

# Journal of Teaching, Learning and Society

Pilot Issue – April 2018



## Publication Details

---

The Journal of Teaching, Learning and Society is a production of TLN Press, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Teacher Learning Network (TLN).

The Teacher Learning Network is a not-for-profit provider of professional development for teachers and educators across Australia. The TLN is owned by the Australian Education Union (Victoria) and the Independent Education Union (Victoria – Tasmania). TLN has been providing programs and resources to schools and early childhood centres since 1994.

Consistent with our commitment to education unions as significant stakeholders in education, the journal will not print material that openly contradicts the shared values of these two unions. However, the journal remains open to articles and research that might inform the ongoing development of policies of these unions.

More information about TLN is available at [www.tln.org.au](http://www.tln.org.au)

or contact

Michael Victory  
Executive Officer  
Teacher Learning Network  
126 Trenergy Crescent  
Abbotsford, Victoria, 3067  
E: [admin@tln.org.au](mailto:admin@tln.org.au)  
T: +61 3 9418 4991

This publication is registered with the National Library of Australia, Canberra ACT, 2600  
[www.nla.gov.au](http://www.nla.gov.au). International Standard Serial Number - **ISSN 2206-2769**

© Copyright, is held by the Teacher Learning Network. This publication is subject to Australian copyright law and any person seeking to copy from this publication should comply with that law or seek permission from TLN Press. Educational Institutions seeking to make copies from the publication should comply with Australian copyright law and be registered for a CAL license with the Copyright Agency Limited.



## **Editorial Details**

---

### **Managing Editors**

Professor Tania Aspland, Australian Catholic University  
Associate Professor, Marcelle Caciattolo, Victoria University, Footscray, Victoria  
Max Grarock, Program Manager, Teacher Learning Network  
Professor Tarquam McKenna, Deakin University, Victoria  
Michael Victory, Executive Officer, Teacher Learning Network

### **Honorary Editorial Board**

Professor Gert Biesta,  
Brunel University London,  
and Artez, Institute for the Arts, Netherlands

Nathan Chisholm  
Principal, Buckley Park Secondary College,  
Essendon, Victoria

Professor Antonia Darder  
Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles  
and University of Illinois

Dr. Kim Dray  
Principal, Laburnum Primary School  
Blackburn, Victoria

Associate Professor Nuntiya Doungphummes,  
Mahidol University, Thailand

Associate Professor Gillian Kidman, Monash  
University  
Clayton, Victoria

Associate Professor Catherine Lang  
La Trobe University  
Bundoora, Victoria

Dr. Liz Rouse  
Deakin University  
Burwood, Victoria

Professor Roger Slee  
University of South Australia  
Adelaide, South Australia

Associate Professor Peter Wright  
Murdoch University  
Murdoch, Western Australia

## About this Journal

---

The content of this online journal will focus on educational research that is specifically designed to critique, engage and make public local and international practices that hinder or encourage effective teaching and learning approaches. This is an interdisciplinary journal that welcomes creative submissions that redress inequities and social struggle.

An underlying principle for the establishment of this journal is to also make public the transformative work of teachers and teacher educators across Australia.

This journal privileges qualitative approaches to research and welcomes mixed methods and non-traditional forms of representation of research.

JTLS will *critique*:

1. issues of educational (in)equality
2. systems and structures across all levels of schooling and early childhood
3. educational change at all levels of schooling and early childhood
4. the impact of the market economy on resourcing the delivery of education in the school and early childhood sectors

JTLS will *engage* in:

1. authentic descriptions of all levels of schooling and early childhood
2. interdisciplinary praxis based curriculum
3. discussion around global trends of privatisation and marketization in schools and early childhood
4. intercultural competency that is displayed in transformative teaching spaces

JTLS will *make public*

1. teachers and their students' experiences of learning and teaching in action
2. collaborative exchanges in a variety of local and international educational communities
3. creative, innovative teaching and learning practices that lead to positive change
4. the stories of children and families of the least advantaged and how education can lead to pathways and agency for educational opportunity

The journal will offer peer reviewed articles, invited articles and reviews. All peer reviewed articles are double blind reviewed consistent with the practice of scholarly journals. Clear differentiation will be made between peer reviewed and invited articles.

## **Contents**

---

A new journal begins.....	6
Signature Pedagogies in Teaching and Learning Contexts - Associate Professor, Marcelle Cacciattolo	7
From Medieval Feasts to Family Court: Middle Years History and Socially Just Curriculum - Mary-Rose McLaren .....	11
The Leadership Dispositions of Middle Level School Leaders: A Case Study - Jemila Goodman and Dr. Venesser Fernandes.....	28
Praxis Learning - Living Praxis – Living Practice - Dr Brian Mundy.....	40
Beginning the Journey of Reflexive Teaching and Learning Practices: A Study of First Year Preservice Teacher Exposure to Praxis Inquiry and Signature Pedagogies - Coral Cara .....	50
Working Globally in Teacher Education - Greg Neal.....	64
Invited article – reflections from a teacher, feminist, unionist and pre-service educator - Claire Kelly .....	78
Core Beliefs of Teacher Learning Network .....	94
Submissions to the Journal of Teaching, Learning and Society .....	95

# A new journal begins

---

Welcome to the Journal of Teaching, Learning and Society. This journal had its genesis in 2016, arising out of discussions between staff from the Teacher Learning Network and academic staff from Victoria University (VU) and the Australian Catholic University (ACU). It was posited that a new journal would offer a forum for academics working in teacher education and education practitioners to publish the outcomes of joint projects. The journal would foster new collaborations between research and practice in education, so that each could grow its influence on the other i.e. ‘research informed practice’ and ‘practice oriented research’.

The journal seeks to develop new conversations about the transition from pre-service teacher to in-service teacher and the continuum of support that an individual might need to develop their technical capacity, their social orientation and their personal and emotional disposition that will enable them to flourish as an educator.

