities that are inherent in their practice”. Journalists engaging in “shop talk” about a colleague’s “great story” are critically reflecting on what makes the story so admirable (p.6). This dialogue, Sheridan Burns argued, is a feature of what Lave & Wenger (1991) would describe as the “community of practice” to which journalists belong. She maintained that if students are to explore journalism’s complexities, educators must give them “a real sense of the often-discomforting compromises journalists may make in the course of their work” (p.6).

Situated learning

Lave & Wenger (1991) developed the concept of situated learning as one manifestation of experiential learning, originating in research into craft learning.

In their study of apprenticeship learning, they pointed to the crucial role of “the community of practitioners” (p. 110). “Acceptance by and interaction with acknowledged adept practitioners makes learning legitimate and of value from the point of view of the apprentice” (p.110).

In his foreword to (Lave &Wenger, 1991), Hanks pointed out that in exploring the situated character of human understanding and communication, the focus was on the relationship between learning and the social situations in which it occurred. This echoed the contention by Brandon (2002) that “ignoring the study of the learning environment in which journalism education takes place is a fatal flaw” (p. 59), needing to be corrected.

Lave &Wenger (1991) said their original plan was to “rescue” the idea of apprenticeship, noting that this first arose in Lave’s previous research on craft apprenticeship among tailors in Liberia when Lave observed how apprentice tailors

became skilled and respected “without being taught, examined or reduced to mechanical copiers of everyday tailoring tasks” (1991, p. 30).

Lave & Wenger (1991) further challenged the view that the “specifics” of practice are acquired through “observation and imitation”. They argued instead that the newcomers’ legitimate peripherality provides them with more than an “observational” lookout post: “It crucially involves *participation* as a way of learning – of both absorbing and being absorbed in – the culture of practice” (p. 95).

Experiential learning, as described in this thesis, is different from situated learning. Whereas situated learning assumes the learners are learning alongside experts, in the learning environment described here, the “expert” opinion, though present, is to some extent withheld to encourage more student initiative and experimentation.

Participation in the learning experience, involving two or more students working together to learn the same subject, has been termed co-operative learning – yet another category of experiential learning, according to Sherman, Schmuck & Schmuck (2004).

Co-operative Learning

While Dewey (1916) is acknowledged as the “father” of experiential learning Kurt Lewin has been labeled the “father” of organization development (Smith, 2001). Lewin’s mid-twentieth century insights into group-based experiential learning had “a profound impact on a generation of researchers and thinkers concerned with group dynamics” (Smith, 2001, p. 3).

Smith (2001) reviewed Lewin’s argument that a person who has learned how much his own fate depends on the fate of a group will be ready to take his share of responsibility for the group’s welfare. Lewin argued that interdependence of fate could be “a fairly weak form of interdependence” (Smith, 2001, p.3). A more significant factor in Lewin’s eyes was interdependence in a group’s goals. “People may come to the group with very different dispositions, but if they share a common objective, they are likely to act together to achieve it” (Smith, 2001, p.4).

Lewin’s four stage model of experiential learning, as summarised above by Kolb, and illustrated below in Figure 3a (Clark, 1999), started with a concrete experience, leading

to observations and reflections, the formation of abstract concepts and generalisations, the testing of the implications of concepts in new situations and a new concrete experience.

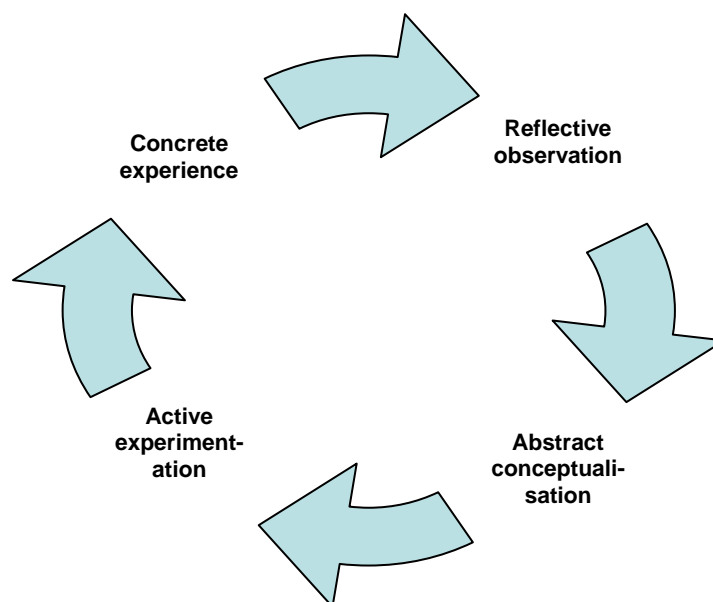


Figure 3(a) Lewin's learning cycle

As Clark (1999) described it, Lewin discovered that learning is best facilitated when “there is a conflict between the immediate concrete experience and detached analysis within the individual” (p. 1).

In acknowledging the influence of Lewin on co-operative learning, Sherman et al (2004) also noted a considerable body of later literature in the field on its positive effects, including Sharan (1990), Slavin (1995). The factor of interdependence of fate and achievement are common to all co-operative learning structures, they reported, along with another three elements – “face to face interactions, heterogeneous grouping and the development of social skills” (p. 196).

Active and problem-based learning

Problem-based learning as a concept, is a method of “learning by discovery” developed by Plato which became widely adopted by health sciences in the 1950s in the United States (Meadows, 1997). Boud & Feletti (1997) traced its spread from “a handful of medical schools” to other areas. Medical education

with its intensive pattern of basic science lectures followed by an equally exhausting clinical teaching programme was rapidly becoming an ineffective and inhumane way to prepare students, given the explosion in medical information and new technology and the rapidly changing demands of future practice” (p. 2).

Among the features of problem-based learning they listed are the use of stimulus material to help students discuss important questions; the presentation of “real life” or simulations of professional practice; appropriate guidance for the students’ critical thinking; having them work co-operatively a group; identifying their own learning needs; and reapplying the new knowledge to the original problem (Boud & Feletti, 1997).

Problem-based learning, they reported, had spread to other disciplines, among them occupational therapy, physiotherapy, orthoptics, nutrition and dietetics; and areas as diverse as architecture and social work. Some disciplines had dropped the word “problem”, substituting the terms “enquiry or action learning or issues-based learning” in social work and “situation improvement” in agriculture (p. 8).

Several journalism schools in Australia adopted problem-based learning in the mid-1990s, “especially related to covering issues such as cross-cultural reporting and youth suicides” (Robie, 2006, p.22). He described problem-based learning – “active, constructive and reflective” - as developing decision-making skills by involving greater realism (p.22).

Sheridan Burns (2004) in stressing that journalism required “active learning, critical and creative thinking” (p. 5) went on to define problem-based learning pedagogy as being “based on the view that for active learning... students must develop, in a structured way, a process for understanding and evaluating what they do and why they do it in certain ways” (p. 7).

Problem-based learning, though aimed at tackling “real world” situations, can often involve simulated experiences. For example, pointing to the difficulty of assessing journalism interviewing skills, Sheridan Burns (1994) described the development of “the hypothetical press conference” (p. 109) at Newcastle University in 1989, where students were required to interview hired actors, who had been briefed on a particular scenario and instructed on their responses to student questions. The videotaped interviews were later shown to the students – “often chastened to see themselves...behaving in a manner...they were well-used to criticising” (p.110).

“I know of no other circumstance in which students can gain better understanding of the power plays present in all interview situations and possibly even insight into the ethical realities of day-to-day journalism” (Sheridan Burns, 1994, p. 110).

She described the video replays as “a variation of the learning by humiliation experienced by many who went through a cadetship” (p. 113).

During an interview with the shy survivor of a bush ordeal [an actor], the interviewee was asked who he had thought about while he was lost. When he replied: “My Mum”, his response was greeted with howls of derisive laughter. A week later, as they watched the video replay, the students were asked to consider the reality of being lost, alone, in the dark and the rain and to reassess their response. The point wasn’t lost (p. 113).

Zinkiewicz et al (2003) defined active learning, including problem-based, as a process by which students work co-operatively in groups with guidance from an instructor to seek solutions to “real world problems” (p.32). The key word here is “guidance”, representing what is often a new concept for teachers in how they are to play their role.

3.5 The role of the teacher

One of three major “guideposts” listed for successful experiential learning is the shift in the power base between instructors and learners “so that learners assume more of the responsibility for what is learned and how learning occurs” (Jackson & Caffarella, p. 44). Meadows (1997) described teachers in problem-based learning as “facilitators” and pointed out that the role could be challenging for them, “especially those who are used to telling students how to do things and what to do to become a journalist” (p.99). The facilitation process he described relied more on helping students discover answers for themselves and so to take charge of their own learning.

The concept of teacher as facilitator also featured in Itin's definition of experiential education as a "central premise of the philosophy" (Itin 1999).

"The teacher is responsible for presenting opportunities for experiences, helping students utilize these experiences, establishing the learning environment, placing boundaries on the learning objectives, sharing necessary information and facilitating learning" (p. 94), while Mezirow (1996) went further.

Adult education is predicated upon creating free space for reflection and discourse and a reduction of the power differential between educator and learner. The educator is seen as a collaborative learner, and tries to work his or herself out of the job of facilitator to become a collaborative learner, contributing her experience to arriving at a best consensual judgement (Mezirow, p.171).

Tsui (2000) quoted a professor at one of the schools in the United States which rated highly on a critical thinking scale who described himself as "the most advanced student in the room" rather than as "an authority" (p. 429), and Shor (1992) described a process of "empowering" students, with the teacher leading and directing the curriculum, but doing so democratically with student participation. Empowering education is "student-centred" but does not mean either students or teachers can do what they like (Shor, 1992). "Students in empowering classes should be expected to develop skills and knowledge as well as high expectations for themselves..." (p. 16).

Itin (1999) noted a critical point made by Shor (1992) that teachers sharing power with the students did not "abdicate their responsibility and authority for the curriculum" (Itin, p.95). In "real-world" problem-based learning, as opposed to simulations, there are times when teachers may have to re-assert their authority. Boyd-Bell (2005) described a journalism teacher "sitting in the background" while the class decided on the placement of stories in the newspaper they were producing, not needing his input and "going through the process of negotiation to come up with the best solution" (p. 5). Later in the process though, tutor intervention was vital.

Deadlines were racing towards us like a train and pages had to be got to the printer. There were times when students identified improvements that could have been made on certain pages but we just had to over-rule that and say: "Sorry if they're not glaringly obvious errors or potentially legal problems....the pages simply had to go to the printer (Boyd-Bell, p.5).

Teacher and student resistance

As Meadows (1997) noted, a move towards encouraging student independence can be "disarming for some who are used to maintaining a tight control over the learning

process” (p.99). Little (1997) pointed to this as “by far the major difficulty in implementing problem-based learning (p 121) but she also noted that the reality of the method for students can “sometimes be too much in conflict with their habits and expectations of learning” (p.122).

Student resistance has been identified by other educators. Shor (1992), in introducing participatory learning reported an instance of students asking him if he was new to the job and Schwarz (1997), who introduced some aspects of self-directed learning and abandoned lecturing at Otago Medical School in the early 1970s initially found himself the subject of student complaints and suggestions that he be fired.

Though tempted to go back to a traditional approach he persevered when he realised the students *could* learn “without depending on me to pre-digest and feed them everything”. Using an individualised, self-paced mastery system he demonstrated that the students were “much more capable and thoughtful than I had realised” (p.59). Since the mid-80s Otago has had successful discipline-specific problem-based learning well-accepted by the students.

3.6 Assessment methods, including peer review

Student assessment can be a difficult area in problem-based programmes. Swanson, Case and van der Vleuten (1997) discussing tutor, peer and self-ratings pointed to “well-known psychometric and practical problems” with the use of ratings (p.271).

The authors cited an experience when peer ratings were used formatively by the School of Health Sciences at the University of Maastricht: “Students either did not take them seriously or refused to complete them”. When they were used summatively they were “uniformly high and not useful” and “steps to force some variation into the ratings (e.g. by forced ranking) elicited so much resistance from students that they had to be discontinued” (Swanson et al, 1997, p.271).

A contrary view came from Heron (1999) who argued that a fully educated person is “an awarely self-determining person” but higher education institutions did not prepare students for this, with staff unilaterally deciding student objectives and assessing them.

What all this means is that many professional people have emerged from an educational system which has not equipped them with the basic self-determining and co-operative competencies that are required for the effective practice of peer review audit (p.131).

The assessment of students in journalism team projects is often difficult because of having to distinguish individual effort from that of the team, in order to award grades for degrees or diplomas. If assessment is dependent solely on tutor observation, it can also be very time-consuming and demanding from the tutors' perspective.

Frost (2001) reviewed a method used in a United Kingdom journalism course, in which the students were required to play a key role in assessing their own performance. Third-year journalism students assigned to a weekly A4 publication called *The Reporter* chose their roles according to a points system.

Table 3(b) Points system – The Reporter, (Frost, 2001, p.427).

| | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Editor | 200 |
| News editor | 170 |
| Features editor | 140 |
| Chief sub-editor | 120 |
| Deputy chief sub-editor | 100 |
| Picture editor | 120 |
| Sports editor | 100 |
| Chief reporter | 100 |
| Subs | 75 |
| Reporters | 50 |

After each issue of the paper was printed, the students attended a compulsory feedback session where the tutor gave the paper a mark out of 20 from 10-12 (satisfactory) to 17-20 (outstanding). The tutor justified the mark to the students and the students then proposed a different mark (presumably higher) and attempted to negotiate towards it. Once a group mark had been agreed on e.g. 14/20, each student "post-holder" was awarded 14/20ths or 7/10ths of the maximum mark for their role.

Notably, the editor of each issue could point out that someone had not been pulling their weight and have their marks withheld or moderated. Frost (2001) said this would be

explained to the offending student. “Only once was there an appeal and even then a settlement was readily negotiated” (p. 428). Although students understood that staff checked the paper, on publication day, for “legals”, other decisions about stories were up to them.

What was produced was published, no matter how bad, provided it would not get the department into legal trouble..... On one occasion, the students published an article that caused offence to an individual and were forced to deal with the subsequent complaints. Such complaints allowed real-life problems to be presented to the students and these were discussed in a group session to consider the possible ways of dealing with them (p. 332).

An important consideration in allowing these United Kingdom journalism students to produce whatever they wanted, “no matter how bad”, was that the newspaper’s 150 copies were circulated only within the journalism department – not even the whole university. Time could be taken over the assessment system, too, because although the paper was produced weekly, different groups of students were involved from week to week.

3.7 Online advantages

One drawback of attempting to involve journalism students in experiential learning by way of newspaper production is its cost. Turkington & Frank (2005) reported that while both students and staff at the Durban Institute of Technology had long recognised the need for a student publication to showcase student work, this had been constrained by “prohibitive costs of printing and paper” (p.145).

They found the institute’s independent, authoritative news website (DITonline), a useful training ground for student journalists – providing “opportunities for experimentation with formal and informal collaboration” (p.154). Though the site started in 2003 as a purely voluntary exercise for contributors, the journalism department explored ways of integrating it with elements of the curriculum and in 2004 introduced its first B Tech (Honours) level course in online journalism, committing to a semester-long module in the subject at third-year level. The students – Frank was the editor – became employees in a “virtual newsroom” required to produce individually a total of 10 articles over the 15-week course. If they achieved more, their best 10 were assessed. However, students also had to strive for negotiated group targets each week; if they published 15 or more articles with pictures and/or multimedia elements, they would achieve 100% for the week. This meant that even students who produced their own quota quickly were

motivated to continue contributing stories, to ensure a good group mark each week. Turkington and Frank (2005) described the news editors' roles as being to liaise with the overall editor over what would be published and to "motivate, cajole, plead, threaten and inspire their classmates to work ever harder in pursuit of a good group mark" (p. 150). In addition, the authors described the "discussion areas" on the website as "the engine of the class" (p. 150).

Here students filed stories, peer-edited them, chose to publish them, sent them back for additional work or rejected them outright... the collaboration was transparent and recorded – anyone in the class could refer to it at any time (p.150).

The students were also encouraged to use the discussion area to reflect on their learning. Turkington and Frank (2005) anticipated that although the site was faced with challenges of producing regular, good content, a good foundation had been laid and anticipated that incoming students would "grow the project as an innovative tool for collaborative, blended, teaching and learning" (p. 152).

Educators who have used experiential learning in various fields have generally reported positive results for both teaching staff and students. Deuze (2006), however, pointed to a world-wide debate on the uses and merits of experiential learning in journalism, "stimulating or even requiring students to take internships and apprenticeships in mainstream news media organisations, and engaging them in the production of campus media" (p. 29).

For Blobaum (2000) the in-house production of campus media is the ideal meeting place for theory and praxis, for others it is a costly waste of faculty time and resources, taking time and money away from teaching and research (Deuze, 2006, p. 29).

Discussing tensions between advocates of "standardised" methods of journalism education, including testing, coursework and pedagogy and those emphasizing a culture of learning, rather than teaching – "exposure to much more than just the consensual knowledge of the day", Deuze (2006) reported, rather depressingly, that the first kind of mindset seemed to be gaining the upper hand. As enrolment in journalism programmes continued to rise, he said, the profession should "critically investigate" the consequences of mass education producing "a product-oriented teaching culture instead of a process-focused learning culture" (p. 29-30).

Chapter 4: Empowerment of students on *Te Waha Nui*

“*Wow, we have all this freedom. What do we do with it?*” – Sophie (2 weeks into the paper).