This edition of the Journal of Teaching, Learning and Society, focuses on the Signature Pedagogies framework being implemented in the teacher education program at Victoria University. As a pilot edition, it provided an opportunity for the journal editors to establish the procedures, policies and protocols necessary in the development of a new peer reviewed journal. The journal is to be published as an online journal, allowing, over time, for greater creativity, diversity and innovation in the form of submissions.

Contributing authors were invited to report on practice involving the use of one or more of the signature pedagogies, or to use one of the signature pedagogies as the form of presentation for their article. We also welcomed contributions from practitioners that demonstrated the teacher as researcher. The editors are pleased to offer six articles in this pilot edition. Payment has not been made to authors nor is payment received by the journal for publication of articles.

The editors would like to acknowledge the contribution of the many people who offered and undertook to review articles for this initial publication. Reviewers included academic staff from universities, experienced practitioners from related fields and senior leaders in school communities. The reviewing task is complex and demanding and completely voluntary. We thank the reviewers for this commitment to the education community.

The editors would also like to thank and acknowledge the editorial board. We look forward to the contribution from each of our valued colleagues on the board. Once again this is a voluntary role.

Michael Victory  
Executive Officer  
Teacher Learning Network  
[mvictory@tln.org.au](mailto:mvictory@tln.org.au)  
For and behalf of the Managing Editors

# **Signature Pedagogies in Teaching and Learning Contexts - Associate Professor, Marcelle Cacciattolo**

In this inaugural edition of the *Journal of Teaching, Learning and Society*, the focus is on Signature Pedagogies. Signature pedagogies first appeared in the writing of Lee Shulman (2005), who defined this term as ‘the characteristic forms of teaching and learning . . . that organize the fundamental ways in which future practitioners are educated for their new professions’ (p. 52). Shulman argued that there are many types of teaching approaches that are embodied and reflected in particular kinds of disciplines such as law, engineering and medicine. These teaching approaches tell an important story about the kind of knowledge that is valued, privileged, replicated and endorsed by practitioners in the field. In the examination of such signature pedagogies, Shulman argued that we are better able to understand those aspects of teaching that are absent or fraught with tensions in professional learning. Shining a light on qualities of pedagogical practices that foster learner engagement, agency and transformation is essential to achieving positive learning outcomes.

According to Shulman signature pedagogies share three core dimensions that allow for and enable particular kinds of thinking and acting. The first characteristic is that they have a surface structure which ‘consists of concrete, operational acts of teaching and learning’ (p.54). The second commonality is the occurrence of a ‘deep structure’ made up of a set of assumptions about the application and imparting of knowledge. The final dimension embodies an ‘implicit structure’, a moral standpoint that includes core values and beliefs about professional attitudes in the field (pp54-55). When we connect these three dimensions to schooling, education and teacher education we have a roadmap in which to consider effective teaching and learning practices that lead to positive change. Indeed, the articles in this inaugural edition provide a roadmap for tracing the directions, twists and road blocks that educators encounter when refining and reflecting on their practice.

The construction of a signature pedagogy framework also encourages collaborative dialogue amongst professionals and their students. The Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970), best known for his libertarian ideas surrounding education, believed that progressive education involved an equal teacher-student relationship. This equal relationship was challenged when teachers adopted a ‘banking concept of education’ (p.53). The metaphor of the banking model involves a teaching approach that is underpinned by the transmission of knowledge. Teachers ‘deposit’ chunks of information into the minds of learners who are seen as empty vessels in need of filling. Education in this instance becomes an act of oppression and dehumanization where students are stripped of their right to be active, creative human beings. A more emancipating form of education positions learners at the centre of their universe. Through engaging in a dialogic process of inquiry, students can work alongside their teachers to co-create new knowledge. Collaboration is the key word here. Destabilising and disarming teaching and learning processes that seek to silence, marginalise and relegate forms of ‘otherness’ is a necessary step to creating active citizens.

Staff at Victoria University have spent some time examining the concept of signature pedagogies and their application in initial teacher education programs. Their analysis has led to the development of a

set of eight signature pedagogies that adopt a praxis inquiry based approach to teaching and learning. According to Hooley (2017) these signature pedagogies 'provide a language by which all participants can describe their learning journey and the social and educational acts embarked upon' (p.193). These eight signature pedagogies are listed below;

### The Eight Signature Pedagogies

- Professional Practice
- Repertoires of Practice
- Teacher as Researcher
- Case Conferencing
- Community Partnership
- Praxis Learning
- Participatory Action Research
- Portfolio Dialogue

(Hooley 2017, pg 193).

Hooley (2017, p.193) also identifies particular attributes for each of the signature pedagogies. These characteristics have been paraphrased below.

**Professional Practice** refers to the space and place where learning occurs for individuals. Through their immersion in professional settings, learners and teachers gain deeper insight into educational practices and structures that lead to meaningful outcomes. This knowledge is essential for building collaborative communities who strive to bring about positive change.

**Repertoires of Practice** refers to a teacher's toolbox; the types of teaching, curriculum and assessment approaches that practitioners use in their classrooms. Reflecting on those practices and resources that lead to successful learning outcomes is a strong element of this signature pedagogy.

**Teacher as Researcher** refers to the systematic lens that teachers adopt when interrogating their work. Teachers collect evidence surrounding their practices. This evidence can involve journal notes, samples of student work or student data. The teacher as researcher uses this evidence to make informed decisions about changes needed to improve teaching and learning outcomes.

**Case Conferencing** refers to the use of case and commentary writing. Practitioners use this approach to write about and unpack key incidents that have occurred in their daily work. Unpacking emotionally charged events, through an objective lens and through collegial discussions with peers, can enable different ways of seeing the incident being examined.

**Community Partnership** refers to the relationships that teachers have with community organisations. In partnership, practitioners, students and community providers come to a shared understanding of actions that can bring about positive change for all stakeholders.

**Praxis Learning** refers to learning that occurs through the examination of one's experience in the field. This insight also embodies a reflective element and the consideration of actions that lead to cohesive and inclusive communities.

**Participatory Action Research** refers to research that involves teachers identifying key aspects of their practice that they would like to improve on. This research approach also emphasises collaboration amongst colleagues in considering ways of strengthening school processes and systems. This collaboration involves the collection of evidence to support and validate changes that are put forward.

**Portfolio Dialogue** refers to artefacts and annotations that are collected by individuals over a period of time that specifically relate to their professional work. The portfolio tells a story about one's teaching philosophy and the learning journey that has evolved. Engaging in conversations with colleagues about one's learning journey assists in reaching a deeper understanding of those teaching practices that lead to cohesive learning sites.

## In this Edition

---

The articles that now follow provide a snapshot of the application of one or more of these signature pedagogies in a particular educational setting. The authors, who are professionals in the field, privilege us with their writing. They share pivotal awakenings that have emerged from their work and draw our attention to teaching and learning practices that can hinder or encourage effective teacher/student learning.

Mary-Rose McLaren investigates the power of case writing and commentary in opening up spaces for professional reflection and critique. She also examines the power of repertoires of practice that assisted her preservice teachers to develop meaningful relationships with disengaged young people.

Jemila Goodman investigates ‘leadership dispositions’ in a Catholic secondary school through a case study lens. Her findings alert us to those qualities that make up ‘transformational leadership’ styles. These leadership qualities are necessary in the production of innovative teachers, learners and school sites.

Brian Mundy, introduces us to the ‘Praxis Inquiry Protocol’ and the value of using this tool with preservice teachers. The benefit of using this protocol in learning circles is central to his work. His theory of living praxis, a term he coined in his PhD dissertation, shows the connection between reflective practice, personal improvement and a commitment to lifelong learning.

Coral Cara further elaborates on the value of using a praxis inquiry approach in her work with first year preservice teachers. What we gain from her writing is the important role of ‘teacher as researcher’ for first year preservice teachers entering the field.

The global collaboration project, led by Greg Neal, draws our attention to the ways in which digital resources can assist in the development of global learning communities. Online forum spaces, synchronous forums and international partners all formed part of a dynamic unit of study that he taught. What we see exemplified in Neal’s article is the need for projects that innovate and inspire learning beyond traditional classroom settings.

In an invited article Claire Kelly offers a personal reflection on her journey from school student to teacher educator. She maps her journey as a teacher activist through feminist influences and the collective action of teacher unionism and her work as a pre-service teacher educator at Victoria University. In sharing her personal journey we find elements of praxis learning, community partnerships and portfolio dialogue.

Signature pedagogies provide professionals with a frame of reference in which to document, critique and revise their work in visible and active ways. They are a valuable resource tool to draw attention to those qualities and attributes that inspire us to teach well.

## References

---

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Continuum.

Hooley, N (2017). *Radical Schooling for Democracy: Engaging Philosophy of Education for the Public Good*, Milton: Taylor and Francis.

Schulman, L. S. (2005). Signature Pedagogies in the Professions. *Daedalus*, 134 (3), 52-59.

# **From Medieval Feasts to Family Court: Middle Years History and Socially Just Curriculum - Mary-Rose McLaren**

*Victoria University*

This paper explores, through the use of case and commentary, the author's experience as a teacher educator in a year eight classroom. It tells the story of two secondary school students, and examines the ways in which the curriculum, and the way it is taught, does or does not, support their learning. Taking into account theories of Funds of Knowledge and Socially Just schooling, the author proposes the practice of embodied learning, using strategies from Drama education to encourage higher order thinking through embodiment, emotional connection and creativity. She outlines an example class, based on the same material as in the text book, but acknowledging the students' life experiences and encouraging them to build on what they know of and feel about the world in which they live.

## **Signature Pedagogies**

The following case and commentary tells a story of disengagement in a Year 8 Humanities classroom. The case is based on experiences working with pre-service teachers as part of a site-based practice. One day per week a class of pre-service teachers and I, as the supervising lecturer, undertook a unit of study located within a secondary school context. This case and the following commentary are not a critique of that school, but of the wider systemic problems within a curriculum that is not catering to the students of greatest need. The story told here highlights the presuppositions on which much of our teaching is based. It could have happened in almost any public secondary school in Australia.

The case and commentary form, itself a signature pedagogy, is used as a way of exploring the emotional and academic impact of decisions made by teachers and students in classrooms (Newton, 2012; Shulman, 1996).

This form allows greater freedom to explore intuitive responses, and to examine in detail those moments when such responses do or do not work in providing for students' needs (Shulman & Shulman, 2004). The case and commentary form invite us, through personal account and analytical development, to understand our practices in classrooms as social processes. In the case and commentary below, there is a particular emphasis on two students' levels of engagement in classroom material, which then opens up a discussion of alternative and more socially just practices that might have been used.

Professional Practice and Repertoires of Practice are significant pedagogies underpinning this experience. Although the story is apparently about two students and their engagement in class, it is primarily about my own insight into teaching practices, which resulted from participation in this classroom as a teacher, teacher educator, and researcher. This vignette of classroom interaction prompts reflection on my own

practices and on the quality of learning experiences we, as educators, offer to students. It opens discussion about the content we offer students in classrooms, the use of textbooks, and the sorts of unspoken rules we place around opportunities to learn. One aspect of Professional Practice is the formulation of new teaching practices. Exploration of the dynamics of this story leads to suggestions for new ways of connecting students to learning, and the formulation of new ways of thinking around the presentation of content

The concept of Repertoires of Practice is also significant in the commentary. The way content is selected and then taught in classrooms has direct implications for inclusivity. This story highlights the ways in which social marginalization can be implicitly supported by the content we teach and the ways in which we choose to teach it. By describing features of the pedagogy and curriculum applied in the moment captured in this story, the commentary provides opportunity to discuss ways in which to develop a more inclusive and democratic classroom environment. It invites the reader to analyze the practicalities of teaching Humanities in secondary classrooms, and in particular, to consider embodied learning as a way toward socially just and inclusive education practices. At its core this story highlights the connections between the curriculum we use, the ways we use it, and the development of democratic and civil society.