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores what emerged as a major theme in the research – the power relationship between the 10 students and their two tutors and how that affected the students’ learning outcomes. The students, first interviewed two weeks into the News Production paper, initially noted that the tutors seemed to be allowing them more decision-making power and giving less direction than they had expected. The tutors, with two years’ previous experience of classes producing *Te Waha Nui*, had anticipated that the level of student consultation with them in the earlier years would be similar with the class of 2006, but this was not to be the case. An important factor was that while there had previously been one editor for all four issues of the newspaper, 2006 saw the appointment of two editors, each in charge of two editions. The reasons for this and the consequences of it for both students and tutors are described here. A major ethical issue for both students and tutors, which arose during production of the third issue of *Te Waha Nui* and which challenged the power relationship is discussed.

4.2 The role of the tutors

The two tutors saw their role on *Te Waha Nui* as striking a fine balance between undue interference with student empowerment in the decision-making process and, on the other hand, creating a potential for missed deadlines, legal problems or serious errors in a paper distributed to a critical audience. Story and picture selection and the aesthetics of news and feature layouts are left as much as possible to the students, with the tutors describing their own role as similar to that of *management* in a commercial newspaper.

Student expectations

Two weeks into the News Production paper, when the students perceived the tutors’ role as largely *hands off* and saw the major responsibility for deciding on the content of *Te Waha Nui* as being up to them, the surprise for some of them almost amounted to alarm.

I think we were a bit shell-shocked that they’ve almost given us free range to produce a paper and choose its angle and choose our reporters. – Sophie

But she went on to comment:

It's nice knowing that they're there to help us, but they're not unduly interfering. They say they are our management and the management attempts not to interfere.

Other students appreciated being put into what they described as a *real world* environment.

It's a bit of responsibility, so it's quite good. I'm looking forward to getting the first edition out there. – Brad

In the real world you are going to have to make decisions yourself, based on your professional or unprofessional judgement ...so I think in some ways it is bridging that gap to the real world. – Teresa

Derek, the editor, however, said he understood the benefits of the approach, but saw it as the tutors *just sitting back and watching us flounder*. Rita, while thinking the tutors' attitude was good for her learning, wondered about how students had got on in previous years.

I don't know if we're ahead or behind. It's a huge responsibility. I guess the tutors are still directing it to a certain extent, but I didn't think they would be this lax about their involvement. – Rita

Leonard recognised the need for the tutors to play a role *to ensure that we don't say anything defamatory or produce anything that's too poor in quality, but not to provide too much of a controlling hand* and Teresa saw the tutors as providing a *safety net*.

They're going to step in before you come unstuck, so it's a nice transition I think.

The students all expected to have a lot of input into making key decisions about story placement and layout. At this stage, the strongest view came from Derek, as the first editor.

I've already been told a few things like: 'Look you have to have that, and you have to have that', but on the whole I think we've got a massive amount of input.

Some of the others could see limitations they might face.

I'd say that we have a fair amount of decision-making power, although I think the tutors would intervene if we were drastically wrong. And obviously, we would expect them to. They've been doing it for a lot longer than we have. – Sophie

I'm realistic that maybe there will be a number of students who won't make decisions very well and there will be a number who will do it well. I guess that is how it is in life. – Leonard

Teresa hoped the students could make good story selections but recognised that part of the process would be their evaluating their product after each edition and learning from their mistakes.

Obviously we're coming at it with not a lot of experience, so what we think we can do, and what we can do, may be two different things.

Greg didn't foresee any problems.

We've learnt all about layout and how to rank stories and all the principles of where to put photos and how big headlines should be. We'll probably disagree with each other from time to time, but it's really up to the editor in the end to decide how he wants to do it. The tutors are there for advice if we're not sure how to do a certain page, but I don't see any problems with that.

How the student/tutor relationship worked for the students

The power relationship between tutors and students reached something of a crisis during production of the third issue of *Te Waha Nui*, amid controversy over the placing of a particular image in an advertisement. This is discussed in Section 4.3. But in general for most of the students the relationship with the tutors over all four issues worked reasonably well. As the production deadlines approached both tutors stayed late into the night to help, even when some of the students couldn't be there.

As Brad described it:

They were always there to help us if we needed it but they weren't overbearing.

Teresa recognised that the tutor involvement was, as she put it, *well-judged*.

There were obviously times when they could easily have jumped in early and steered us in the right direction. I think they allowed things to play out a little bit, which ultimately worked quite well.

Greg was surprised at the level of criticism which came from one of the tutors in a debrief after the first edition was out.

It was quite interesting when Tutor A was saying, we should've done this and we should've done that. We were all thinking: 'But you were there last week, why didn't you tell us this?' But I guess that's not his job. We're supposed to realise these things ourselves and then we get the feedback later. It's a good example of how they held back.

By contrast, Derek, the first edition editor, took the tutor's criticism personally.

It completely undercut me in front of everybody, and then I'm expected to get up and lead the troops ... I was pretty disgusted with that. I thought if he felt so strongly about it, he shouldn't have given me the job in the first place.

Leonard noted that though the tutors' presence was more constant, during the production process, than the rest of the team, they were not directive.

After the first issue they talked about concerns they had about some of the things that didn't happen, or could've happened, so that was hopefully something we will think about and consider next time.

Grace agreed that the tutors' role during production was helpful but uncritical.

We certainly weren't deserted. It was nice getting advice and help with layout and subbing but we never really had them saying, "I think this is a bad story, I don't think we should run this". They weren't critical of the stories we were choosing, which was quite good because I think that that would've raised stress levels and people might have been unhappy about that.

Sophie, however, noted one instance of disagreement between students and a tutor about the final appearance of a story.

The best example is the lead from the last edition, that Vanya wrote, which I thought was a fairly good story. Tutor A completely re-wrote it, which I disagree with in principle. A few of us were a little bit anti that, just because we felt Vanya would read it and think: 'I didn't say that— that's not how I wanted it to come out.' But Tutor A clearly knows a lot more than we do so we have to respect his opinion on that. If we hadn't had Tutor A I think it probably would've got left, but I think his angle was good and I guess as a reporter you have to deal with that. – Sophie

During Derek's editorship of the first two issues he acknowledged the level of help from the tutors went up a lot in the production weeks. But, as discussed in Section 4.3, there was a crucial difference in Derek's aims for *Te Waha Nui*. Over the weeks of his editorship he described the tutor involvement in general as being *very much hands-off*.

I think perhaps that was due to the tutors' idea of Te Waha Nui being so different to mine, that they didn't feel that they wanted to stand on my toes whereas it would've been really beneficial if they had helped out a bit more."

Derek also wanted more tutor support in disciplining students who were not performing well. He noted that being appointed as editor didn't change his status as *just a fellow student*.

I can't pull rank. If there's dissent in the team I can't really haul them aside and say: "Mate, you're destroying the paper by doing this." I think that's the role of the tutors, because at the end of the day, it's a classroom. But if the tutors aren't going to show any leadership in that, and they're going to let people undermine the whole process behind everyone else's backs, it makes it very difficult. – Derek

The tutors' perceptions of the power relationship

As Tutor B described it, while the tutors take responsibility for potential legal problems and serious errors, they don't want to take over and *micro-manage* production of the paper. He said the tutors focused first on any potential legal problems and then on style, grammar, and fluency in the story writing.

We will pick up any seriously flawed headlines or layouts. – Tutor B

He said the paper replicated every aspect of a real-world production environment and the students were aware that newsrooms around the country all received *Te Waha Nui*.

Students know their work will be under scrutiny and mistakes will be highly visible. This really adds an edge to the learning environment.

There was value, he said, in the students taking on different roles in the editorial production team – chief reporter, chief sub, section editor, pictures editor – usually changing with each edition of the paper.

We rotate the students through those different roles and give them the chance to learn and improve through those experiences. It's rewarding to watch them grow in ability and confidence. – Tutor B

Tutor A explained the experiential outcome for the students:

It means that their writing skills start to become sharper. They start to get a better sense of the shortcomings in their own writing, because they see it in others and they can then apply it to their own. They have a better sense of deadlines and most of all, they've just got an overall idea of how a newspaper is put together – the teamwork that's involved and the range of skills that need to be drawn on. I think that's a huge, huge plus.

Tutor A described the power relationship between students and tutors as *a fine line* and said it came down to whether the desired objectives of the paper were clear enough. In 2006, he noted that the aims of the first editor *collided with some of the things we set out to do with the paper*.

The two previous teams, in 2004 and 2005, had gone through a lot of consultation, particularly in the early stages, working out what the paper was doing.

The discussions sometimes got a bit tedious but they were very, very necessary as part of the whole process. This year, there was a rather different dynamic. We had set down an hour for the first editorial meeting but it ended after five minutes and everybody went their ways to do various things. The editor negotiated individually with each person, but without very much discussion with either Tutor B or me. – Tutor A

4.3 The Role of the Editors

The tutors tend to have little choice about which students opt to do the News Production paper. However, students who want to become the editor of *Te Waha Nui* have to put in a formal application for the job and be interviewed by the tutors

Selection

In 2006, for the first time in the three-year history of *Te Waha Nui*, two editors were appointed instead of one. Derek was editor for the first two issues and Greg headed the team for the final two issues.

We departed from our usual practice because we were impressed with both candidates. They were the only two applicants for the job and both had really strong merits. We thought it would probably be fairer to them if they both had a chance at trying it out. – Tutor A

Tutor B initially thought that the first editor's idea of what he wanted the paper to focus on as its target audience – the Auckland central business district (the CBD) – was positive.

It brought a very clear focus to a paper that is usually highly eclectic.

Both tutors, however, finally concluded that having two editors had a negative impact on the students' learning experience. Tutor B felt that because not everyone agreed with that approach it divided the students into two camps and didn't contribute to the working of the team. Tutor A pointed out that editors grow with the team and there needs to be some direction.

If you keep changing editors, everybody's got to get used to the whole dynamic. There was an adjustment period, switching from Derek to Greg. They both had quite different ideas. If you've got two separate styles and approaches with two editors I think it's too destructive overall.

The editors' approaches

One of *Te Waha Nui*'s main objectives is to showcase a range of student writing. The first edition of the newspaper, produced at the end of the first semester in June, provides an opportunity for students completing the Editing and Design paper to demonstrate the design and layout skills they have learned. This group – not all journalism students – usually numbers about 55.

This 28-page edition of *Te Waha Nui*, which has its own editor, is produced during tutorials over a three-week period, with two students working on each page. Although some students take on the roles of design and picture editors, most are content editors – politics, education, health – whose main job is to select the stories for their section. The role of the Semester One editor is to direct the balance of the paper – deciding on the number of pages in each section and the sections' running order.

The four issues produced in the News Production paper in Semester Two, on which this research is based, provide a more challenging learning experience for the students, because of the increased responsibility they have for the product. Derek, the editor for the first two issues, seems to have partly based his approach on disappointment with the June edition.

It was a mish-mash of all sorts of stories that 60 different students had written about stuff they know. And the result, I thought, was that you just didn't know what you were reading. – Derek

Derek initially decided to apply for the editor's job to *make his CV look good* when applying for jobs in journalism. But after inter-semester work experience at the *Northern Advocate* in Whangarei, Derek developed an idea to make *Te Waha Nui* a community paper for Auckland's central business district, where he saw a void in the community newspaper market. As he thought more about ideas for the paper he says he got really excited about it.

It's really just bloody-mindedness I guess – I have an idea and I just want to see it work.

He said the approach was inspired by what he had learned at the *Northern Advocate*.

I got told in no uncertain terms, that you have a readership to write to now and whether or not it's your people, you've got to write to them, because you're a professional. And that's something that we hadn't been taught at all, last semester, and it was a steep learning curve. – Derek

Greg, the second editor, though he saw Derek's plan as quite an interesting idea, didn't want his version of *Te Waha Nui* to be geographically located to any area, seeing the paper as an opportunity to get some of the students' best work into the newsrooms of prospective employers.

I wasn't so worried about who our audience was in the city or on the two university campuses. I was focusing on the audience in the newsrooms – editors and chief reporters that might want to hire some of our students at the end of the year. – Greg

Each editor had some degree of respect for the other's idea. Early on, Greg decided he would let Derek do what he wanted for the first two editions and in his role of chief reporter try to co-operate.

If someone says they've got a story but they're not sure if it fits into Derek's idea of the paper, I'll try and work out a way that it can. When I'm in charge, I'll implement what I want to do – hopefully.

Derek claimed it was Greg's idea for the editor's role to be split in two.

When he took over editing, he said he didn't want local stories unless they had national relevance. I thought, fair enough – it's different to my idea, but it's a strong idea. His ideal readership I thought was different but great, but in the end I don't think he really had the readership as such. He just wanted to fill pages. – Derek

Derek claimed that Greg was too dependent on the team to come up with story ideas and didn't commission any stories or have any ideas of his own.

*As I found out, the editing job is mainly a cajoling job. You're getting beside people all the time and making them write for you. As he didn't do that, he was stuck with whatever people gave him and a lot of stories we ran were stories that weren't good enough to make the first two editions. We had no other copy so we chucked them in.
– Derek*

Derek thought *Te Waha Nui* should be something students fight to get published in.

That's what we created in the first two editions. I think it created a lot more pride with people having to fight to get their stories in and write to a specific

audience. If you've spent the whole year writing whatever the hell you want in Te Waha Nui you haven't been trained very well.

On the other hand, Greg found Derek's CBD community paper idea *quite restrictive*.

I told people that I'm looking for more national interest and world stories. Realistically we're not trying to attract advertisers. While we want as many people to read it as possible, who's reading it isn't that important, as long as prospective employers are reading it.

Greg cited as an example of his approach a story that led the front page on the last edition, about a Kiwi nurse who had just come back from Somalia, talking about the fact that, as the situation there was not being reported in the mainstream press, volunteers were not getting the help they needed.

The whole point of studying journalism is that you want to make a career of it. So I was looking at stories that were just more interesting reads and features. I was trying to impress people with showing off some more of the talent we had. There were a few stories we ran that wouldn't have gone into the CBD issues.

How the students reacted to the CBD focus

Even two weeks into News Production, Rita was one student who had noticed how Derek's different ideas for *Te Waha Nui's* readership focus was beginning to affect the wider student group contributing to the paper.

Some people are resenting it a bit. They're thinking they want to submit all their news stories to Te Waha Nui and he's said we'd prefer city focus ones. Derek doesn't want it to just be a paper of features any more and so getting it to take the direction he wants it to might be quite a challenge. – Rita

By the time the first issue had come out, Teresa had also decided that the CBD focus did not help the production team's relationship with the wider group of students contributing stories to the newspaper.

There was a little bit of grumbling because they felt that if they didn't write a story about the two square kilometres in the CBD, they weren't going to get it published, which wasn't strictly true. Those are the people who were giving us our stories, so we need to have a good working relationship with them.

Brad thought the CBD focus worked for the general news pages but as sports editor for the first edition he thought it made his job tougher.

I struggled with it. We ended up flagging it. I don't think we did one Auckland sports story, so I found that tough. A lot of stories Derek didn't want because they weren't applicable to the CBD. – Brad

Leonard, on the other hand, identified more with the editor's approach.

It meant we had good criteria in choosing and writing stories applicable to the demographic. This meant some stories had to be left out and I think that's also a good thing. You can't be too democratic about these things.

Rita was impressed with the paper's clear focus but aware of other considerations.

I think Derek's trying to produce something that's more economically viable, which is not really the point of Te Waha Nui. We're not selling it, we're not making any money off it, but it's rewarding to have a focus and reach it.

Derek, however, described himself as *incredibly happy* with his decision, after helping distribute the first issue he edited.

I handed a paper out on Queen St, and just watched people's reactions. They were supposed to be crossing the road and when the light went green, they were still reading the paper and missed the crossing. People came out from the shop next to us and asked if they could have a copy. We walked past their shop 10 minutes later, and they were still reading it. They were up to page 12 and still going. We heard that people were reading it on the ferry and we didn't give it to the ferry, so they must've grabbed it from cafes. So our target audience loved it. Everybody we gave it to read the first page and kept on reading. – Derek

What the editors felt they learned from their experience

After all four editions had been produced, Derek, as the first editor, concluded that switching editors halfway through the semester didn't work for the second editor, Greg.

It was very unfair for him to have to come in halfway through. And I don't think it worked for the team.

Greg, on the other hand, thought there was value in being editor for two editions and then having different roles for the other two.

It gave you a wider scope to view the different aspects. The experience as editor was, professionally, very valuable for my development as far as understanding what makes a good story, how to deal with a team of people and everything that goes in the newspaper.

Derek resented what he saw as opposition from the tutors to a job he thought he gained because of his CBD idea.

It was one of the most stressful experiences of my life and it didn't need to be. I knew I had to push a slightly radical idea for the students and none of us had done this before, but I really didn't expect to have to fight with the tutors day in

day out, and be called into the office and told I was doing everything wrong, after they'd already bought into the idea. I felt like I was not only against the students and the normal pressures of deadline and getting stories in but also constantly having to defend my position against my management team – my tutors.

Derek said he learned a lot by having the pressure really put on him.

But then I gave it a hell of a lot of myself. It's very hard to say what would happen if the tutors took more on their shoulders, but I don't think everyone would approach it the way I did. I consider myself to be pretty strong and have pretty good time management skills. It nearly broke me.

Student insights into editorial roles

Greg, the second editor, said some team members didn't seem to understand or even do what was part of their role. For example, he felt he had to think of all the feature ideas.

The feature editor very rarely came up with any ideas for features or got any written. It seemed people didn't really understand what the chief sub's role was. They tended to ask me or Derek all the time, what page we should lay out and what pages can be done, where if you look at the list of jobs, then the chief sub should be dictating what pages are laid out. I felt we were trying to be democratic decision-wise but the editor was still taking on far too much responsibility, because people weren't aware of their jobs or weren't maybe fulfilling their jobs properly.

Rita didn't think having two editors worked well.

Derek was just getting into a rhythm by our second edition, and I think part of the reason that third edition was so bad, is that we had to start all over again pretty much. And Greg had to find his feet all over again, so we were back to square one with a lot of aspects. I think one editor the whole way through would be a lot more easy and it would give us a chance to explore more stuff because we would be more confident by the end, whereas this way we got cut off half way and had to start all over again.