### **The Story (the case)**

---

It was an unruly class: Year 8s and the noisiest class I'd ever been in. It wasn't dangerous or hostile, just incredibly noisy. The students weren't focussed on the task at hand and it seemed impossible to capture the attention of most of the group. As a teacher educator, I

was one of several adults in the room. The others included a group of pre-service teachers, an aide and the teacher, herself. The classroom teacher, who hoped that the presence of more adults could create some small-group learning opportunities, and might therefore result in the students achieving something, had invited us in. She had told us in advance that the class was difficult, frequently disengaged, and included some students with challenging behaviours. Together, we were making an orchestrated onslaught in the hope of teaching this class something. We took a small table group each and tried to tackle the work.

This was year 8 Humanities – medieval feasts and festivals. It so happens that I love Medieval History. I have a PhD in fifteenth-century London historical literature. This was my thing. If enthusiasm and depth of knowledge were ever going to engage anyone, it was my group. My table group consisted of only two students, Stacey and Dee. Stacey was serious and intent, told me she loved History and read the History book at home where it was quiet enough to think. She engaged with me in conversation and approached the work with interest and thoughtfulness. She was nonetheless keen to get the questions answered. She wasn't really interested in discussion or inquiry - she wanted to get the work done. Working from the text book, this was essentially a comprehension exercise; read the text, answer the questions; look at the pictures, answer the questions.

The other student, Dee, was her friend. Dee demonstrated no interest. I couldn't find a key to allow her to enter the medieval world (at least not within the restrictions of this class). She didn't have the book, and so worked from a black and white photocopy provided by the teacher. Her attention span did not exceed three minutes, even in this very small group.

Despite sitting right next to her, I could not capture her attention. There was nothing I could say, suggest, or ask, that could engage her. She was disconnected from this content, and from me as a representative of what we were trying to teach. She was not, however, disengaged from her peers. Rather, she seemed intent on drawing their focus at any given moment. She would call across the room to this one or that one, and they would, almost without exception, respond. A few diehards asked her to be quiet, but even this was done in a rowdy way. I caught her attention only once: she was mildly interested in the idea of drinking ale as your regular beverage.

'Really? She said. 'They drank cheap beer all the time?'

'Mostly, yes. The water in the cities was contaminated, you see.'

'They must have been pissed all the time!' Well, yes, I thought to myself, that is actually quite an insightful comment. It could explain a lot about certain late medieval behaviour. I tried to tell her, but she was gone again, back to conversation – usually mildly abusive - with students from across the room; conversations about her week end with her 19 year old boyfriend and his mates and the goon and the weed; it was swinging on the chair and gazing about, it was drawing on her arms and legs, it was trying to distract her friend. To all intents and purposes, Dee looked bored. Bored to death. And to be honest, I didn't really blame her. The room was hot, the windows didn't open, the noise level was phenomenal, the pictures in the book were too small, the vocabulary was too difficult, but the concepts were too simplistic. I was already wondering what the point of all this was well before this student went to the toilet.

When she left the room her friend, Stacey, the conscientious one, said, quite without my probing:

she's having a tough time. She's a good person really, but she gets a bit lost

Yes, I said, she's finding it hard to concentrate today.

It's coz of her mum. She did something a bit stupid and the DHS<sup>1</sup> took her away and now she can't see her mum. She has to go to Family court tomorrow to see if she can see her mum. She'd never tell anyone but she's worried about that. She really wants to see her mum.

And then her friend returned and Stacey and I went back to the questions about what nobles ate in the fourteenth century, and how church rules were so important, and Dee went back to entertaining herself and distracting her classmates. And we had no more luck at learning anything than we'd had before.

### The Commentary

#### 1. Contextualizing the classroom

---

The classroom described here is part of a coeducational government school in a lower socio-economic area on the edge of Melbourne. A group of pre-service teachers undertook their placement at this school one day a week, as well as completing a unit of work at the site. I was present as their university lecturer and supervising teacher. The university and the school had a good relationship, and school students were used to having pre-service teachers in their classrooms as teachers, helpers and observers.

There is a wide body of literature on student engagement and disengagement, summarised and analysed by Slee (2014), which is relevant here. In particular, Furlong's work on student

---

<sup>1</sup> Department of Human Services

disruption (1991) and Teese's work on equity (2013). Notably, the two behaviours described by teachers as the most troublesome in classrooms (distracting or hindering others and talking out of turn) were both present in this classroom in amplified form (Arbuckle and Little 2004). What the above case specifically highlights, however, is the interaction between teaching styles, textbook content and student needs. Particularly notable is the observation that neither the 'good' student (Stacey) nor the 'disruptive' student (Dee) were having their needs met as learners of Humanities.

The experience in this classroom is further illuminated by reference to Smyth's work on 'socially just' schooling, and Zipin's work on 'Funds of Knowledge'. Smyth (2011) notes that socially just schools regard 'student disengagement from classroom learning as, often, an indication of a disengaging curriculum' (p. 14). Zipin (2013) identifies characteristics of engaging curriculum, asserting that it acknowledges students' and community's 'funds of knowledge':

For students from marginalised spaces of social life, curriculum that draws on knowledge which is familiar to them in their life spaces strikes resonances within their cultural identities, and so evokes stronger engagement in learning (p. 2).

Both these writers are interested in the interplay between curriculum and the student's life experience. Smyth extends the discussion to what schools look like when they interact with students and their families. In his identification of features of socially just schools, he notes that such schools:

Recast themselves as listening organizations with a commitment to giving students, 'parents and families authentic voice in shaping their futures and how they go about learning' (p.13).

Further, In the context of these two ideas – that students bring funds of knowledge to the classroom with them, and that socially just schools interact with students and their families in distinctive ways around engagement – the story of Dee, Stacey and year 8 Humanities can be more richly explored. This paper is particularly informed by these two ways of interpreting but moves beyond them to suggest ways of teaching that can embrace and extend student knowledge through embodied learning. Acknowledging extensive research on improved learning outcomes when students are taught with and through the arts (Caldwell and Vaughan, 2012), it explores ways we might support student engagement via embodied artistic learning opportunities.

## **2. Framing the Problem**

---

In examining this case, the guiding question is: 'What can we do to improve the experience of Humanities learning for all students?' It is clear in this case that neither Stacey, as an example of an engaged student, nor Dee, as an example of a disengaged student, is having their learning needs met. The following section aims to identify and explore specific problems emerging from the case, in order to frame some imaginings of alternative ways of teaching and learning.

### **Using the text book**

This Humanities class was textbook based. I do not intend to analyse the content of this specific textbook; other Humanities text books in Victorian schools have similar content. Rather the focus here is to consider, broadly speaking, the ways in which the use of the textbook, and its presentation of History, impacted on the events described. The book being used was based on the Victorian Essential Learning Standards. A new edition, with the same page on medieval feasts, has now been published to meet the Australian

Curriculum. It is a widely used text in Victorian schools. The History presented is focussed on structures and the representation of authority. The Australian Curriculum implies this by specifically mentioning feudalism and knights but does not indicate that this should solely be the way to engage historically. These Humanities textbooks typically rely on comprehension as a way of revising; one asks specific vocabulary questions. In each case, the history of children, and marginalised groups in general, is absent (one text does include a section on women). There is no focus on people's experiences of life. This text is not interested in approaching those children whose life experiences make connection with the past painful; or those children whose present is so challenging they are struggling to look beyond it. Such children are completely absent and completely unaccounted for. Instead, the text presents a version of history that is clean and neat, and emotionally removed.

The textbook also offers only one explanation for historical events. So, doing, it removes the 'messiness' of history (Strawson 2003; VanSledright 2010; Barton and Levstik 2004) and presents historical events as simple. It creates a narrative that lacks complexity. Problem solving, intellectual challenge, and emotional engagement are all missing, reducing History for Stacey to a number of comprehension questions. This is processed history concerned with content, not with critical thinking. Like processed cheese, it might fill some of the students up, but it provides little intellectual nutrition; for others, the flavour is too bland to be tolerated.

The main reason given for the use of a Humanities textbook in this class was because the students were perceived as badly behaved; consequently, they were not offered excursions, hands-on activities, drama, or the

arts, as ways of engaging historically. Better behaved classes at this year level were having a medieval day when they would dress up, learn medieval dances, play musical instruments and learn to shoot a bow and arrow. However, this class would not be given the same option because there was a concern that they would misbehave and spoil the day. Although none of the classes at this school were streamed, literacy levels in this particular class had been identified as relatively low. The focus on the textbook was a particular frustration for many students in this class who were excluded from the content by poor reading skills, and then excluded from those activities requiring less literacy because they were behaving badly in the book-based learning environment.

### **The Curriculum**

History in the middle years of secondary schooling is very 'content' heavy: how do we decide what students need to know and what they do not? Clearly in a subject like History there are certain Historical skills that are valuable to acquire and that are useful across disciplines: reading a document or artifact, understanding context and bias, observing manipulation, contesting ideas and evidence, understanding differences in chronology and the idea of causation. However, there is the whole of human experience to draw on as the content, which is the vehicle for the development of these skills.

It is tempting to think that the content of medieval history has no relevance, and perhaps we *should* question the relevance of nobles and church organisation to Year 8s. However, if a different standpoint on history is taken, shifting from the structural to the social, and the learner's focus is redirected to hearing the voices of the disadvantaged within dominant structures, then what one studies is very different. Medieval London, for example, is full of questions about who cares

for children, and who ‘owns’ them. Depending on the child’s status – that is, whether or not they were the child of a citizen - we know that social and political structures stepped in and protected and catered for children whose parents could not. The Mayor of London was responsible for assuring the provision of education and care for orphans, usually by appointing a guardian (McLaren 2008; Barron 2004). Many children were raised by people who were not their parents. In some cases, children were placed in the care of neighbours when their fathers died and their mothers remarried, and sometimes into the care of masters to whom they were apprenticed (*Letter Book K*). The *Letter Books of the City of London* record numerous stories of children, young adults, and mothers suing guardians for mistreatment, suing to claim inheritances, and complaining about inappropriate marriages (<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-letter-books/volk/pp16-30#h2-0001>). There are many accounts of children being brought before the court of the Alderman in London in order to be allowed access to their mothers; and of mothers suing for the return of children who were bound to inappropriate apprenticeships by male guardians (Hanawalt, 1993). Mothers also go to court to protect their children’s, step children’s and grandchildren’s inheritances (Erler ,1994). Children were not, however, completely voiceless: the records demonstrate children themselves, and young adults, seeking autonomy and recognition. The *Plea and Memoranda Rolls* give us stories of children fighting for their inheritances, and seeking to prove themselves as adults (McLaren, 2008). Throughout these records it is clear that schooling was considered important: John Stow (d. 1605) tells us individual mayors of London funded the foundation of schools for ‘poor boys’ (Simpson ,2002). We know that many children attended school because the London *Letter Books* and Coroner’s Records

tell us stories of children (both boys and girls) coming to grief on their way there (McLaren, 2008). Finally, despite systemic efforts to protect children, there are stories of children who die in the street, and are buried, unknown and unnamed, in parish churches (Hanawalt,1993).

But none of these stories is in the Year 8 Humanities textbooks, or available on *Scootle*, the ACARA (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority) online resource centre. Why have the feasts of nobles and the power of the Church been included in this chapter on medieval Europe, when the social conditions of childhood have been excluded?

## **The textbook version of History/ Constructing an alternative**

The traditional and conservative standpoint of History in schools in Australia has been accepted and reiterated in our text books and our resources, without due thought for those studying it, their life experiences, interests, and ways of engaging with the world. Within a ‘funds of knowledge’ model, however:

Curriculum becomes democratic by including and working with the family- and community-based knowledge of students who inhabit the school.