The tutors' viewpoint

Interviewed after all four second-semester issues of *Te Waha Nui* had been produced, both tutors agreed there was some resistance to Derek's idea to focus on publishing stories about the central business district – just one aspect of the newspaper's overall audience.

We've always tried to run stories that are going to interest all our different audiences. The CBD focus took some getting used to. – Tutor B

Tutor A felt it came back to the definition of what Derek thought he was doing.

Derek felt that he was under pressure from me, not about individual stories but the overall balance of what was in the paper and what we're drawing from the other students.

In contrast to Derek's view he thought the tutors were *quite supportive* of him.

He did sell us his idea but his interpretation, as I saw it anyway, was that everything would be CBD, everything else out. He never said that during the interviews. He told us that he was going to emphasise and concentrate on the CBD, and I didn't see any problem with that. But there was a clash with other things like Taha Maori. – Tutor A

The *Taha Maori* stories, produced by all students on the journalism course during the teaching on cultural affairs reporting, tend to be longer feature stories on Maori issues. As such, most of them bore no relation to Auckland's central business district.

I was expecting that there'd be something like two pages of Taha Maori stories. They're actually really good sections and we get a lot of good public support from those. If Derek hadn't been under pressure from me, I don't think there would have been any Taha Maori stories in the paper at all. – Tutor A

Tutor A said the tutors made it plain that having *Taha Maori* stories in the paper was an expectation and though he sensed Derek didn't like that, he never talked about it.

There was no discussion about it and I think we fell down partly on that as well, because we didn't really see what was happening. We probably should've explained to him more what we did expect.

Tutor A said Derek was doing what he had experienced in his internship but *Te Waha Nui* had different objectives.

Te Waha Nui is an educational, experiential paper. We do a lot of things that are not quite what they do out there in the industry, to try to give everybody their maximum opportunity to learn as much as they can.

Tutor A did not see his attitude as bringing pressure on Derek.

Because we weren't really discussing these things properly in the group, it might have been perceived by him as pressure. Had it been discussed properly in the group, which I tried to do, then hopefully the consensus would've got through from that.

As a result of the 2006 experience, Tutor A decided to recommend changes for the paper in 2007. He is suggesting giving the students a *dummy* – a rough template of the content, based on what the students might expect from the other courses – perhaps five or six pages of news, two pages of *Taha Maori*, two pages of reviews from magazine

journalism, a couple of pages of sport, and perhaps three or four pages of advertising. Tutor A said the students could then negotiate changes to the paper with the tutors.

It might turn out that this year's Taha Maori stories are pretty ratshit. There might only be a couple of really good stories, so maybe it's only worth a page. But they negotiate that with us. The students still have complete control over what are going to be the leads in those stories, but we provide the template of what the content would be from the other courses. – Tutor A

This suggestion – an attempt to prevent a repeat of the experience with Derek as editor – is aimed at trying to ensure the tutors regain control of the paper's format. As Tutor A put it:

In the two previous years the students just simply clicked to what we were seeking. With Derek, it was a bit confrontational – well not really confrontational – but he was coming from there and we were coming from here and there wasn't much consultation.

Tutor A said the students would then have a basic framework.

It will change from edition to edition, because the second edition has the columns and that's what we expect to be included in the paper. They can work around that. The students still have total freedom about how they select their stories and what the news is, but it means that we also achieve our outcomes.

Tutor A said his co-tutor didn't agree with his suggestion.

He was much keener to leave it as an open sort of paper.

As Tutor A has new and different teaching commitments for 2007, Tutor B and his new colleague in News Production will be making that decision for the future.

Student appraisals of the overall performance by each editor

By the time the fourth issue was printed and distributed, the students had all formed strong views about the strengths and weaknesses of each editor.

Brad thought Greg's national and even international focus worked well and the last paper, which Greg edited, he rated as definitely the best. But he said he did more work when Derek was there.

Derek was probably a better motivator.

Teresa thought Derek's weaknesses were in being able to spot a news story, knowing what had been covered in other forms of media, and finding different angles. Greg, she

thought, tended to control everything rather than delegate, creating a rod for his own back. She remembered an incident when she was getting instructions on the phone and also talking to another student about trying to get a colour photograph resized.

It wasn't a biggie but I was talking somebody through what needed to be done, and I've got Greg in an ear 'rah rah – what's going on?' I just literally turned to him and said, 'Shut up!' Because I had two people, I didn't need the third. He probably needed to step back and assume that we can sort those little problems out.

Leonard said he learnt from Derek how to encourage a team and keep everyone focused on a goal.

Derek had everything under control. Greg was a lot more "this is how we're doing it because I'm the boss" and at times, because he's a bit younger, he probably didn't know how to lead a team as such, so it meant other people had to pick up some pieces along the way. I learnt a lot from that just because I was probably having to do more. With Greg, there was always the chance that things could spiral out of control, so you had to be more involved and work a bit harder. I probably learnt more just because I was doing more in the second two issues.

Rita agreed that Derek's leadership was stronger.

I think Greg just liked to say: 'Come on guys, let's do this now.' You'd ask him what needed to be done and sometimes he wouldn't really know. But he did do a really good job with story selection.

Sophie decided that Greg was *far too nice* to be an editor.

He gives people too much leeway. Derek was better at saying: 'I want this and I want it now,' whereas Greg would say you could have another two days or another hour. 'Greg – just be rude. Tell them you want it now!' It teaches you that you have to be nice, but quite firm, otherwise people muck you around. Greg taught me what not to do and Derek taught me how to be nice without letting people walk all over you.

Student ambitions to be editor

At the end of the experience, some of the students considered whether they could have taken on the editor's job.

Leonard said the longer he was involved with the paper the more he thought he would have liked the editor's job.

I was thinking about it but I was overseas when they were doing the selection, so I couldn't apply anyway. But I think in hindsight, I would've liked to have done it.

Sophie said at first she did want to be the editor.

I sat down and thought about it but I don't have the time to put in. I know Greg and Derek were both here until eleven or twelve o'clock some nights and I completely respect them for being there. I couldn't have done that because I've got four horses at home that need feeding at five o'clock and you can't just write them off. So I don't think I could've done the job justice.

Teresa, singled out by the tutors as a student who, because of the way she progressed on the course, could easily have handled the editor's job said she liked the chance to try the different roles.

But I just don't have the ambition to be the editor.

Both Rita and Grace said they didn't feel up to the role because they lacked confidence.

I wouldn't feel confident enough to lead people in that role, because I just don't think I have enough experience. – Rita

I'd probably rather have a role where I get some say, but the buck doesn't stop with me. – Grace

4.4 The Suicide Advertisement

The issue of student empowerment in the production of *Te Waha Nui* faced its greatest test in the few days leading up to the deadline for the third issue of the newspaper. A controversy developed over publication of an advertisement, initially deemed unsuitable for publication by the students. In the context of the looming deadline, for which the paper was running seriously late, one of the tutors made a strong case for using the advertisement while the other opposed it. Just 48 hours from the final deadline, the students had to embark on an ethical debate.

How the issue arose

Te Waha Nui contains very few advertisements – perhaps three or four per issue – but in the last two years, Tutor A had worked with his colleagues in the advertising creativity major to give their students' work a publishing opportunity.. For the third issue of *Te Waha Nui*, a team of creative advertising students prepared a special campaign advertisement under the supervision of one of their tutors. This involved a six-week class project by two students for a real brief, chosen by the advertising lecturers, which was an advertisement for a campaign by an organisation called Homeowners Against Line Trespassers (HALT) against a controversial proposal by Transpower to build a 400kV transmission line across a 200km route from Otahuhu to Whakamaru in the

Waikato as part of a new national pylons network. The advertisement, depicted in Figure 4(a) was to be run as a full-page colour image in *Te Waha Nui*. It claimed research showed that people living near power pylons were more likely to commit suicide.

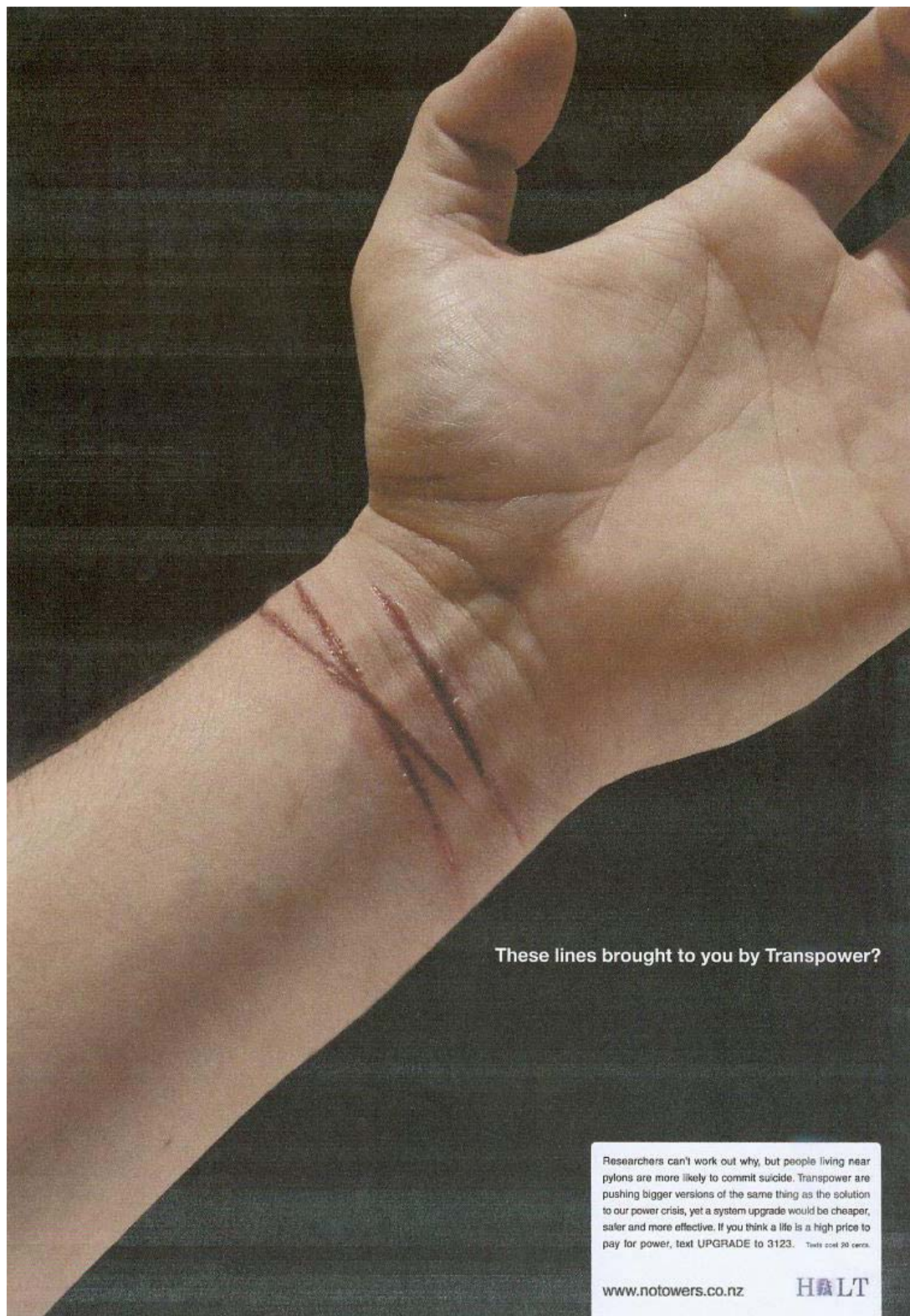


Figure 4(a)

Decisions about the advertising content of a newspaper usually do not involve editorial staff but as Tutor A later explained (p. 72) he thought giving the journalism students the opportunity to discuss the issue was “crucial”, to give them an idea of the criteria involved in selecting advertising.

The *Te Waha Nui* students, having discussed a rough proof of the HALT advertisement in Tutor A’s absence, and without hearing the views of either the advertising tutors or the students who created the advertisement decided it was not suitable to publish.

When he heard of the students’ decision Tutor A embarked on his own research and worked overnight to produce a commentary for the students “*Why we’re publishing this graphic advert*”, signed by him as the course leader, and intended to be published on the page opposite the advertisement. The commentary [Appendix B] quoted some research about serious health effects on people living near power lines though suicide was not directly mentioned.

Also conscious of his responsibility to both the advertising staff and students, as well as the journalism students, Tutor A invited the campaign creators and their supervising tutor to a meeting to explain their thinking about the HALT campaign. The following day an additional meeting was held with another advertising tutor to discuss the context of advocacy advertising.

At the second of these meetings, to which I was invited, the advertising tutor made it clear the advertising students believed in their cause and thought their ad could be a good vehicle for advocacy. But he stressed that the journalism students had editorial freedom about whether to use the ad (Boyd-Bell meeting notes, September 26, 2006). After he left the meeting there was a lengthy discussion covering such issues as whether the shock value of the ad would detract from its message and whether publishing it might cause complaints. According to Tutor A, he was attempting to provide a valuable pedagogical and educational outcome for the students from this experience. Eventually, after a split vote about the HALT advertisement, it was resolved to ask the supervising tutor for permission to use a print version of a billboard advertisement, created by another group of students, as a substitute (depicted in Figure 4 (b)),

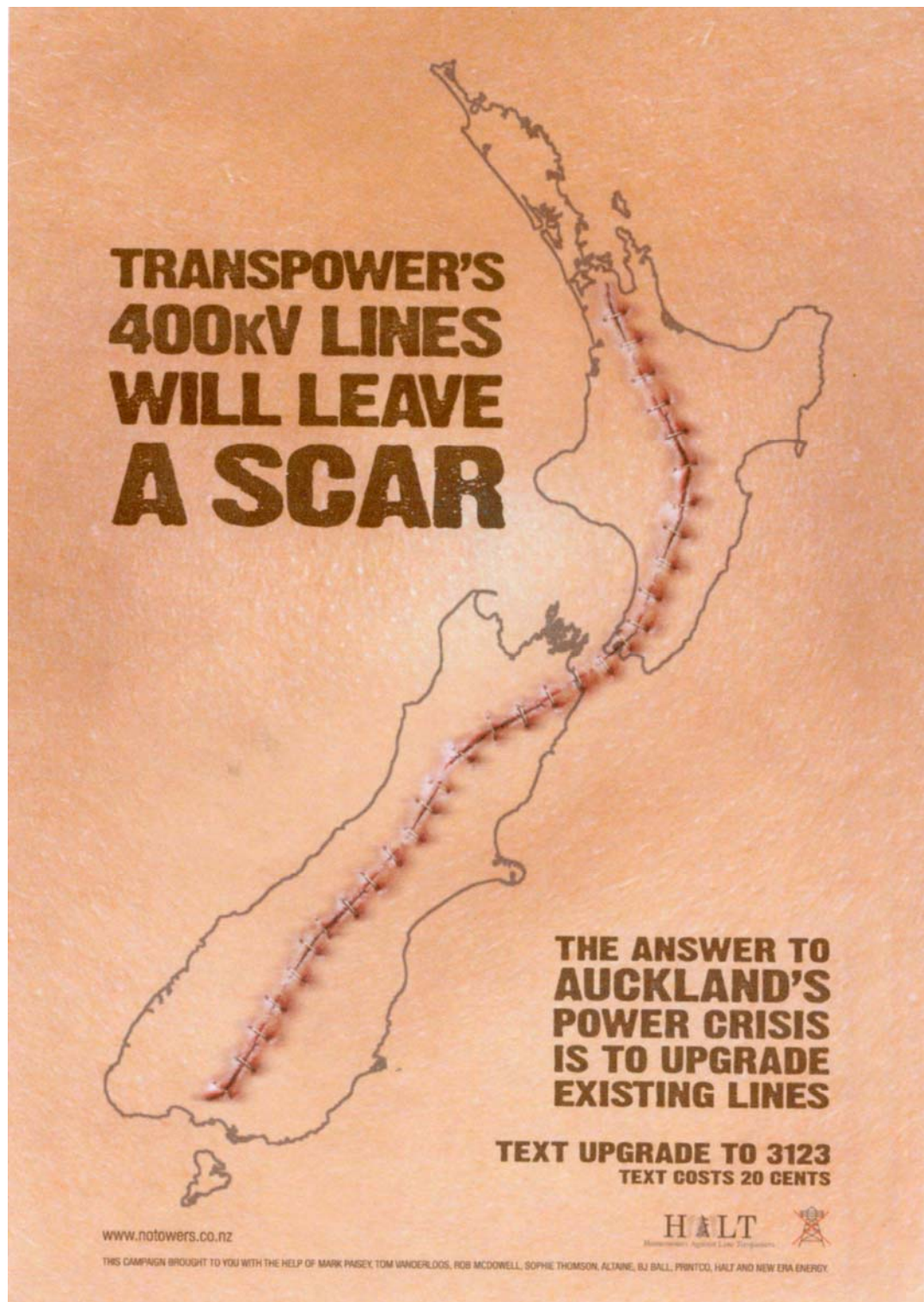


Figure 4(b)

Interviewed after the course finished, Tutor A said he called the meeting because he didn't think there had been a good process.

Discussion about the ad had taken place when I wasn't present and no one was sufficiently aware of the background. I was very disappointed by that and there was also discussion outside the course that had an influence on the students and I didn't think that was very fair. – Tutor A

Student views of the advertisement

Most of the student views on the advertisement were strongly held. Some found it difficult to decide what to do. Teresa said she *swung from one end to the other*.

Obviously some research does suggest there may be a link between suicide and these pylons and maybe we should have some role in running an ad from the group – just doing some advocacy. At the time I think I voted to run it, although I probably had reservations and now in hindsight I think not running it was a good idea. I think the message of the ad would probably have been lost in the controversy around the image in the end.