Pedagogy becomes democratic in relationships of power-sharing that support voice and agency among students (Zipin 2013, p. 10).<sup>2</sup>

Designing a curriculum that draws on students’ ‘funds of knowledge’ and listens to an ‘authentic voice’ means contemplating the processes more than the outcomes. It concerns both *how we teach* and *what we teach*. History in the Australian Curriculum implies a style of classroom history that is teacher led (McLaren, 2013). I have written elsewhere that:

The way that we understand and teach History has a significant impact on the degree to which our students will become equipped as active agents in a democratic community. Teachers of History must address the question of the purpose of their task: are they teaching History in order to provide a moral education; to develop analytical skills; to extend and demonstrate factual knowledge; or, to

<sup>2</sup> True Funds of Knowledge study includes engaging with the student’s household and incorporates ethnographic study of the home and wider community in which the student lives. This paper is not a ‘funds of knowledge’ study, but acknowledges the work done in this area and the value of it as an underpinning way of thinking about students’ lives and their engagement in the classroom. On Funds of Knowledge, See: N. Gonzalez, L.C. Moll and C. Armanti (eds.) *Funds of Knowledge: Theorizing practices in Households, Communities, and Classrooms*; Lew Zipin, ‘Dark Funds of Knowledge, deep funds of Pedagogy:

engage students in their community through development of a sense of their place in the world? The Australian Curriculum seems biased toward the development of analytical skills. Notably, Barton and Levstik observe that the ‘voice of students’ can often be missing from analytical History (Barton and Levstik 2004 p. 84) (McLaren 2013, p.65).

The students experience History as teacher-led and textbook-based. The idea that the students themselves are participatory in the making and interpreting of history is absent. However, if we apply Zipin’s concept of funds of knowledge to a class such as this, we can see that student-led inquiry is possible, because it values the knowledge, experiences and cultural connections that students bring with them into the classroom. VanSledright notes that

students engage and reason from a host of sociocultural, race-class-ethnicity-based positional anchors and assumptions. They depend on them in the first place to make sense of what they are doing (2010 p. 159).

Zipin explores in depth the notion of ‘dark’ Funds of Knowledge, and this is also implied in VanSledright’s work (2010). Such knowledge, drawing on experiences of violence, abuse or neglect is often steered away from by teachers and by textbooks. However, the dark funds of knowledge are part of the Dee’s ‘cultural resources of life-based contexts’ (Zipin, Sellar, Brennan and Gale 2013, p. 11).

Exploring boundaries between Lifeworlds and Schools’ in *Discourse: Studies In Cultural Politics of Education*; Lew Zipin, Sam Sellar, and Robert Hattam, ‘Counteracting and Exceeding ‘capital’: a ‘funds of knowledge’ Approach to Re-imagining community’ in *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 33:2; and Lew Zipin, Sam Sellar, Marie Brennan & Trevor Gale, ‘Educating for Futures in Marginalized Regions: A Sociological framework for Rethinking and Researching Aspirations’ in *Educational Philosophy and Theory*.

Genuinely student-led inquiry which engages Dee in the process, will engage with this knowledge. Such student-led inquiry is consistent with the aims and practice of socially just schooling, as outlined by Smyth. The issue becomes one of how we move the classroom experience from teacher-led and textbook-driven to one of student-led inquiry, particularly in contexts where certain classes have been identified as ‘problem classes.’ The lack of engagement of Dee in this classroom, should not simply be attributed to the style of teaching. As Smyth has noted, and as is apparent when one considers the knowledge and experiences Dee bring to the classroom, the curriculum itself is also a problem. Numerous studies have connected engagement and relevance in the Middle Years of education (Beane 1993; Dowden 2007; Smyth and McInerney 2007; Prosser, McCallum et al. 2008). While we, as teachers, might see the relevance of History and the development of historical skills to Dee’s future, what relevance does she see in the content of this class?

### **3. Just Teaching or Teaching Justly?**

---

Underlying the questions of curriculum and pedagogy is the issue of social justice. Are we just teaching, or are we teaching justly? What does ‘teaching justly’ in our classrooms mean? And what does it look like? What sort of curriculum meets the intellectual and emotional needs of adolescents in our schools and supports them to become independent learners?

When I ask what teaching justly means I am thinking not only of Dee, but of her friend, Stacey. Don’t they both have a right to learn? How do we balance Dee’s needs against those of Stacey? Is there a way that both these girls can engage with learning?

The students in this classroom are caught between the expectations of textbook learning (the need to listen, frustration with their peers who are disruptive, and the expectation of content transfer) and the realities of their lives. Socially just schooling acknowledges the funds of knowledge that enter the classroom with the students, listens to these, and uses them as the point from which inquiry begins. It is a very different starting point from a textbook, which filters the content according to an unspoken set of values and expectations. The following will outline a theory and practice of applying socially just curriculum, which builds on students’ own experiences and understandings of the world. The aim of this alternative is to challenge the students to become fully engaged in the process of learning- not only intellectually, but in their bodies. It aims to have the students take the learning inside them and find their understanding of the learning in their own life experiences. Although there may be more relevant or more interesting aspects of Medieval History to explore, this lesson is based on the textbook, as an example of ways in which embodiment, creativity and students’ knowledge can be combined to facilitate learning.