Leonard said he was divided between feeling the ad was *quite insensitive and graphic* and thinking that if it was true, it was important to raise the questions. He talked to one of the students who had written a feature story on the topic.

She was pretty certain that assertions that the pylons are dangerous aren't based on good hard research. In that respect I'm glad we didn't run it. I also think, when you're in a team, you should all feel comfortable about something like that and we didn't all feel comfortable. Otherwise if it had just been up to me I quite possibly would've run the image and then backed it up with a good article the following week.

Derek thought the advertisement was *propaganda, based on fallacious research*.

But his main concern was the time taken to make a decision when the paper's third edition was seriously behind schedule.

For 10 of us to take up two and a half hours of meetings, that's 25 hours of time we could've spent laying out the paper. It was a shocking advert. I think they should've run it simply because it would've generated discussion. But it's just not a journalist decision. I think it's great that we learnt it and it's relevant, but under the time restrictions it was just not fair.

Rita was reluctant to run the ad.

It was really graphic and disturbing – I couldn't look at it – and I just found the claim that people who live near pylons commit suicide pretty hard to swallow. Since doing my feature on it, I'm glad we didn't run the ad because it turns out

*that a lot of that research is **really** inconclusive. There's nothing to back that up.*

Rita also thought the advertising creativity team might be taking publication in *Te Waha Nui* for granted.

They were hoping: 'Oh they're our student newspaper, they'll just run it for us because no-one else would run it.' I think there's no way that anyone else would run that ad. I thought it was great having an input into the decision, but at the end of the day working at a real newspaper that would be a management decision, not an editorial decision.

Sophie thought the same, though she said she thought it was a good advertisement and she respected the motives of the advertising creativity students.

I wouldn't have run it. On the whole we're quite an open-minded team, but very few of us wanted to run it. No-one else has run it. None of the billboards will touch it. The Herald won't touch it. So I don't think we were wrong. I think we're pretty much down the middle and I would be uncomfortable with running something like that. It was pretty graphic.

Grace voted against publishing it.

I just thought about how people I knew would react. It's not a grotesque image but it's a strong image and we have restrictions on suicide reporting, presumably for a reason. I didn't want any of the fallout, like letters being written to the paper.

Greg, as editor was in perhaps the most difficult position He wrote an editorial , "Halting ads and pylons" (2006, p. 19) lauding the rejected advertisement as "a brilliant creation" by the advertising students but added:

"The ad in question featured a graphic suicide photo, a touchy subject among the media and wider community. The arguments both for and against were well considered and the debate caused much consternation and sleepless nights for our team."

"We came down on the side of caution in the end," he added

Interviewed after the course ended, he had not changed his view.

It was just an offensive image. You could almost guarantee that a lot of people are going to look at that and be revolted or have a flashback to some memory of a friend who did that. Suicide's something the media don't take lightly. Because of the standards that we have in New Zealand about the reporting of suicides, I just felt it was irresponsible to run the ad.

Greg went on to note that *real world editors* wouldn't really have a say over advertising.

So it wasn't part of my role in a strict sense. But I felt that I had to say something.

Greg said his attitude might have been different if the ad was *part of an anti-suicide campaign*.

If it was for someone like Youthline, then we might have looked at it differently, but knowing what I know about Youthline they'd never run an ad with that type of image in it.

Interestingly though, as the advertising creativity tutor had shown the students in a session earlier in the course, the *Samaritans* organisation used a graphic image (see Figure 4 (c) in an anti-suicide campaign. This had been run in leading Fleet St papers where editorial guidelines on suicide reporting are similar to New Zealand's media guidelines by the Ministry of Health and the New Zealand Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy.



Why you should think more seriously about killing yourself.

We wouldn't want to alarm or shock unnecessarily.

But it is alarming that every year over 200,000 people in this country try to kill themselves.

And it is shocking because only a very few of them really want to die.

Over 95% of these people who try to kill themselves and survive are glad that they survived.

Out of those who didn't survive there will sadly be many who didn't really want to die because in most cases, an attempt at suicide is first and foremost a cry for help.

So is a call to the Samaritans.

The difference is that it's a cry that will always be answered.

That's exactly why a call to the Samaritans is a serious alternative.

This isn't to say that you have to be about to kill yourself to call the Samaritans.

We hope that people will call long before they reach that point.

The Samaritans are there to listen to anyone who needs someone to talk to, no reason for calling is ever too trivial.

A Samaritan will never censure, criticise or pass judgement.

All conversations, whether face to face or over the telephone are conducted in absolute confidence.

Samaritans are on call for 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. Anywhere in the country.

And there are daytime centres you can visit in nearly 200 cities and towns so there is bound to be one near you.

Anyone who does try to commit suicide and succeeds will never have the chance to change his or her mind.

That's why everyone should think more seriously about taking the easy way out and call the Samaritans.

Please.

The Samaritans.

Figure 4(c) Samaritans advertisement

Resignation considered

Greg considered resigning from his editorship over the issue.

I didn't bring it up with anyone in the team while we were still discussing the ad. I didn't want it to be seen as if I was blackmailing other people – as in: 'You do what I say or I'll quit.' But I did confide in one other student outside the editorial team, that if the ad did run then I would be resigning as editor. I'd still continue to work on the paper but I wasn't prepared to have my name at the top of the list of something that I wasn't happy with.

Greg said he spent some time thinking about the consequences of resigning.

To be honest I did make sure that I'd have the grades to pass that paper if I wasn't involved in the last edition. But it wasn't a split second decision. It was something that I had put a lot of thought into and something that I would've gone through with. I just really didn't feel that that advert was appropriate and I thought the harmful effects of it were too great for any possible gain that may come from us running it.

Student views of the decision-making process

When it came to making a final decision on the ad, many of the students criticised the process they had to go through, feeling they came under pressure from one of the tutors. Some saw their autonomy challenged. Sophie said she was not sure any of the team was happy about the way the decision was made.

I guess we believed that we had the final say as editorial team and Tutor A – with no disrespect - was determined to run it. None of us wanted to. And I guess we all felt that his bringing in the two students who made the ad and their tutors was fairly disrespectful to the editorial team, because we'd made our call and we didn't want to touch it. I think Tutor A probably should've backed down on it. It's hard having to disagree with someone who you respect, who's older than you and who's had industry experience, but we really didn't want to touch that ad.

Grace described the situation as *a bit of lecturer interference*.

I felt Tutor A was trying to convince us towards his view, which is fair enough really, but the majority of us weren't too keen on running it. With going over it again our minds didn't end up being changed. I think it was a good learning experience because a lot of editorial teams wouldn't have had that kind of say with advertising being in a completely separate unit. So it was good to have that say.

Greg said he was *a bit unhappy* with it.

We'd sort of make an original decision and then Tutor A kept coming back at us with people trying to persuade us the other way, in which he was almost successful in doing. It came down to just one person's vote in the end.

The time taken out from working on the paper was an issue for some students.

I think Tutor A was really pushing for us to run the ad. If we had been using that time to work on the paper, it may not have been so stressful in the end. If Tutor A had wanted to run the ad, he had the right to say so, as the manager of the paper. It wouldn't be an editorial decision in the real world. – Rita

I thought it was obvious we weren't going to run it because not enough people were enthusiastic enough about it. When we were going over the issue again and again, although it was a good learning experience, I thought we had more important things to do with our deadline looming. – Grace

Greg said he was naive about the industry in not realising that Tutor A and Tutor B were taking a management role and it was their job to look after the advertising and distribution, while the editorial staff was charged with making the content.

But I also felt we ran things a bit differently from a standard newspaper and everybody was involved in decision making. At the start of that whole kerfuffle the decision was quite clear. It was unanimous that people didn't want to run this ad and eventually people started getting swayed the other way by what I guess you'd call all the pressure that was coming.

The tutors' views

The two tutors came from completely opposite perspectives. As detailed below, Tutor B took into account guidelines for journalists on reporting suicide while Tutor A decided advertising codes were more appropriate.

Tutor B was concerned that the image depicted suicide *in a very shocking and graphic way*.

I felt that no other newspaper would publish this photograph and it was inappropriate for a newspaper directed, to a large extent, at a youth audience.

Tutor B said he understood that the image was deliberately shocking – designed to grab attention and the advertisers, lobbying against high-rise pylons coming into South Auckland, felt shock tactics were justified. Tutor B said he had read that, in the New Zealand experience, whenever suicide was prominent in the media, there was a heightened risk of young people committing suicide.

The media here takes a pretty responsible attitude to how it reports suicide. I wanted us to do that too.

Tutor B's views were affected by online media guidelines by the Ministry of Health and the New Zealand Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy (<http://www.spinz.org.nz>, 1999). The website lists seven considerations for journalists reporting and portraying suicide, including a warning not to *oversimplify* causes.

The reasons behind suicide are complex and often the result of a history of problems, rather than just one event. About 90% of people who die by suicide or attempt suicide will have had at least one mental health problem, most commonly depression.

Another clause advises against using photographs or visuals.

Photographs of a funeral, the deceased's bedroom, a rope in a noose or the site of the suicide may increase the risk of copycat suicides (<http://www.spinz.org.nz>, 1999).

Tutor A compared the controversial image with that in the *Samaritans* advertisement (Figure 4c).

The knife image and text, in my view, are far more challenging than the Transpower one. – Tutor A.

Tutor A considered that instead of journalistic guidelines in relation to suicide reporting the Advertising Code of Ethics (<http://www.asa.co.nz/codes/ethics.htm>, 1996) was applicable.

This was a campaign in the advocacy advertising category – not a feature article or some other piece of journalism dealing with specific facts or trends relating to suicide. – Tutor A.

In reference to advocacy advertising, Clause 11 of the Advertising Code of Ethics, says:

Expression of opinion in advocacy advertising is an essential and desirable part of the functioning of a democratic society. Therefore such opinions may be robust.

However it goes on to say that opinion *should be clearly distinguishable from factual information*. More importantly perhaps, Clause 2 of the Code says advertisements *should not contain any statement or visual presentation which ... makes false and misleading representation*.

The argument here obviously turns on the reliability of the suicide research – something the students were in no real position to know. Tutor A's initial disappointment with

their decision seems to have resulted from his concept of *Te Waha Nui* as an *experiential educational paper*.

We want to give the best opportunities we can for our students to develop. But Te Waha Nui is also a media voice. It's an independent voice and it's an alternative voice from the mainstream and that's why sometimes I think they should push the boundaries a little bit more.

He thought the students had ideas and creativity but sometimes lacked a little courage to try something different.

It was my personal hope that the students might have taken a slightly more daring approach to running that particular image, but we didn't take that path. I was happy in the end that we'd gone through a process and had a good discussion. In the end we were happy with what we did. I think that's the important thing about a learning experience and I'm sure most of them will remember that and it'll be useful somewhere down the track.

Tutor A was surprised that, compared to some of the student teams he had worked with before, the AUT students were quite conservative in the way they thought.

I felt very strongly and I really wrote that commentary [Appendix B] as something provocative to push them to the limits so they would justify what they were doing. I actually think that, as student journalists, they can push boundaries themselves. If anything we should be the conservative guides saying: 'Oh no you can't really do that.' They've actually got quite a bit of freedom. It's not the sort of freedom they're going to have out there in the industry, so personally I'm quite prepared to back them. They do have quite a bit of power.

Tutor A stressed that he would not have been prepared to publish the advertisement if he felt the team was against it.

Ultimately, I think it was a very narrow vote against it, but I wouldn't have run it even then. The whole team would have had to be reasonably comfortable with it.

The learning experience

Tutor B agreed that the students were frustrated by the length of time spent on the issue in the short term, when they were a long way behind their page production targets.

Not a single page was signed off 48 hours before we went to print. But looking back I think they will have benefited from us taking the time to discuss the issue fully. It gave them the experience of working through a real ethical issue and they felt satisfied their views had been heard. – Tutor B

Tutor A said that both ads were good and in the end whichever was run was not crucially important. But he thought the discussion process was a *highlight*.

It was the crucial part of the whole thing – the process and our reasoning and our discussion. They were getting a much clearer idea of the criteria that would be used with an advertisement and also the editorial. I don't think the students had much idea of that at all. My impression was that they gained quite a lot out of it, especially those who were there for the last discussion. I think that was very important. – Tutor A

The fact that the tutors had opposing views was generally seen as helpful to the students. Tutor B said the students didn't necessarily expect the tutors to agree with each other.

They seemed to accept that we held our differing views in good faith and I don't think that was a particular problem for them to deal with. They were divided too.

Teresa found the split in the tutors' opinions *good in some ways*.

I felt that we were going to be less railroaded into something. We had two people with longstanding experience in the industry, able to offer two strongly different views and I think that made it easier for us to make our own choices. If we had them both on one side or the other, it may have made it difficult to go against their decision.

Leonard found the tutor disagreement *the most interesting thing*.

At first it seemed we were being a bit immature – teachers versus the pupils. But we had a good chat and it was good that everyone was able to moderate their position and not be so extreme. I think partly for me it was out of respect to the tutors. If they weren't clear on it then how could we take sides? It's just not worth it.

For Greg, there were insights into his power as editor.

I thought I had over-riding control of the paper when I don't – there are bits that I'm in charge of and then bits that I'm not. I thought that my say as editor was being over-stepped but in the real world I wouldn't even have a say in it. I guess you get a lot of power. You've got a 2000-issue publication which you're putting out every two weeks which you can put whatever you want in, barring legal consequences, and so that's quite empowering. If there are issues you feel aren't getting the coverage that they deserve, then you have a medium through which you can discuss them. It goes into every newsroom in the country.

4.4 Discussion

There was plenty of evidence here of student learning about the realities of life as a journalist. A poignant moment was when one of the tutors radically changed the lead story in the final edition so that it didn't resemble the version submitted by one of the students in the wider contributing group. This realisation that a journalist's copy is never sacred usually happens within the first weeks of operating in a newsroom, either for reasons of layout space or, as in this case, a need, in the tutor's eyes at least, for a story to be completely re-angled. The student's wry comment: *I guess as a reporter you have to deal with that* would resound with journalists all over the world.

The first editor's different idea of the paper's readership and his impression that this embroiled him in a *constant battle with the tutors* and *nearly broke him* still left him with the satisfaction as he saw it, of improving his management skills and *developing a thick skin*. On the other hand, his sheer delight at watching people read *his* paper and appear so interested in it was an experience that he could not expect to gain in the industry for many years.

A somewhat different issue was his expectation that it was the role of the tutors to deal with *dissent in the team* because he felt that as just another student he couldn't *pull rank* even in his role of editor. In the next chapter, the other editor notes that some people in the team were *complaining about each other behind their backs* but none of the students had volunteered this information in the class debriefs. This contrasts with Frost's (2001) description of a peer-reviewed assessment system in the United Kingdom where an editor had the power to get a fellow-student's marks withheld or moderated in these circumstances. Outside a peer review marking system this would not be possible, but a debrief process taking more account of likely team disagreements and performance issues, provided students knew they could speak freely without getting penalised, could be a possibility for the future.

Some of the students' comments provided clear evidence that they had learned about how the editors and other people with positions of authority in the team were able to achieve results, citing the need for *firmness* in setting deadlines for the work of fellow students, and the dangers of being *too nice*. This again highlighted the reality that students are relating to fellow students, rather than employees.

The students' first impressions of how the responsibility for *Te Waha Nui* rested mainly with them had to be moderated over time but was still a major factor in the learning experience. By the time the first edition was published, there was an awareness that although story decisions were up to them this didn't mean that what they produced was not above criticism from the tutors and the controversy over the advertisement in the third edition caused many of them to think one of the tutors was *interfering* with their decisions about *Te Waha Nui's* content. Ironically, as the tutor made clear, he expected a *more daring* approach from the students and was disappointed at what he saw as their conservatism. Nonetheless, his attempt to influence the student decision caused some resentment and a feeling of interference with the students' *power* to make the crucial decision.

The tutor disagreement over the suicide image was perhaps fortuitous as this had the effect of putting the students in the position of having to make the final decision and justify it. The issue, described by one of the tutors as a *highlight* of the learning experience, as well as raising issues of tutor versus student power, also pointed to the difficulty of maintaining a *training* priority – thoroughly discussing an important ethical issue – under the pressure of real deadlines, unlike simulated learning experiences.

Chapter 5: Experiential learning and the *real world*

“I’ve just realised now that I’m going to have to be at Uni from 8am to 5pm every single day. I have to put the social life aside for this semester I guess.” – Rita, (2 weeks into the paper).

5.1 Introduction

This chapter describes how the production of *Te Waha Nui* set out to match what happens in *the real world* of newspaper production and identifies the range of challenges faced by the students. A recurring issue of student workload is explored first. Teamwork and communication issues which arose both within the small production group and with the other students contributing copy to the paper are then considered. The anticipated and actual learning outcomes are described and the process of reflection – an integral part of experiential learning – is also discussed. The chapter concludes with a reconsideration of experiential learning in the light of issues raised in this study.

5.2 The *Te Waha Nui* workload

For journalism students, the challenge of meeting a deadline to produce a reputable course publication is undoubtedly an enormous contrast to their customary experience of university study. The workload involved is difficult for students to appreciate before they embark on the project, and this issue – how much was demanded of them – was a difficult and recurring problem. It compounded pressures arising from varying levels of commitment and student abilities, alongside the challenges of effective communication and teamwork.

Early impressions about time commitment

Two weeks into the News Production paper at AUT the time commitment involved with *Te Waha Nui* emerged as a concern. Although the paper is, like other second semester options, worth 15 credits, there are 13 hours a week timetabled for production work. Initially, the students compared this unfavourably with the three hours of class time per week spent on other papers offering a similar number of credits. This concern, however, did not take into account the fact that work on *Te Waha Nui* largely had to take place in the production laboratory. For other papers, like Magazine Journalism, much of the students’ time commitment for completion of assignments was outside the timetabled classroom hours. This, however, became more of a problem towards the end of the semester when the students enrolled in News Production also had to meet deadlines for their other papers.

During the first interviews, two weeks into News Production, all eight students in the study said they had not anticipated the extent of the time commitment. Editor Derek said he was *stunned* at how much of his time had been taken.

It's not just the 13 hours' class time, but every time I step into the newsroom, I'm bombarded with other people who want opinions, which is great for the paper, but it's hard for me.

At that stage Derek was expecting the benefit he would get out of News Production would be *negligible*.

Had we had 20 people doing this, I'd still get the same thing on my CV, but I would've had a much easier ride.

The second editor, Greg, who at that stage didn't have the responsibility of leading the team, said that one of the learning outcomes he expected was time management – “*something I've always struggled with*”.

Sophie also saw time management as something of a threat to begin with.

I think with our first issue we'll probably be pushing it. Not through lack of material – probably just through lack of experience. By the fourth issue, we'll have that – I would hope – far more under control.

Grace anticipated *a major difficulty* when dealing with the students contributing stories to *Te Waha Nui*.

Other students will have their own workloads and so, it might be a situation where we're really wanting people to deliver on a deadline and they're already busy.

Rita said she was *hugely overwhelmed* by how much work was expected.

We're doing quadruple the amount of work that we're doing for other papers. I'm very daunted by it this stage. I'd heard people saying there would be lots of late nights, and I thought sure it was going to be a workload, but I didn't expect this. It hasn't put me off. It's just been a huge reality check.

Part of the students' concern appeared to be caused by the pressure of attempting to produce a newspaper that would be used to “showcase” the journalism course. Sophie said she was *50 times more stressed* than she thought she would be, though she attributed this to her own naivety.

I think we are all stressed, just wanting to strive for perfection. I think we've become a bit more realistic in the last two weeks and realised we're not going to produce a masterpiece. It'll just be as good as we can get initially.

Teresa, who foresaw difficulty in balancing the workload with her work in other papers and with her personal life, said she wanted to commit as much time as possible to *Te Waha Nui*.

Because it's a very public face of the course you want it to be as good as possible.

Looking back on the workload: the student viewpoint

As the paper neared its end, all the students concluded that the workload had been too heavy, partly because of the pressure of having to complete assignments for other papers in the course. Struggling to satisfy the demands of other classes was a juggling act – not always successful.

It's hectic at the moment. I'm two stories behind on Specialist Writing and I've got shorthand to pass. – Greg.

I lost interest in it, because I was trying to get my shorthand out of the way and I had to come in here and help out. – Brad.

My grades were straight As last semester. They'll be straight Cs this semester probably, and that's not from lack of time at uni – it's just from News Production. – Derek.

Recently we've handed in our feature and everyone else last week was working on that. We were doing Te Waha Nui and staying late at night. I think we were under a little bit more stress than everyone else with that, but it worked out fine. It wasn't too bad. – Rita

I made sure I was there from go to whoa basically so particularly in the production weeks, when you are there for 10 or 12 hours in that newsroom, everything else fell by the wayside a little bit. – Teresa

For some there was a sense of injustice:

You can't just drop a bundle like that in a bunch of students' laps when the students have a whole bunch of other tutors expecting things of them. To expect that we just live for Te Waha Nui is a little bit rich. – Derek

Students could see ways to improve News Production so that the workload was less problematic. Several advocated for the paper being given more credit – 30 credits instead of 15.

While agreeing that the paper could be worth more credits because of the workload, Rita also criticised the extra design assignment at the end of the course [Appendix C] as being *just tacked on*.

I feel we have put in enough hours and blood, sweat and tears, into what we've done already and now to have to do another assignment is a bit much.

Teresa suggested that, instead of the last assignment, the students needed more time between editions to look at one page or aspect of the layout and re-design it.

We could have taken some time to step away from it and say: 'Well this is how we laid out our sports page, but these were the weaknesses' – spend a couple of days just having a hard look at it. That would've been quite nice to be able to do.

Sophie called for more leeway with the university's marking systems, allowing the *Te Waha Nui* students some credit for extra writing they did for the newspaper.

We really felt that if we wrote reviews, we should be able to get those signed off. Columns, I know, are personal but you still have to research them. So it's still your time and it's still your words.

Brad agreed that the students wrote a lot of stories for *Te Waha Nui* which didn't qualify for their Specialist Writing paper or news stories and Grace suggested a lighter workload in other papers would be helpful.

We could maybe have enjoyed Te Waha Nui more, spent more time on it and been less stressed.

Sophie said students needed to be made aware of the time commitment at the beginning of the paper, knowing, for example, that they had to work late sometimes.

I don't think that bothers anyone, as long as they know. I think all of us went in a bit blind. But I thoroughly enjoyed it. I think all of us have learnt heaps.

Teresa recognised that both the technology used, and the varying time commitments by different students added to the tremendous workload requirements:

Maybe the fact that not everyone was delivering consistently did impact on their classmates' workload. I think it's also because we use a piece of software that we can only access at university. There isn't that option of sitting down at home to do a bit of work on it. You really had to be here.

How the tutors saw the issue of student workload

Both tutors were concerned about the workload issue with Tutor B describing it as the paper's biggest problem. Tutor A said the advantage in other institutions where he had worked with newspapers was that the production courses had higher credit values than theory courses, whereas, he says, AUT is not structured to be able to do that.

It has bothered me, feeling that the students who work on this course do put in a disproportionate amount of work and questioning whether they get enough credit or acknowledgement for what they do.

But Tutor A said he believed that what the students got out of the experience was *huge* as well.

I think a lot of them see that anyway, but it would be better if we could find some way that takes the workload into account.

The analysis and the solutions generated by the students were not necessarily accepted by the tutors. Tutor B didn't agree with increasing the credits to 30 because it would mean the students would have to drop another potential paper. Instead, he advocated dropping the final reflective assignment and continuing to find other ways to make the workload more manageable for the students. Tutor A didn't go along with the students' idea that a smaller production group than in the previous two years had made a significant difference to the workload. He said that changes made in 2006, to align story production for other papers like Magazine Journalism with *Te Waha Nui* production deadlines, had meant, overall, *a huge flow of copy*, compared with the two previous years.

5.3 Deadline pressures and stress

Part of the students' learning experience comes about under the pressure of real-world immovable deadlines. For the first edition, a four-week production cycle was timetabled. For the second and fourth editions, production time was halved to two weeks. The third edition, although it had a four-week build-up officially, spanned the two-week inter-semester break, when some of the students went on industry internships or holidays. This edition was the most chaotic and stressful.

The first edition

Two weeks into News Production, the only student who predicted that producing *Te Waha Nui* to deadline would be a major difficulty was Rita.

We think we're in deep water now with four weeks, [production time] but I just can't even imagine once the first issue's out and we have to get eight pages done, four days after that. It's just going to be crazy.

Ironically, after the first edition was out, Rita was a lot more confident, because, she said, the team had done a lot of its work before deadline. However, by then, a lot of the students were agreeing with her earlier views. The pressure of having only two weeks instead of four to produce the paper started to make itself felt.

Teresa described the short turnaround as *unbelievable*, particularly with its effect on her other studies.

I'm looking at this week and thinking, how are we going to do it? The team has shrunk and I just don't know how we'll pull this one off, so stress levels have been quite high. I've got a major piece of work due next week and I don't have time to interview people.

Teresa said she was pleased with what she was achieving with *Te Waha Nui* but disappointed to be doing only *bare-bone* work in her other papers. Grace was also finding the second issue a lot more stressful than the first one.

It's harder getting people to submit stories when they have quite a workload, and I've got more of a workload than I did then. Maybe my time management was better last time, but this time the pressure's on a bit.

The third edition

It was during production of the newspaper's third edition that deadline pressure had its most devastating effect on the students' learning experience. Some went as far as saying the paper was *a mess*. The fact that some students were away during the semester break meant there were very few hands on deck in production week. This made it particularly difficult for Greg, who was serving his first term as editor.

I tried to make sure everybody knew what was happening. A lot of people couldn't make it. I'd send an email out telling everyone what would happen with the paper and where we were.

While he simply described it as the team temporarily losing momentum and cohesiveness, other students described the experience more graphically. In Rita's words it was *just madness* when she arrived on deadline day.

It was an absolute shambles. It was just not finished. It was so far from deadline. And it was rushed. You could see it in the paper – there were mistakes

*and it was pretty unpolished. It was a horrible environment – everyone was really, really, **really** stressed out.*

Sophie said the students lost control of the third edition and it was *by popular decree a total disaster*.

We were still laying out copy on pages at 12.35 on the Thursday before the 1 pm deadline. We were so stressed that no-one really looked at typos and there were some absolute beauties. On the back page I think we invented a new rugby position. I guess we all felt we'd let ourselves down on that one.

Teresa also described the experience as *hugely stressful*.

We got back from holiday and we had no stories, whereas at that point we should have had eight pages laid out – or at least fairly close. To get there on Monday and find half the class wasn't turning up for the next couple of days and nothing was being done was just awful.

Derek criticised the way Greg had performed the editor's role.

His approach was: 'Everybody just do your job and then the paper will come together.' And that's not better or worse than me, it's just different. Because my approach was: 'If this is going to have a single focus and a continuity to stories I'm going to have to drive it myself.' If he had taken that approach with four weeks over the holidays I'm sure he could've done a lot better.

How the tutors saw deadline stress

The tutors, while recognising the stress involved, and probably experiencing it themselves, did not think the deadline crisis was any reflection on Greg. Tutor B attributed it to the other students *abandoning ship* in the first two weeks of the production cycle.

It's a miracle that the paper went out without any serious errors, mistakes or legal problems in it because the pages were thrown together in the last 48 hours of the production cycle.

Tutor B said nothing had been produced even by the Tuesday morning of the second production week, when the deadline for the finished product was 1 pm on Thursday.

We didn't have a single page completed. But we had at least 10 pages started and I'd say that Greg had laid out nine of those. Greg put in a huge amount of effort and I feel that he was let down by his colleagues.

Tutor A agreed the third edition had some problems but, unlike the students, thought it was still a good paper.

When you think what we're doing you expect some to bomb out really badly somewhere along the line. We haven't. We've had quite a consistently good standard. I am pretty tired by the end of the four editions. It's constant late nights and also there's a certain amount of pressure on us. There's always in the back of my mind: 'Is there something I've missed?' We're actually pretty lucky. We haven't even had all that many corrections.

One major issue arising from this sort of experiential learning is whether there might be a time when a particular edition of the paper had to be abandoned because it had got so far beyond deadline. Tutor B said options were being discussed for the third edition – either to drop some editorial pages and insert more full-page advertisements – or another suggestion of his, that a four-page section be dropped, bringing the paper down to 20 pages. Finally, a couple of full-page advertisements were added because, as Tutor B said, the students didn't want to reduce the size of the paper.

I don't think that we'd ever get to the point where we'd have to pull out of producing the paper, but I think we always reserve the right to drop some pages if we feel that the production effort just becomes impossible. – Tutor B

Despite the challenges of producing student newspapers over a number of years, Tutor A has never found that a paper had had to be abandoned.

We've had a couple of editions along the way where we've wondered: 'Are we going to pull it together? Is it really going to come out?' And we've mildly read the riot act and made noises about maybe throwing out a few pages and putting in some ads. That wakes people up a bit. But it's always been pulled together in the end.

5.4 Teamwork and communication

An important factor in the production of *Te Waha Nui* has always been the extent to which students can keep a team spirit alive and make sure everyone has a reasonable knowledge of what's happening.

Student expectations

In the early days of production of *Te Waha Nui*, the students rated teamwork and communication as a major part of the learning experience. The main challenges they foresaw were both in their own teamwork and their ability to encourage the wider student body to contribute to the paper. Early insights included the recognition that the team consisted of *a bunch of different personalities* learning how to manage each other.

I think that's important in a group, to learn to work with each other and love each other for what we are. – Sophie

So far it seems to be a constant communication between everyone around you, checking what everyone's doing, what needs to be done, what the editor wants of this story – just constantly checking and checking and checking and seeing if you're on the right track with everyone else. – Rita

Editor Derek expected he was going to have to increase his knowledge of both team work and leadership. He described it as *massively important but a difficult proposition*.

We're not a professional organization, where we're all getting paid to be team players. It's within each individual student's best interest to get the best marks and if that means concentrating more on Specialist Writing [a core paper in the same semester] and letting this slip, well then, what can you say? It's a very hard situation to try to encourage teamwork. – Derek

Sophie pointed to the fact that the learning experience went beyond the work of the News Production team.

It's how to work with an entire newsroom – the fact that we rely on other people to write our copy for us.

Grace also anticipated the relationship with the wider group of students as being a bit challenging at times.

What if someone has written a story and it's not quite the angle you wanted. Just how to deal with that and how to make sure that people meet their deadlines, as well as you are meeting yours – that's what I expect to learn.

Teresa said the News Production students had to see themselves as part of a wider picture – *not just the 10 of us* – but part of the entire team of contributing students.

You've got to be aware that this is their work and they are contributing it to you. It's a bit of a privilege really and you can't trample all over them. I guess that's part of being a team.

Student opinions after the first edition

Most of the students agreed that during production of the first edition the feeling of being part of a team took some time to develop and communication among team members and with the wider student body was poor. They pointed to frequent student absences from production sessions and a lack of production meetings.

A lot of us didn't know what someone else was doing, when it was affecting what we were trying to do, because there weren't really any group meetings.
– Greg

I struggled just with knowing what to do and what my role was when it came to subbing. I think a lot of people were waiting around to be given stuff to do – that was a bit of a problem. – Brad

Teresa, who was chief reporter and online editor for the first issue, agreed that initially communication was quite poor and more of the concerns needed to be discussed in a group forum.

There were some stories we were running which I wasn't even aware of. Particularly with the earlier more news-focused pages, it was almost like a surprise. There was also a piece of work that had been submitted and declined. It wasn't until afterwards that I was even aware this issue had come up.

Rita said the production group learnt a lot in the early stages and was already talking about communicating better among themselves and with the students who were hoping to contribute stories.

People would be coming up to us and asking why their stories weren't being used. And you'd say: 'I thought it was being used.' But then someone else had decided not to use it. Apparently last time some students were getting quite upset.

Although the paper's first edition was completed well before deadline, there were still some last-minute misunderstandings. Greg said that one day before the paper had to be completed he and Sophie arrived early.

We walked in and found that what was our front page story had gone back to page 11 and there was nothing on the front page. And we had no idea what was happening to it and we couldn't get in touch with the editor, who made the decision.

Not knowing that plans for the front page had changed, Greg decided he had to do something about it.

I got one of the students to write a story for us, which ended up, luckily, getting onto page four, but we didn't know what was happening.

Greg also identified systems errors as causing major problem; students did not necessarily follow the agreed process of printing off a page when they had finished working on it and filling in a checklist. He said he had learned a lot more about team work and dealing with the contributing writers' response to criticism.

One person got told her column wasn't going to be used and she got quite upset, because of the way she was told. I was part of that decision, and when I found

out she was upset, I went and explained a bit further what the reason was. She was fine once she knew the whole story. – Greg

Teresa said people were still feeling their way with the roles and trying to establish what team work actually meant during the beginning of the production period.

It probably wasn't until the last three days immediately prior to going to press that we got that feeling of being part of a team.

All the other students agreed with her. Rita pointed to a transformation in attitude after what had been *a few tense moments* for the team as they went into the last week of production.

Things were really stressed and there were a few snappy comments, but on the Tuesday and Wednesday nights, when we were all staying late I think it got really good. Everyone pulled together.

Derek agreed there was a pre-deadline turnaround.

There was a great atmosphere and everyone stayed late on Tuesday and Wednesday. It was fantastic team work. – Derek

Derek's leadership was appreciated in the final stages.

Instead of just deciding on a page, he made a point of going around and asking everyone if they were all right with it, instead of just pulling strings from above. There are always going to be stressful moments, but I think it worked out well in the end. – Rita.

I guess he was able to bring it all together, even though the team itself was probably quite erratic or slightly dysfunctional. There definitely could be more communication and that's something I think we're learning. – Leonard

Greg, while acknowledging that he was one of the more critical people about the CBD approach, thought the first edition had some good stories in it and was looking forward to making the second edition *even better*.

I handed out copies of the paper at a high school careers evening last night and people there who aren't in the CBD at all really liked the paper and were intrigued by it. I'm really proud of what we've done and I think it was worth all the long hours and the stress.

Looking back: student views after the final edition

Early concerns about communication difficulties were reinforced as significant by what happened in the three later editions of *Te Waha Nui*. Students acknowledged the

development of cliques within the team, highlighting the need for effective leadership across small groups in order to maintain a cohesive team capable of meeting deadlines.

We had pages assigned but if we didn't have copy on our page, we didn't have anything to do. I don't know if it could be helped because we were waiting for students to finish their stories. Then "boom" it all hit us. – Brad

I enjoyed the team atmosphere. You accepted that the more some people were around, the more they were detrimental to the team, so it was probably good that they weren't always there. At the end of the day the right people were the ones doing the work, so it meant the paper got put out. – Leonard

Greg said communication got a little better but some team members were complaining about others behind their backs.

But when the class had time for reflection, these sorts of comments never came up and people just pretended it was all happy families. That didn't get any better.

These views were echoed by two of the other students. Sophie said members of the production team had learned to work with each other, looking past their differences. She and another student learned to cope with a personality clash.

We've both got over that and we can now have a civil conversation, which was looking like it was never going to happen in the third edition.

She added that there was some encroachment on other people's roles.

With the last edition especially, it seriously annoyed some members that Greg would refer to me, when I was only an Opinions page editor. I thought Teresa would be thinking: 'Hold up! I'm chief sub. She's actually not doing anything – ask me.' I hope I didn't yell that often! It gets hard not to.