Concept	Teacher says/does	Activity	Discipline and thinking skills
Warm up activity Connecting student to the learning context; sensory awareness	Teacher leads students into activity; learns which students are ready and able to engage	Eyes closed, listening: what can you hear? What can you feel? What are you feeling inside?	Focus
Introduction	<i>'Today we're going to explore what it was like to live in medieval times.'</i>	Students remain quiet, eyes closed; listening to teacher	
Students work with their experiences and lifeworlds which will be connected to the history involved.	The teacher works with a pair of students to provide a model of the activity	<i>Find a partner. One of you is powerful; the other is in a position of weakness. Students make a sculpture with their bodies that shows that</i>	Collaboration; status and control
Power and status	<i>Who do you think was powerful in medieval times? (church, men, nobles, people who could read) What/who made them powerful?</i>	Conversation; drawing on general knowledge	Analysis; conceptual understanding
Oppression and marginalisation	<i>Who was weak in medieval times? (women, children, people without land, sick people, people with mental illnesses) What/who made them weak?</i>	Conversation	Analysis; conceptual understanding
Dualism; power relationships	<i>With your partner, come up with four words each to describe your status – e.g. rich, strong, ruthless, privileged; sore, sad, low, hungry</i>	As pairs, students come up with appropriate words and choreograph one image in their bodies for each word and put words and movements together	Synthesis; students are building an empathetic relationship with the content; experiencing dualism.
Dualism – are there other ways of thinking? Introducing the concept of contestation	Point out dualistic language (and that working in pairs might encourage this). Medieval people had strongly dualistic thinking which reinforced power structures	Combine pairs so they become groups of four; students put together their actions and words and find ways of presenting dualistic and non-dualistic ideas about power and status	Analysis; synthesis; creativity; contesting ideas
Celebrations  Students develop their understanding and step from their own experiences into a concept of medieval life through using their bodies and being talked through the process by a teacher who understands the connections and is working with the body rather than the text book.	<i>What would the rich have to celebrate? What would the poor have to celebrate? What other groups might exist and what would they celebrate? Think of a type of person from medieval times – (strong, weak, dominating, submissive, holy) Give this character a shape; think about the way they stand, the way they interact with other people to do with how they celebrate.</i>	Build a dramatic collage. One person at a time [build the collage by each individual adopting a 'stance' appropriate to their character type, and standing close together – they can link but they don't have to]	Judgement; analysis; synthesis; creativity. This activity requires students to work together, to consider themselves in relation to others, and also to consider how interactions, power and status worked in another place and time.

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Teacher says/does</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Discipline and thinking skills</b>
Connecting knowledge and feeling	<i>How did that feel?</i>	Conversation; enactment of mini scenes to explore connections	Responsivity; reflection; interpretation
Exploring feeling	<i>Let's do it again: this time we will add sound: how did it feel?</i>	Students make same or similar group body sculpture and add a repeated sound for each character (a word or other sound that can be repeated several times so a sound and physical collage is built)	Judgement; analysis; synthesis; creativity; reflection; interpretation.
Developing knowledge	<i>This time I want you to hold your pose and I'm going to be a roving interviewer: How are you feeling today? What are you celebrating? Who will clean up the mess? Were there presents – what sort? What are you wearing? What are you eating? Why do you celebrate? How do you celebrate?</i>	Roving interviews; students respond in character	Information gathering; imagination; comparison; empathy; synthesis.
Building knowledge; contesting ideas	<i>Sit down in a circle. In what ways do you think medieval festivals were different from today? [Church; technology; fear/joy; belief structures; freedom to be who you are]</i>	Conversation	Comparison and contrast; possibly contesting each other's ideas.
Carnival	<i>Explain the idea of carnival – the world turned upside down (Davis, 1975). Why do you think this was a way of celebrating? What would happen if we did that at school for a day? Would the teachers like it? Why do you think the rulers allowed it to happen?</i>	Make the group sculpture again – students are the same characters as before but power is inverted, as in Carnival – do some quick roving interviews	Making connections; change over time; interpretation; judgement
Contextualizing Students begin to contextualise the 'problems' of the past and develop an understanding of how they might inform the present.	<i>What questions do you have? How will we find out the answers?</i>	Conversation; research	Inquiry; discussion of sources; understanding of the relevance of different sources.

In each of the steps outlined above, students are encouraged to engage in higher order thinking and to use imagination and inquiry as stepping off points to engage with historical ideas. They are also asked to connect emotionally with the content. ‘How did it feel?’ is a question we rarely ask about learning, and yet connectedness, care and respect (all of which are expressed as feelings) are crucial to adolescent success in schools (Smyth and McInerney, 2007). In this teaching, the repeated question, ‘how did it feel?’ is asking students to acknowledge that action, sound and interaction can change an experience. It invites students to make a judgement as historians (did it feel more or less ‘authentic’ than the previous time?) and as artists (was it more or less aesthetically pleasing?) Students are being asked to use their own bodies, and their bodies of experience, to connect to the lives of people in the past, and to make judgements about how the past might have felt and how the past can be represented in the present. Within this context, when being interviewed as people from the past, it doesn’t matter if students don’t know the ‘right’ answers (Heathcote 1971). There will be many things students don’t know about the medieval world; similarly, many things about their own world will be contested within the group. However, students will build both discipline knowledge and content knowledge through making this comparison. Inaccuracies will be picked up and worked through in the conversation and research components of the work.

Activities like those outlined above set students up for further inquiry and support the development of discipline specific skills around source analysis and interpretation, as well as encouraging the connection of the self and the other. Each of the students’ responses emerges from their cultural

knowledge, brought with them into the classroom. Conflicting responses will challenge that cultural understanding. Consequently, the need to source evidence, both contemporary and past, drives the inquiry.

This way of teaching History relies upon three key concepts:

- ♦ Embodiment
- ♦ Creativity
- ♦ Emotional connection

### **Embodiment**

Dixon and Senior write about ‘embodied pedagogy’ in the context of pre-service teacher education. They identify, through the use of images, moments where teaching and learning are ‘bodily’ (Dixon and Senior 2011). They observe that ‘the affective encounter between bodies gives shape to the pedagogical moment’ (p. 476). In the outline of a class above, based on what appears in the year 8 textbook, but represented as part of an embodied learning experience, the pedagogical moment can also be found amongst year 8 students. Drawing on Boals’ image theatre (Boal 1996), students are invited to create tableaux which place them within the historical context and invite them to ask questions about themselves and the experiences of others. Taking photos of these images and looking at the lines and structure created by the students may open areas of understanding about the past, self and the relationship between self and the past. Dixon and Senior indicate that this supports students to ‘maintain an imaginative state of awareness with images, while at the same time a capacity to question their veracity, motives and value’ (p. 477). Although it is not their purpose to use this in secondary History classrooms, it is clear that such an activity enhances the learning of history discipline skills, inviting imagination, empathy,

contestation of evidence, analysis and reflection.