Grace found friction between team members *realistic*.

Not everyone is going to get on with everyone else at all times because I'm sure that's how a newsroom is. I think that in the first two editions we probably were more together as a team. For the last two it wasn't necessarily because of Greg's leadership. I think it was just getting to the time of year where we had a lot of stuff due in.

Teresa said communication within the team improved and both the editors' second editions were stronger. However, she said communication with the wider group of students on which they relied for provision of content was perhaps not so good.

For our last edition Leonard went into one of the classes and asked for stories. Suddenly we had no problems getting news content, which had been an issue in

the previous editions. We should have been doing that right from the word go. I think that's probably one thing we could've done a lot better.

Rita said the students agreed on this in their debrief.

I think the key was having someone get up at a lecture and tell all the students what we needed and we didn't do that. We just dropped the ball on that one.

The production team was conscious that students were sometimes being put in an uncomfortable role in relation to their fellow contributing students whose stories were declined or heavily sub-edited. Grace indicated she felt this was part of learning to be a journalist.

I know that for one of the articles I subbed the student wasn't particularly happy about it but that's the way it goes. I think her article was better as a result of the cutting because it made more sense and was tighter and cohesive.

Teresa wanted a better system for handling stories from the contributing students.

Once we got work that was obviously unsubbed by anybody as if the student had written it and flicked it to us. It took hours to sort that out and I don't think that person had any concept of the problem they created.

She also echoed Derek's earlier concerns about motivating students to write for the paper.

You'd talk to people and ask what they were working on and when they were going to file it and they would say: "Oh I can't be arsed! I can't be bothered filing it."

Teresa described this attitude as *frustrating*.

It would be nice to have the course structured so that they were linked in more to provide more of a real-life experience. You can't sit in a newsroom and not bother filing.

5.5 Student learning outcomes

The students' expectations of what they would learn from the *Te Waha Nui* experience were followed up at the end of the course with them and the tutors. Development of technical production skills was only one aspect of the learning outcomes.

Initial student expectations

Just two weeks into the course the students detailed what they expected to achieve and some of the obstacles they anticipated. Derek, the first editor, expected to learn most

from dealing with page layout and subbing and to gain confidence in writing captions and headlines. In terms of journalism, he said he didn't expect a lot.

It will be reinforcing the fact that there's a reason why your chief reporter says: 'Don't write over 400 words and make sure there's a person in your photo.' It's just drumming home those things, because we're seeing it from the other side.

Rita wanted to know more about story selection and sub-editing.

I don't generate my own story ideas very well. I tend to ask other people and so it's interesting being in an environment where lots of ideas are being generated and you're having to contribute.

Teresa, deputy chief reporter for the first edition, wanted to know what that role meant and how she could make a good job of it. She also valued learning new technical skills and being able to apply them.

You've got something to show for it at the end. It's not that you learn how to use Photo Shop. It's that you can point to a picture in a printed newspaper and say: 'That's the one I worked on and it came out looking great, because of that time I put into it.'

The difficulties anticipated included concerns from Derek that the production team, compared with previous years on *Te Waha Nui* was smaller than usual.

Being short-staffed, which is effectively what we are, is just a nightmare. I think that's going to be our biggest issue because there's still the same number of jobs that need to be done, and there's only the same amount of time to do it.

The second editor, Greg, worried about time management and possibly running out of stories to publish. Sophie, on the other hand, was not concerned about the number of stories produced for the paper, but the standard of them.

With the whole newsroom producing copy, I think it will be hard picking out the best stories without favouring anyone. There are obviously stronger writers than others and you don't want a whole paper produced just by those writers, just because they're good.

Learning outcomes from the first edition

After the first edition, students pointed to their learning outcomes going beyond the realm of news story writing. Some students indicated they understood technical processes, such as Photoshop better. Leonard was happy with his progress in that skill. Most of Greg's time had been spent learning page layout.

I probably worked on about seven or eight pages and did three or four myself entirely. I've learned a lot more about what pictures work and what pictures don't. I've learned a lot about headline writing.

Other students said they gained from getting a feel for the newspaper production process – something which was missing from other aspects of the journalism course, such as internships at newspaper offices.

Brad valued seeing how a paper gets put together, the roles people play and working towards a deadline.

With our individual stories all we worry about is writing and getting it done. When you're putting the whole package together you see all the subbing and picture stuff going together, so you get more of an idea about what goes on behind the scenes.

Teresa also talked about getting a sense of the overall process of production, comparing the experience with what happened during her internship at the *New Zealand Herald* and a journalism field trip to *Hawkes Bay Today*.

There you're really only dealing with one aspect – writing. The next morning you pick up the paper, and there's your story, after you've filed it to the copy folder. Here you get a better picture of the kind of decisions people are having to make, which, as a journalist, you just don't see.

Rita said she wouldn't compare the experience to a field trip at a real newspaper.

But I was walking down the stairs last Friday with a bunch of 200 newspapers and I thought being part of this has given me every single insight into every part of newspaper production you could ever want, from selecting stories, to writing the stories, to laying out the pages, to editing to distribution. To just get to see every facet of newspaper production is amazing. It's really good.

Looking back: learning outcomes after the final edition

After four editions of *Te Waha Nui* the students appeared more focused on what gains they had made from experimenting with the different production roles. Derek said he gained most, career-wise, from being editor for the first two editions.

Those skills in layout and subbing are great but in terms of really stretching me, it was the editing role that was beneficial. Developing self belief, a thick skin and management skills will be more useful than anything else in my future career.

Greg, the second editor, said he learnt a lot about managing people after having to work for a long time in a small group where there were personality clashes.

We spent more time on relationship stuff than actual production of the paper. Not everybody really knew everybody beforehand and not everybody really liked each other afterward either.

Sophie felt she had gained most from the role of chief sub-editor. As well as learning a lot about layout and time management, she said she found it a challenge to work with reporters and page subs.

You can't just go and change what the page sub does because you don't like it as a sub editor. You scoot around it and say: "Could you shuffle that down or shuffle that up or change the headline?" It needs tact – something I don't have a lot of often.

Rita, as well as learning that copy must be edited, as she put it, *thousands and thousands and thousands of times* also found the role of chief sub-editor the most useful learning experience for her.

You learn to look at the whole thing and see which pages sit next to each other, which headlines work and which don't and which sections should be next to each other. In that role I had to make some decisions which I didn't find easy.

Leonard believed his critical thinking was improved when he was chief reporter.

I was a lot more involved in choosing the stories and that definitely got me. I think it helped me learn a lot, just reading lots of other work, and being critical in my thinking towards it.

He cited a story in the third edition as an example of the students' learning.

We had one story we were going to run as our page three lead. It was supposed to be a great story, but it just fell through and I think that was one example of how we probably weren't critical enough at the start, because in my opinion it wasn't a story right from the start.

Leonard rated the last issue of *Te Waha Nui* as the best.

We were having more stories on a page, our layout was better and we had a lot fewer soft stories compared with the first issue. We became more critical about our story selection and most of the stories had a good edge to them.

Greg felt he learnt enough to make him confident about page layout and subbing and to understand the effort that goes into making a paper.

Ours is a reasonably simple operation, but there's a lot of time that goes into it. You try to imagine what goes into producing a paper like the Herald or the Dominion every day.

Teresa, who also grew to feel confident with layout, anticipated using everything she had learned in News Production in her future daily newspaper career.

I can now look at a page and spot errors in layout and design and notice if pictures or headline placements don't look right. I'll study a paper and be able to pull apart the components of it. That design side of things was something I've never done before, but now I feel I've got quite a good grounding in it. – Teresa

Brad, who found sub-editing helpful for his own writing, took the opposite view on design, deciding that it was not his forte.

I probably just don't have the patience. I didn't mind sub-editing and editing stories, but just not the design stages.

Looking back: what the students noticed about fellow students' learning

When asked to evaluate what they noticed other students achieving, students identified the quiet performers as well as the noisy ones. Many students had excelled in particular roles. Janine, a student unfortunately not involved in this study, was closely identified with newly developed skills in photo editing and was mentioned by several students. While the editorial roles were supposed to be rotated, there were several roles in which people began to specialise and tended to stick with, despite an understanding that students were supposed to try out different roles. Students also learned from each other.

Janine and Leonard both did the final stages of the black and white photos for every single issue because they knew how to do it. It was quite a technical thing, but they jumped in and taught a few people. ...There were little pockets of that where people learnt how to do one thing and stuck with it through the process. – Teresa

Teresa said this meant students did not have to keep going to the tutors for advice.

Leonard agreed the group who had learned photo editing skills had improved the photos. He said they had also learned editing – *being tough on stories, getting the news values in and being able to cut the crap out.*

Greg felt that some students showed a greater aptitude for layout and others learned more about it, issue by issue.

Our original layouts tended to be one story along the top half of the page, and one story along the bottom and photos at the top right hand corner. Every page was like that and then occasionally you'd get one that had a story on the right hand side, and that was the variation.

He said the later issues showed different things happening design-wise and the group learned to realise who excelled in that role. Derek singled out Teresa, who, as online editor for almost every edition, was another of the students who learned a role and stuck with it.

Those people learnt a skill and then consolidated that learning by doing it over and over again. Whereas, I think just switching from one section to another, maybe sports one time features the next, it's really just much of a muchness.

However, he saw good value in expanding layout and headline writing skills.

I'm really glad that we've got to go over and over and as each edition comes out you look at it and see that a heading or something could've been better. It's a great learning experience like that.

Leadership became visible amongst students who were not officially in leadership roles. Rita noticed that Teresa developed through the course and had really clear ideas. She thought she would have made a good editor.

Teresa was a bit bossy at times, but I think without her, in the last two editions, there's no way we could've done it. She's the person you asked if you needed to know what to do next. She had her eye on everything that was going on.

Rita thought the change in editors halfway through the course had provided a new opportunity for Teresa.

Derek was a very hands-on editor and she didn't get much chance to have a say. When she was given a lot more freedom by Greg she just shone. I think she thrives on being given that responsibility and when she finally had it, she really just let loose and it was great.

What the tutors observed about learning outcomes

The tutors, sometimes marooned in the production laboratory for hours on end and often late into the night, saw most of the action and based their student assessment largely on their observations of how each student met the requirements of his or her assigned role [See Appendix D]. To provide another measure of assessment, each page of the newspaper also had a history worksheet where students were supposed to make a quick note of what they had done to the page. In the heat of the moment sometimes though,

the students either failed to complete the sheet or gave only sketchy information. Tutor A described the process as pretty fair but *still evolving*.

It's largely dependent on the tutors' observations and although between us we're there most of the time, there are times when we're not there so things can happen that we might not have observed.

Asked for examples of students' learning on *Te Waha Nui* in 2006 Tutor B cited one student's experience in trialling big reverse headlines, which didn't really work in a mini-broadsheet newspaper.

He was able to see for himself why they clashed with the tone of the design. To some extent that was because of listening to feedback, but it was also just seeing them appear in the paper and seeing how they didn't fit too well.

Another student was observed struggling with laying out centre spreads.

He tended to fragment all the text and illustration elements and break up the story into more than a dozen individual text boxes. He felt this made the page interesting.

Tutor B described this as a *scattergun approach* that made the story hard to read. But by the end of the semester the student had progressed to doing high quality feature layouts, partly because of Tutor B's feedback on his draft pages, but also from seeing in the finished paper, examples of layout that worked well and those that didn't. Tutor B said the whole team also made progress in picture selection and editing.

We went through phases this semester of running pictures of the sides of buildings, and the backs of people's heads. There were other pictures with large areas of monotone in them. But by the final edition, I think everyone had an understanding of what works and what doesn't work on a newspaper page, in terms of contrast, light and composition.

Tutor A noticed four high-achieving students during the semester, including both editors. He also singled out Teresa, saying she probably held the paper together the whole semester in ways she wasn't always recognised for.

We had online editors for the first time this year but we hadn't set up templates they could work with. Teresa probably single-handedly really pushed that along and did really good work there, in addition to everything else she was doing on the paper.

Tutor A wondered why Teresa didn't apply to be editor but thought because of what she put into the course she probably got all the experience she would have got as editor anyway. Leonard he also cited as developing very well.

I thought he was very reflective about what was done by them as a group. That was really rewarding and encouraging to see.

Tutor B said the 2006 students started strongly in news but weak in features. By the end of the semester, they were strong in both. He said the group didn't make as much progress on their copy editing and proof reading, but to some extent that was because they were a small team and most of the subbing and proofing was left to the tutors. Tutor A believed that in many ways students who work on *Te Waha Nui* learn much more than they do being assigned to a community paper – their usual outlet for news stories.

I think the standards are higher. They get more mentoring. The constant discussion on stories and ethics involved is a huge learning experience.
– Tutor A

Although he acknowledged that the 2006 students had problems along the way, he thought that as a group they did grow.

Their final edition was very strong. Ultimately it was still a really good learning experience.

5.6 Reflective practice: knowing what you're learning

The saying attributed to Confucius, which opened Chapter 3: "Tell me and I will forget, show me and I may remember. Involve me and I will understand" was put to the students in their final interviews. They were asked to comment on whether this saying and the theorists' views that reflection on an experience led to a new learning cycle had any resonance for them, following the *Te Waha Nui* experience.

The student view

There was general agreement that involvement in the production experience was unmatched by other learning experiences on the journalism course. Derek said a good example was that in the first week of the semester, Tutor B took the students through some textbooks on feature layout.

That was great. But I did the last two centre spreads and having to actually do it and go back through those books and think what it was he showed me a couple

of months ago and apply it myself, now I know. I've learnt, so absolutely. That's the glory of Te Waha Nui is that you get to do it, you get to analyse it and you get to do it again. And in that respect it's absolutely brilliant.

For Derek, learning about himself as a team member had been a key insight.

I'll never know my strengths unless I put myself in a difficult situation and can fight my way out of it. I am a bit of a neurotic perfectionist. Everybody struggled with that side of me and I know that.

But he valued some of the tutor feedback.

Being able to listen to someone criticise you and realise they're right – without experiential learning, you'd never have that. You'd always just think in the situation you'd be okay. But when you actually are in it, you have no choice. If you want to make it work, you've got to change.

Sophie tried to compare learning the same material in a lecture theatre.

I think you all tend to sit there and go, yeah, yeah, yeah – can't be that hard. And then you do it and you get a two-week cycle which is pretty luxurious.

She described the thought of having a daily deadline as *terrifying*.

When you walk in after you've gone to press and you've got a blank board again, you're thinking: 'God what are we going to put on this board? – we've got two weeks' and I can't imagine thinking 'God what are we going to put in the paper tomorrow?' It's taught you so much more than having someone tell you what it is like. – Sophie

According to Teresa, it was the chance to produce several editions of *Te Waha Nui* that ensured the quality of the learning experience.

For the editors, particularly, this meant they were more confident and had a better, stronger second edition.

Leonard also said he gained from repeating the experience.

I was able to culminate all that I'd been learning over the first three issues, in the last issue and as chief reporter try to do the things I'd learnt.

Greg said there were things he would do differently, if he had the opportunity again.

There are probably decisions about what stories to promote that on reflection weren't the right decisions but that's something you only learn in hindsight.

However, he noted the major progress on the fourth and final edition.

You'd give someone a page to lay out and, 15 minutes later, they'd have it laid out and it would need only minor tweaking after that, whereas it used to take one or two hours for someone to fit all the elements on the page.

Most of the students who focused on improving their design skills found their speed with technology had vastly improved. But not everyone agreed about improvements in the quality of the layout. Teresa said there was not a lot of *evolution* in it.

We introduced a vox pop page with a set layout, but that was the only innovation in the design of the paper.

She also saw a possible future role for students doing the concurrent photojournalism paper to improve the standard of photographs in *Te Waha Nui*.

Our photos have ranged from dreadful to mediocre. I think it would have been valuable for them to be running a photo desk, as part of their course.

Rita said the experience had expanded her confidence about doing a variety of journalistic roles other than just reporting.

I feel more open to the idea of going into an editorial team in another role, as a photos editor, a section editor or even as the sub-editor. I feel I at least have a taste of all that now.

Almost everyone involved in producing *Te Waha Nui* agreed that the production schedule did not allow for much time between editions to look back on the experience. This was only partly due to the tight timetable. According to Greg there was also a personal need to focus elsewhere.

When you have distribution on Friday you'll just flick through the paper and decide what looks great, what didn't print properly, whether something's funny with a column or whether a photo's a bit sharp and then you run off and distribute it. I've spent two weeks working on the paper. I don't want to read it over the weekend. So on Monday I've only read the stories that I've already looked at before we come to this reflective meeting.

Grace saw the lack of time for reflection as being *fairly real life*.

It's not something you can tell people to sit and think about. It could have been too structured in that way and might have felt a bit condescending. More time would have been good, but it's quite tricky to organise that.

However Leonard said the students had time to reflect on the Friday and Monday and the whole week before production week.

That's where you make those slight changes or try to head the thing in a better direction. During production week you don't think about things too much but it's that thinking you do the week before that helps frame what you're doing in production week. – Leonard

The tutors' view of reflective practice

Both tutors agreed that time for the students to reflect on their learning, during the production period, was limited. But Tutor B said that though *Te Waha Nui* was a *real world* production it was still very much a learning environment, where issues could be discussed when they occurred, making the process a lot more democratic than a commercial newsroom.

Doing a lot of talking can slow things down at times but our priority has to be the learning. Students always value feedback and no matter how much we give them they still want more.

He felt a lot more detailed feedback could be given but time was the problem.

As soon as one paper has been published, we have to move on. Some of the learning opportunity that could happen in discussions with the tutors on pages the students have worked with ends up being missed.

Tutor A agreed that the element of reflection did not feature enough during production of the four issues. He thought student reflections specifically about what they had done on the paper during the semester could be another possibility for the final assignment.

That might make more sense to them and it might not feel such a chore to do. It could be a reflective assignment that they're expected to work on through the semester so it's clearly tied in with the paper.

5.7 Discussion

The News Production paper calls for a level of teamwork and communication unparalleled in other papers in AUT's journalism course. The students had to work out ways of agreeing on basic decisions – which story goes on what page, choice of headlines, how layouts can be improved, how a story should be edited and many other judgments made in everyday journalism. But in addition, they had to try, as well as maintaining a team spirit within the group, to have good communication with the wider group of contributing students and encourage them to keep a good copy flow going into the newspaper.

The difficulty with that, as pointed out by editor Derek, and reinforced by Teresa, was that all the journalism students, coping with the pressure of gaining a degree or diploma with the best possible marks, must try to excel in all their papers, particularly if they have decided to aim for a career in broadcast journalism, for instance, or magazine journalism. Obviously, they were not in the same position as newspaper journalists paid to be productive employees. This created stresses for the production team which would not be present in the “real world” of newspaper production, when reporters did not have the chance to opt out of filing their stories for possible publication. This situation was particularly galling for News Production students who believed their own overall grades in other papers would suffer because of the long hours involved in News Production.

The students generally found that their communication within the group was sometimes adversely affected by “splits” among members. This appeared to have been exacerbated by the appointment of two editors and the recognition that, to some extent, this divided the class into two “camps”, particularly as one of the editors had a focus for *Te Waha Nui* that did not conform to that of the tutors or of previous students. The team spirit, however, grew at deadline time when both students and tutors worked late into the night to get the paper out on time, with shared takeaway meals and a sense of fun and co-operation, along with the urgency. With the wider group, there was a frank admission that communication could have been much better. Group members pointed to ways in which this could have been dramatically improved with a simple class visit by a News Production team member from time to time to request more stories for publication.

Deadline pressures and stress are probably an inescapable outcome of producing a newspaper for which the usual “extension” process for sick or lazy students must be rigidly ruled out. As one student commented, the strong desire to produce a *masterpiece* must of necessity give way to making *Te Waha Nui* as good as possible in the circumstances. The student awareness of producing a professional publication which must endure the scrutiny of stringent critics, including possible future employers, was a vital factor in the learning process. This compared with the situation described by Frost (2001) in which a weekly newspaper produced by journalism students had 150 copies printed and was distributed only to students and tutors within a journalism department. Although Frost (2002) quoted the course leader as explaining that the deadlines for *The Reporter* were “artificial”, but mostly adhered to by students as a matter of “professional honour”, he still revealed that students could seek an extension to the 9

a.m. Thursday deadline in the event of “major computer crashes wiping out a day’s work or preventing the normal Wednesday activity” (p. 332). For a weekly newspaper, produced by different groups of students each week, and aimed only at an internal audience, this is probably a reasonable allowance. But the “reality” of the deadlines for *Te Waha Nui* was key to the learning experience and about the only aspect that truly matched commercial newspaper journalism, giving the students a “real world” idea of what the job entailed.

Finally, the element of reflection, aimed at improving student performance for each issue of the paper, and easy to dismiss as being absent, or at least limited, in a deadline-pressured environment could be seen to exist in its own way. One student’s suggestion that an opportunity be given to review particular pages in the paper, after publication, though perhaps desirable, was obviously impractical without radically altering the structure of the paper. In another student’s eyes this prospect was seen as *condescending*. There was evidence that by the time of the final edition, the students had made a good deal of progress in critically evaluating their story selection. There were also clear signs that they had gained what Sheridan Burns (2004, p. 9) termed the ability to “think on your feet” and “keep your wits about you” – both phrases that she suggested described “critical reflection in practice” – abilities highly valued in journalism.

The question raised by this chapter is how much the learning experience can attempt to replicate the “real world” of newspaper production when it is set in a university environment, or even whether it should make this attempt. Though the *Te Waha Nui* students were unanimous in describing the experience as a very useful way to learn new skills with comments ranging from *great* to *fantastic* or *brilliant* in many ways they encountered student-related situations that do not completely replicate a *real* newsroom. In the *Te Waha Nui* context, at least, these would appear to be an inescapable part of the learning experience.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

When I showed Te Waha Nui to my parents they thought it was good. I said this page has got this error and this error and they had no idea. My Dad's extremely intelligent. He reads the paper every day, but he doesn't know these things. – Greg

6.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by describing the purpose of the study and its aim to break new ground in discussing journalism student insights into an experiential learning environment. It also explores how the research question identified two strands of the student feedback – firstly, the delight in their *real world* achievement, tempered by an awareness of the compromises they had to make; and, secondly, the frustrations involved in students trying to exercise authority over their fellow students without a real mandate to do so. Differences between the 2006 student group and previous News Production participants are described as well as examples of data-gathering methods for student perspectives on experiential learning. The major theme emerging from the student interviews – the empowerment of the student in the learning process – is detailed, together with observations on the role of the tutors in the AUT course. The size of the student workload, which also emerged as a major point of contention for the students, and AUT efforts to address this problem in 2007 provide a possible course of action for other journalism schools. After briefly comparing the relative merits of print versus online student publications the chapter concludes with recommendations elicited from the study and some suggestions for future research into experiential learning in journalism education.

6.2 Purpose of the study

Brandon (2002) pointed to a gap in research on the learning environment in journalism education and envisaged a comparative study including the views of industry employees as well as students enrolled in current courses. The focus she suggested was on experiential learning through campus media and internships. Limited to students enrolled in a one-semester paper in the AUT's 2006 journalism major and confined to addressing their own and their peers' learning outcomes while they produced four editions of the course newspaper. This case study is a small step in that direction.

In the context of a small study group, working under considerable pressure, Brandon's advocacy of examining how individual learning styles were applied, according to the

theories of Kolb (1984) would have been too ambitious to contemplate. In any case, in the discussion of Kolb's very well-known learning styles inventory, many researchers, such as the 15 used by Greenaway (cited by Pickles, 2006) remain sceptical of its appropriateness in some situations and I find their arguments convincing. Similarly, time and number constraints ruled out seeking any useful feedback of the type described by Brandon (2002).

Where this study aimed to break new ground was in providing some rarely-published student insights into one aspect of the experiential learning process, as it applies to the field of journalism – working in the campus media.

6.3 The research question

The study set out to explore the student perspective on how their skills and capabilities developed when they were given the major responsibility for producing and publishing their own newspaper. They described the unromantic reality of the experience, with all the challenges and frustrations, as well as the high level of satisfaction “learning by doing” involved. The quotation which opens this chapter came from the third interview with Greg, the second editor, and reflected his delight at the evidence of his new skills – something his *extremely intelligent* father had no concept of. Similarly the first editor, after what he considered was *a constant battle* to produce the paper he wanted, obviously felt very rewarded, judging by his description of distributing the newspaper in Queen St to what he perceived as his target readership, and watching them become thoroughly engrossed in it (Chapter 4).

On the other hand, the study revealed many areas of frustration and difficulty, some of them caused by what Sheridan Burns (2004) called the “often-discomforting compromises journalists may make in the course of their work” (p.6). This was a vital factor in the experiential learning process and a valuable introduction for the students to a journalism career.

Other difficulties, however, arose because the students had to deal with relationship issues which would not be a part of *real world* newsrooms. These included the fact that though they were required to play authoritative roles on the newspaper, their status with each other and with the story-contributing students, remained that of fellow students. As one student pointed out, the contributors who became busy with assignments in other

papers and *couldn't be bothered* filing their stories to *Te Waha Nui* couldn't have acted like that in a normal newsroom.

6.4 The 2006 cohort

The fact that this study was done in 2006 could mean it may be less representative of the experiential learning process at AUT than if it had been carried out in either of the two previous years, because there were differences in the way the group operated. Perhaps the most influential factor was the unprecedented appointment of two editors instead of one. The consequence of this change is acknowledged by both tutors and many of the students to have had some negative effects, including a tendency to divide the small production team into two *camps*. This, together with the first editor's different concept of the newspaper's readership – a view he held strongly and worked extremely hard to achieve – could have meant that there were some atypical aspects to the learning experience. Nonetheless, from the student perspective which is the focus of the study, enthusiasm for the experience still strongly echoes views expressed in feedback from previous years. As the first 2006 editor put it:

I've learnt, so absolutely. That's the glory of Te Waha Nui is that you get to do it, you get to analyse it and you get to do it again. And in that respect it's absolutely brilliant. – Derek

6.5 Data-gathering methods

Such direct feedback from students as they are undergoing the experience seems to be rarely reported from journalism courses. The use of in-course journals can provide some interesting student feedback, particularly when they are guided by instructor questions. A problem-based approach to students of software development (Dunlap, 2005) used a “before and after” questionnaire to guide the student journal entries. At the beginning of the course the journals featured comments such as “My ability to work as a software development professional is very weak” and “I am a terrible programmer; if I was hired by a development firm I would be doing a terrible job” (p. 72). This, as would be expected, contrasted with comments at the end of the course, such as: “I would be very comfortable if hired as a software developer” (p. 74). But an interesting point was that because they had developed their skills while working on “authentic, contextualized problems and projects” (p. 65) many of the students then referred to themselves as “software engineers”, as opposed to students (Dunlap, 2005, p.74).

Journals kept during an experiential journalism course, or even before and after if students are pressed for time, would be a useful way of obtaining further data on the student experience and AUT's plans for the 2007 News Production course now include provision for that [Appendix E].

Online technology also offers opportunities for future data gathering for journalism research. In a discussion area in the *DITOnline* website, students were encouraged to reflect regularly and openly on what they had learned, such as:

This past week I have learnt how to handle those big bouncers who protect VIPs and how to run for cover in case of riots. I have learnt that in order to get your story published, sometimes you need to work on Sundays and miss church. I have also learnt that as a journalist you make a few enemies (Turkington & Frank, 2005, p.149).

Providing a platform for personal revelation, the emotional life of the student journalist can become evident:

I am crying while writing this last lesson. I have learnt so many things from this course. Online has been more than going out, finding and filing the story. It has been a bonding experience, a self-esteem booster and a great help in showing me that I can write anything as long as I put my mind to it (Turkington & Frank, 2005, p. 151).

In addition, the use of a web-based publication meant that the collaboration involved in story filing, peer editing and sometimes rejecting stories was "transparent and recorded" (p. 149). This would seem to be an effective way of overcoming the communication problems inherent in a busy journalism team with other commitments.

6.6 Empowerment of the students and the role of the tutors

The most important theme which emerged from the AUT research was the transformative effect of the students being given the power to make their own decisions about the paper's content, initially daunting to some, but eventually turning into a profound sense of ownership of the product. This reflected the key role needing to be adopted by tutors in this situation. Shor (1992, p 16) described the empowerment process as "democratic" and Meadows (1997, p. 99) referred to the teacher as "facilitator", but it is apparent that the role change by the AUT tutors between Semester One and Semester Two in 2006 was initially something of a puzzle to the News Production students, who were expecting more tutor direction and less dependence on their own judgements. Then, after the paper's first edition was out, the fact that a tutor

who had been helping and advising the students all the previous week offered a strong critique of their efforts the next week, was seen by at least one student as evidence that they were supposed to have realized the shortcomings themselves and corrected them during the production. He cited this as a good example of the way the tutors *held back*. The editor, on the other hand, felt *undercut* by criticism of what he saw as *his* paper. Admittedly, this was the first edition, more likely to reflect the students' lack of experience than later issues, but educationally in an ideal world it would have been desirable for the students to have more of a role in critiquing their own efforts.

As Shor (1992) put it:

In a participatory, collaborative class, conflicts and complaints can be expressed openly and negotiated mutually, which increases the possibility of solving them or at least maintaining a working relationship in the group. In teacher-centred classes, student alienation is provoked and then driven underground ... This bottling up of bad feelings undermines the transfer of knowledge ... (p. 24, 25).

The AUT tutors' role, though far from being "teacher-centred", was made more problematic for them, however, by the students' general acknowledgement that they lacked time to reflect on each edition as a whole. Having mostly concentrated on their own pages during the production period, they arrived the next week to contemplate the *blank board* again.

You're thinking: 'God what are we going to put on this board? – we've got two weeks.' – Sophie

This was perhaps the downside of the empowerment experience for the students. Who had time to sit around analysing last week's paper when there was nothing there for the next edition and it was your job to come up with ideas to fill it? A situation in which the students would critique their own and their fellow students' work is very hard to bring about in these circumstances.

A challenge to the power relationship

A similar dilemma arose for the third edition. There were obviously two reasons why feelings ran so high. Suddenly, one of the tutors whose approach the students had previously seen as *hands off* was appearing to *interfere* with their decision-making process. This was not the first time the students had been involved in in-class discussion of ethical issues and it was an unparalleled opportunity to talk through opinions on a

controversial topic. But the tutor had to some extent pre-empted the process by preparing his own commentary for publication in the newspaper in the event that the controversial version of the advertisement was run – a very necessary move if the paper was to meet its deadline.

This was interpreted by many of the students as *pushing* them to publish the advertisement, whereas the tutor's perspective was that his actions aimed to *push the students to the limits so they would justify what they were doing*. His later comment that students could have been more *daring* and should realize they can *push the boundaries themselves* indicated that there was some justification for the students' feelings. Perhaps the key to the tutor's attitude was his interpretation of *Te Waha Nui*'s role as *an independent voice and alternative voice from the mainstream*. The tradition for "student associations at universities to publish vigorous and challenging newspapers and magazines that have stirred controversy and catapulted many editors into careers in journalism" (Robie, 2006, p. 31) may also have influenced this thinking, even though the controversy "stirred" could, in this case, have been an advertisement rather than a piece of journalism.

The second and probably more important factor, in the students' strong feelings, was the fact that the newspaper was perilously close to deadline and the students, who thought they had already made a decision, were impatient and intolerant of the delay being caused by the debate. This is one of the difficulties in trying to maintain the best aspects of a learning environment, when *real world* deadlines apply. The students, however, did recognize that the tutor in his *management* position could have made the decision without consulting them at all and so, despite their frustration, appreciated being involved.

This highlights another important advantage of allowing student power in this type of experiential learning which is that it is almost certainly unmatched in *real world* journalism. Media organisations are usually hierarchical in their power structures and not all members have equal influence. Within this "community of practice" new reporters "may not be permitted to participate in decisions about what is published" (Sheridan Burns, 2004, p.10). This is one of the strongest arguments for this type of experiential learning. No number of class news selection exercises can achieve the same result.

6.7 The workload for News Production students

The burden of the workload in News Production, recognised by students and tutors alike, is by no means unique to the New Zealand situation. Frost (2002) described the workload produced by *The Reporter* as representing about five-sixths of the students' work in the module, but being worth only 50% of the total mark.

For 2007, AUT is making some assessment changes for News Production which should both reduce the pressure and focus on aspects of convergence in modern journalism practice. A paper in New Media Journalism will have its assessment structure altered to provide for contributions to the online version of *Te Waha Nui* from the students. As well as their other assignments, each student will provide six web-journalism stories for the paper, due weekly during the *Te Waha Nui* production cycle.

In addition, the News Production assessment has been altered by scrapping the controversial final reflective assignment. Instead, a total of 25% of the marks will be assigned for each of the paper's four issues. Students will also be required to write and maintain an individual journal recording their reflections and an analysis of their experience working on *Te Waha Nui*. This will be a requirement to pass the paper but no marks are attached. The paper's head tutor said he made the decision not only to reduce the heavy workload but to "enable students working on the newspaper to be released to work on their final assignments for other papers during Semester Two" [See Appendix E].

This move could be particularly useful in that the journal data – with a student's permission – could be used anonymously as a basis for future research. It should also reduce the danger that a learning experience almost universally acclaimed by the student participants should be marred by the exhaustion and stress involved in coping with the workload as it previously existed.

Another factor to be considered is that the student grapevine is naturally very active and the university could otherwise find that students are put off by what they hear about working hours to the extent that they opt for other papers instead, threatening *Te Waha Nui*'s future.

While stressful, the last-minute deadline pressures are a predictable part of producing a campus newspaper and interestingly were identified as team-building and even fun. As *Te Waha Nui*'s first editor observed, the late nights prior to the deadlines were when the team came together and there was *a great atmosphere* and *fantastic teamwork*.

Frost (2002) observed that it was not unusual for the United Kingdom students to have to work late at night and early in the morning to get the paper out, with some "putting in an average of 18 hours a week...on *The Reporter* alone" (p. 332). Students' "passion" for Durban's website publication (Turkington & Frank, 2005) was such that they regularly arrived early for their bi-weekly sessions in a computer laboratory and always left late. The authors describe the students' enthusiasm as "unprecedented" (p. 145) and noted that by the end of the course in 2004 they were "exhausted" (p.151).

6.8 Online and print publications

Journalism educators planning a campus publication at this stage might follow the South African model and plump for an on-line version only. However, the print version still has appeal, despite the costs involved. For the AUT students, producing a print version not only upskilled them in editing and design but also provided them with the exciting experience of delivering the product into the hands of central city readers:

I handed a paper out on Queen St, and just watched people's reactions. They were supposed to be crossing the road and when the light went green, they were still reading the paper and missed the crossing. – Derek

In addition, the arrival of *Te Waha Nui* on the desk of industry contacts all over New Zealand also gives the students' work a profile which might help them get jobs, compared with an internet site which busy executives then need to make a point of accessing.

The costs of print publication would seem prohibitive for some programmes but in some journalism schools newspapers can become self-funded through advertising (Robie, 2006). At AUT, advertisements designed for real clients by creative advertising students have enlivened the appearance of *Te Waha Nui* and, although the paper is fully-funded by the university, a few advertising clients have also been found. Perhaps involvement by marketing students to gain more advertising support could be an option for the future.

6.9 Recommendations:

The following are the major conclusions resulting from this study which may be a useful guide to other journalism educators considering implementing similar experiential learning programmes.

Empowering the students

The empowerment of the students to make decisions on the content of the paper is the most important aspect of the learning and must be widely encouraged, apart from the inescapable fact that the final word on legal matters must stay with the tutors. If the newspaper is being circulated to a critical audience and is considered a “showcase” for the students’ work, tutor input to prevent serious errors is also vital.

So delegation of power has to remain partial, with students’ content decisions always subject to the right of the tutors to re-angle or heavily sub-edit stories, particularly if they are to be given a prominent place in the newspaper. The lesson that a reporter’s story is never sacred is an important part of the learning process about the reality of day-to-day journalism. However, where time allows, involving the page editor or chief sub-editor in the process, so that they gain some understanding of the reasons for drastically changing a story, is something which should be attempted in most circumstances to improve the student learning outcomes.

Continuity of editorship

It seems obvious that the 2006 experience at AUT points to the advisability of sticking with one editor for all four editions. This approach may vary depending on differing campus media situations but in any sequence of producing a few editions of a newspaper in reasonably quick succession, it has the advantage of allowing the editor to grow and develop in the job. There were both advantages and disadvantages in rotating other jobs, with the positive effect being a variety of student experiences as they learned about the requirements of each role. On the other hand, at least two of the students in the AUT group, by retaining responsibility for technical skills – such as Photoshop technology, or online expertise – gained greater efficacy in the job and probably improved the overall standard of the product. This perhaps reflects the growing accessibility of some computer-based technology – encouraging students to have a go,

but also acknowledging that professional skill levels are not necessarily achieved quickly.

Workload issues

While the AUT experience in 2006 has led directly to the involvement of a larger group of students spread between the print and online versions of *Te Waha Nui* there is no guarantee that this will remove the late-night last-minute pressure involved in producing a campus publication. Educators need to judge whether there are ways of alleviating the work burden if it seems to become unreasonable. Real-time deadlines, though, have given an edge to AUT's course which has been of enormous benefit to students due to enter the industry and reinforced the notion (Sheridan Burns, 2004) that students' negotiation of difficult decisions "can be shown to increase the sense of efficacy graduates will need in the workforce" (p. 6).

Professional standards

The high standard of work demanded of students producing *Te Waha Nui*, while challenging students and tutors alike, is a vital factor in the learning experience. To allow students to disregard the editorial advice of senior and experienced tutors would seem to detract seriously from the learning. Mistakes can and will happen, as they do in all newspapers, but the decision-making process practised by the students should be as rigorous as possible. This research showed the value of requiring responsible decision-making from the students, with significant evidence of improvements in their critical thinking. In the context of a publicly-distributed newspaper, too much student autonomy is as problematic as too little.

Future research possibilities

This research project could be replicated in other journalism schools and widened to include other perspectives. The initial plan to include the views of ex-students of the News Production paper, which had to be abandoned, would have added an interesting additional perspective on the impact of this type of learning on future careers. While several of the 2006 students felt the experience had made them more confident about tackling a wider range of roles beyond that of a reporter when they got into the industry, it is too early to gauge whether that has happened or whether it will in the future. A study of the ex-students – now two or three years into their careers – would provide some useful insights into that. Brandon (2002) also advocated including the topic of

experiential learning during internships and this research could also include the perspective of industry employees involved in supervision of interns.

Experiential learning is not confined to students involved in producing campus newspapers. AUT, for example, has many other practical courses in radio, television and new media journalism and is considering the possibility of eventually integrating these, possibly into some sort of “newsroom” experience in the final year, with students publishing stories in a range of different formats. Handy (1995 cited in Deuze, 2006, p. 26) suggested that students should be prepared for a “portfolio worklife” arguing that:

contemporary professionals do not build a career within one organization nor by doing one thing really well – they switch regularly from employer to employer, from industry to industry, whereas the quality of their work is defined by the diversity and richness of their collection of skills and achievements.

Further research could establish whether, if this is the case, how journalism employees now judge the relevance of their pre-employment training and what guidance they can give to educators about useful developments in the field.

Finally, if journalism curricula are to retain “learning by doing” and in-house production of campus media, rather than having them dismissed as “a costly waste of time and resources” (Deuze, 2006, p. 29), it is important that a strong body of research establishes a credible link between experiential learning in journalism on university campuses and the industry which employs their graduates.

Appendix A

Interview Questions

Student interview 1: Two weeks into the course

Why did you choose to take the News Production paper?

Two weeks into the paper have your expectations changed?

What are some of the main things you expect to learn from producing four issues of a newspaper to deadline?

What role do you expect the tutors to play, compared with the role of the students.

How important do you think it will be to work as a team with your fellow students?

To what extent do you expect that students will be able to make key decisions regarding story placement and layout?

What particular skills or personal qualities do you think you can bring to the team?

What are the major difficulties you expect to face?

Are there any other comments you want to make?

Student Interview 2: After production of the first edition

Many of the people that I talked to last time said they thought that an important thing in running a paper would be team work. How do you think that worked in the first issue?

As far as the group was concerned, what do you think about how communication worked?

Did you feel you had a good say in the story selection process. Were your views taken into account?

How did the CBD focus for the paper work in hindsight?

What sort of stress do you think was involved in producing the first edition?

Quite early on, people seemed to feel that the tutors were going to stand back and let the students make most of the important decisions. How did that actually work out?

When you look at your other learning experiences on the course, what would you say that you're actually learning from news production?

Are there any other comments you want to make?

Interview 3: After all four editions, but with final assignment still to come

How did operating as a team and communication work out as the course progressed?

What do you feel are the main things you've learned from doing this paper?

What role do you feel gave you the best learning experience?

Some students have described the third issue of Te Waha Nui as "a mess". What was your view?

How did you balance your work on News Production with the requirements of your other papers?

What about your fellow students? Have you seen them making progress?

There was one issue of the paper when there was some controversy about putting in an advertisement with a suicide theme. What was your attitude to that?

How did the tutors' conflicting views affect the way the group tackled that problem?

The two editors had different approaches to the paper's readership. What did you feel about this?

If the paper could be expanded so more people got a chance to be editor, how useful do you think that would be?

Do you have any suggestions as to how the News Production paper could be improved?

The theory of experiential learning dates back to Confucius who said "Tell me and I will forget, show me and I may remember. Involve me and I will understand." So what you and your classmates have been doing over the last few weeks is to have a concrete experience, producing a newspaper. The theorists say this leads you to observe and reflect on the experience. And then after that you piece your thoughts together to be a guide for future actions. With these guides in place you actively test them leading to new experiences and a new learning cycle. Can you comment on whether this worked for you and if so in what way?

Are there any other comments you want to make?

Additional questions in the final interviews

Most of the students were also asked extra questions following up on concerns or issues they had raised in the previous interviews – such as the workload. Both editors were asked to comment on how valuable that experience had been and what they thought of each other's performance in the role.

Tutor interviews: After course finished

As a learning experience for the students what do you see as the paper's advantages?

Can you give me examples of what you've observed this year's students learn in this paper that they wouldn't be able to experience elsewhere?

So how much did the students progress between the first issue of *Te Waha Nui* – the first one that they produced on their own – and the final issue they produced?

How do you assess the students' performance?

Would you rate some of this particular group of students, as passengers rather than strong performers?

How much can the tutors really distance themselves from the product and still ensure it comes out on deadline and looking as good as possible? What is your personal philosophy about how to achieve this while not appearing to over-rule the students in decision-making?

This year you had two editors for the paper at different times. Did this have a positive or negative effect on the students learning experience in your view?

The first editor felt that he was more or less battling the tutors over his CBD focus. Was that your impression?

A lot of the students say the third issue of the paper – the first issue the second editor was responsible for – ran too close to deadline and contained a whole lot of mistakes which shouldn't have got through. What was your view?

For the paper's third issue, there was some controversy about publishing an advertisement with a suicide theme. You (Tutor B) opposed this. What were your reasons? How did you (Tutor A) arrive at your decision that the suicide image was a suitable ad to be run?

Feedback from the students indicated that though most of them conceded that the suicide ad issue had been a very good learning experience when it was happening they were running so close to deadline, they rather resented having to spend hours debating that issue instead of getting on and getting on with what they had to do. What's your opinion on that?

Would you ever consider such as with issue three, that things had just gone totally down the toilet and you can't get the paper out?

Are there other issues which have arisen during the production of *Te Waha Nui* this year that have required discussion and perhaps analysis as you go along?

How do you envisage News Production being improved or further developed in the future?

Confucius question (as above)

Any other comments?

Appendix B

Why we're publishing this graphic advert

Te Waha Nui, a training newspaper published by AUT University's School of Communication Studies, supports attempts by the Government and other bodies to curb the rate of suicide in New Zealand – particularly among young people.

It believes in exercising care and responsibility in reporting matters of suicide and mental health.

It may therefore seem surprising to some that this newspaper would consider publishing the graphic image in an advertisement on the opposite page.

Certainly the decision has not been taken lightly.

The image was created by a team of two young creative advertising students at AUT University as a live brief for the Homeowners Against Line Trespassers (HALT) and New Era Energy.

Both community and rural groups are campaigning against Transpower's controversial proposal to build a 400kV transmission line across a 200km route from Otahuhu to Whakamaru in the Waikato as part of a new national pylons network.

"Our message is simple; we know Auckland needs power, and upgrading the existing lines will see the benefits coming on line, along with saving of \$400 million compared with the Transpower proposal," says HALT chairman Steve Hunt.

The students, Ray McKay and Bex Radford, were deeply moved by the allegations of links with major health disorders as they embarked on their research.

Among many health reports cited by NEE's website, a major study published in the *British Medical Journal* found that children whose birth address was within 200m of an overhead power line had a 70 per cent increased risk of leukaemia.

Children living 200m to 600m away from power lines had a 20 per cent increased risk.

This indicated the danger from power lines ^{was} appreciably further from the lines than had been identified in previous studies.

Some research reports also showed links between electro-magnetic fields (EMFs) and cancers other than leukaemia, such as adult brain tumour, Lou Gehrig's disease and miscarriages.

For advertising creativity student Bex Radford, research evaluations that also linked magnetic fields with suicide were especially disturbing.

Her team believed that their campaign needed a strong message to reach the public.

“Why suicide? Knowing nothing about pylons, we decided to do some research before we started work on this brief,” explains Radford.

“The studies coming out from England, Scotland and America about the health effects of pylons was overwhelming, and in light of this it seemed hideously irresponsible of Transpower to propose that bigger versions of an obviously outdated and dangerous technology as the answer to our electricity problem.

“Depression, miscarriage and stress were the three health effects we chose to focus on, mainly because of their potential to destroy lives - both of the people directly affected, their families and the communities they live in.

”This is defiantly an emotional and ‘in your face’ campaign, but to be honest we felt the issue deserved nothing less than that.

“Just as we say in the ads, even one life is a massive price to pay for more power, especially when there are safer, cheaper and more effective solutions.”

Creative advertising lecturer Jane Berney says: “This ad is grounded in fact and reflects the very real position of people in communities being pressured by Transpower over their homes and land in a flawed, inefficient and expensive proposal.

“In the other two campaign ads, the ‘lines’ are represented by a furrowed brow (showing the concern of many New Zealanders), and stretch lines on a pregnant tummy (to highlight some of the health issues for very young children around pylons).

“The creative work on this campaign is outstanding and we’re proud to present it.”

Berney, who moved to Hunua two years ago, is also a member of HALT.

“My property is not directly impacted on by the Transpower proposal, but my community and my country is,” she says. “That’s why I am involved in HALT.”

Under the Advertising Standards Authority’s code of ethics, advocacy advertising is “an essential and desirable part of the functioning of a democratic society. Therefore such opinions may be robust.”

Te Waha Nui has long published a mix of paid advertising and advertisements produced by the ad creativity students at AUT University.

We publish this advertisement today to contribute to the public debate about the Transpower proposals and community opposition.

Appendix C

Final News Production Assignment 2006

Assessment Five

Analytical commentary (20%) Weeks 12, 13

Due: 4pm, Friday, October 27

[Students prepare a 1500 word commentary](#) analysing an aspect of newspaper production. This assignment is designed to test your individual reflective and research skills involved in newspaper production. It can draw on your experience with *Te Waha Nui*. Examples of topics for this assignment include:

- *A proposed remake design plan for an existing newspaper.* The commentary would include approximately four designed A3 pages, a flatplan of a complete issue and a demographics and market analysis justifying the proposal.
- *Designing a new newspaper from scratch.* The commentary could include four designed A3 pages, a flatplan of a complete issue and a demographics and market analysis justifying the proposed new publication and identifying a niche market.
- *A critical analysis of a CURRENT major development in the newspaper industry, or a sector of the press, either in New Zealand or overseas.*

Appendix D

Excerpt from Student Handout on Editorial Roles

Job descriptions

Continuous assessment for editorial roles until the end of week 11. The editor is appointed by the staff course leaders after interviews with applicants. He/she is responsible for leadership for the duration of the semester in consultation with the “management” – the course staff. Other roles are rotated as decided by the editorial team.

Editor:

- Accountable to newspaper management (course lecturers)
- Overall responsibility (in consultation with course lecturers) for organising the editorial production team to meet the printing schedule.
- Oversees news selection and editing, writing of editorials, inviting of opinion articles, and managing policies on style and content.
- Chairs Monday editorial meetings and post-mortems
- Responsible for letters to the editor and dealing with responses/complaints from the readers

Chief subeditor (1):

- Copy tastes – reads all filed news copy, liaises with Editor, Chief Reporters and section editors and makes a preliminary assessment on news value and position (department) in the newspaper
- Organises and coordinates all copy editing and allocation of page editing
- Supervises page revision
- Maintains newspaper flat plan
- Ensures the team keeps to production schedules
- Deputises for the editor when needed

Chief reporters (2):

- Maintains the newspaper’s **News Diary/assignments list**
- Coordinates filing of news and features stories from other papers
- Liaises with other students filing and other paper lecturers
- Assigns team members if stories need filing within the News Production paper.
- Maintains **Contact Book** or e-contacts for useful news resources and student contact
- Organises follow-up information to fill “holes” in stories
- Second chief reporter works on the following edition and becomes the main chief reporter in the second production cycle

Section Editors (1): *(Business, Health, Media, PIMA, Politics, Taha Maori and sport etc)*

- Organises and coordinates specialist stories such as with a Politics Editor and political stories
- Liaises with Chief Subeditor, Features Editor, Chief Reporter, Picture Editors and Editor

Features Editor (1):

- Coordinates Features section of the newspaper (eg., features, columns, opinion)
- Liaises with Reviews Editor and Editor
- Liaises with courses producing copy for this section (eg. Magazine Journalism)

Reviews Editor (1):

- Coordinates Reviews section and the Art, Theatre, Music, Film, Shows listings section
- Liaises with Features Editor, Chief Subeditor and Editor
- Liaises with Magazine Journalism over reviews

Subeditors (rest of team):

- Liaise with reporters
- Liaise with picture editors
- Write headlines and edit/lay out news and features stories
- Follow agreed styles

Online Editor (1):

- Prepares content for **Te Waha Nui Online**.
- Selects and edits/captions News Photo gallery for each edition
- Maintains online letters content and assists with print letters
- Monitors news media links for TWN Online.

Picture Editors (2):

- Organise, select and process all illustrations in an edition (with the exception of four colour images – handled by Art & Design lecturer David Sinfield).
- Commissions photographs, graphics and cartoons (eg., from outside sources such as the *NZ Herald*).
- Edit image information (embedded caption, date and copyright data)
- Maintain picture archives
- Liaise with layout subs.

The last two roles are doubled up with other editorial roles. Discretionary marks will be allocated for these extra duties.

Cartoonist (1):

- Provides political or social issue cartoons for the editorial page
- Draws cartoons/illustrations for stories on other pages.

(This role is optional depending on whether a suitable journalism student is available, or it can be another student contributor preferably from within the school).

Distribution coordinator (1):

- Maintains newspaper distribution database
- Coordinates student distribution volunteers from all journalism courses (as needed) on publishing day.
- Decides distribution outlets and quantities.

Appendix E

Summary of News Production Assessment Changes for 2007

Rationale for change: To reduce and balance the heavy workload as part of a paper that is generally regarded as equivalent to a 30pt course, and to enable students working on the newspaper to be released to work on their final assignments for other papers during semester two.

Recommendation: Drop the current final (fifth) assignment and increase assessment of each of the four editions from 20% to 25%. Instead, the student editorial team would in future write individual reflective accounts [journals] analysing their experience but without marks counting towards the assessment.

Previous assessment (2004-2006):

| Assessment No. | Name | Due Date | Weighting |
|----------------|---|-------------------|-----------|
| #A1 to 4 | <i>Te Waha Nui</i> editions 1-4 | Weeks 5, 7, 9, 11 | 20% |
| #A5 | Reflective assignment/newspaper design/redesign | Week 13 | 20% |

#A1 to #A4

Four published editions of the newspaper Te Waha Nui (approx 24 pp editions) 20% each

#A5 Analytical commentary (20%):

Students prepare a 2000 word commentary analysing an aspect of newspaper production. Examples of topics for this assignment include:

- A proposed remake design plan for an existing newspaper*
- Designing a new newspaper from scratch*
- A critical analysis of a current major development in the newspaper industry, or a sector of the press, either in New Zealand or overseas.*

New assessment:

| Assessment No. | Name | Due Date | Weighting |
|----------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|
| #A1 to 4 | <i>Te Waha Nui</i> editions 1-4 | Weeks 5, 7, 9, 11 | 25% |
| #C1 | Maintain reflective journal | Week 11 | No mark |

#A1 to #A4

Four published editions of the newspaper Te Waha Nui (approx. 24 pp editions) 25% each

#C1: Write and maintain an individual journal recording your reflections and an analysis of your experience working on Te Waha Nui. This is required to pass the paper but no marks are attached.

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