### Creativity

The suggestions above are also explicitly aimed at using and further developing creative responses to historical problems. The focus in this class is not on content transfer but on developing students' awareness of what they need to know, both in terms of personal history and received history, in order to connect with the problems of the past to understand why people made the decisions they did, and the consequences of those decisions. Stacey's curiosity means she enjoys 'learning about the past' – receiving stories and ideas about 'how things were' (the processed 'history'). But for Dee, these stories have no inherent value. It is through using approaches that support creative thinking that these stories can become relevant, and Dee can begin to process and understand the content in relation to herself and others. For Stacey it is also important to make connections between the past and present, so she is open to developing the discipline skills of history, rather than history being a subject dependent on memory and comprehension. It is only in the act of interpreting the world that Dee and Stacey will be empowered to transform it (Haseman 2010). Creative engagement through embodied learning can shift Dee from being a disconnected viewer of History (which bores her), and Stacey from being a consumer of information (which encourages passivity) to being active in forming, understanding and changing History. Davies et al (2013) conclude:

There is evidence that suggests an impact of creative learning environments on learners' academic achievement; increased confidence and resilience; enhanced motivation and engagement; development of social, emotional and

thinking skills; and improved school attendance (p. 88)

This is where socially just schooling is so important – in generating ways for Dee to access education and creativity and so offer alternative ways of encountering and engaging with the world. Within this context, flexibility and dialogue in the pedagogic relationship are critical to engaging students to work creatively (Davies et al, 2013).

### Emotional connection

Newton claims that 'we feel, therefore we learn', and analyses the interaction between emotion and cognition (Newton 2012). He observes that 'for those in a negative mood satisfaction is in the recognition they believe will come from success' (p. 36) He also notes that 'substituting autonomy for constraint' (p. 36) results in more creative behaviours. For Dee, therefore, active involvement in collaborative activity that is based upon feelings rather than literacy is likely to generate more positive responses and higher levels of motivation. The authenticity and novelty of the task are also important in developing motivation and encouraging creative engagement (Davies et al 2013). These authors uncover less need for planning a lesson and more need for planning for adults and students thinking together. They cite Halsey's study which identifies that 'what worked best for disaffected young people ... was an approach that was different to formal education, was flexible, informal and allowed the young people to work at their own pace without pressure' (Davies et al 2013, p. 86). In other words, space for students to engage emotionally with the curriculum, and a focus on their needs and interests can have an empowering outcome. Such a space can only be generated by acknowledging and working with the experiences and constructs the students bring with them into the classroom, even if these constructs are to be challenged.

## Making connections

---

The historical inquiry engaged with in the above example involves learning in the whole body – learning that engages the emotions as well as the mind; that is expressed in the arms and the legs and the fingers and the toes as well as verbally or in writing. For some students the present is so overriding, so overwhelming, that we need to meet them right there in the present and place the opportunities to learn right where they are at that moment.

From the above activity the class can move into literacy activities if the students are ready, or into dramatic scenes, or music composition, or debate and discussion, or artistic representation, or data collection and graphs. But this movement comes from the student, involved in the learning, gently guided, offered opportunities to *be* themselves as learners, carrying their funds of knowledge with them, and drawing on these. It is about *being* and being learners. In this theoretical classroom there is no need for comprehension questions because evidence of comprehension is in the body itself (Dixon and Senior 2011). It can be seen in the students' actions, in their interrelation, in the way they stand and the words they say or the sounds they make.

How does one assess such work? The focus must shift from a student 'proving' what they know (or remember) to identifying those ways in which groups of students, together, build knowledge: conversation; problem-solving in the ways that they express ideas, thoughts and feelings; developing skills in negotiation and the mediation of ideas; testing historical ideas through re-enactment; identifying themes; demonstrating empathy; demonstrating historical imagination; allowing themselves to be changed or challenged in response to the past. Assessing embodied

learning in a socially just way means assessing individual and group process, as well as assessing knowledge outcomes.

The challenge is to take a risk with the difficult students so that they can make connections between curriculum and their lives. It is to operate in a way that is socially just and inclusive of all students as learners, and of their needs and perspectives. To do this we need to be very clear about what we hope to achieve. Are we seeking content transfer, or are we seeking inquiry into past times and their connections with today? Are we seeking memorisation of 'facts' or are we seeking the development of discipline skills? Answering these questions should drive the selection of content as well as the style of teaching and assessing.

## Conclusion

---

Socially just teaching, inquiry learning, and embodied learning are complementary tools in teaching diverse cohorts of students. Working in triangulation, they recognise the body as the site of learning: socially just teaching values the students' funds of knowledge and their experiences within their communities; inquiry learning trusts the students' capacities to ask questions, engage with the world, and make connections; embodied learning acknowledges students as having agency to act in the world through the 'acting out', 'acting as', and 're-enacting'.

Each of us is a physical link between the past and the future. Our students literally carry the past in their DNA, and today's students are living tomorrow's history. In order to empower them to participate fully in making history, it is necessary that we recognise the funds of knowledge that they bring into our classrooms and use those funds of knowledge as a way into new understandings of themselves, the world, and the academic

content with which we want them to engage. If our aim as History teachers is to support the development of social agency in our students, then we must engage them wholly in the learning. When we do that we teach justly, actively and mindfully. It is this teaching that can provide the educational access to change the lives of our most vulnerable students.

## References

---

- Arbuckle, C & Little, E. (2004). Teachers' Perceptions and Management of Disruptive Classroom Behaviours during the Middle years (Years five to nine). *Australian Journal of Educational Developmental Psychology* vol. 4, 59-70.
- Barron, C. (2004). *London in the Later Middle Ages*. Oxford: OUP.
- Barton, K. & Levstik, S. (2004). *Teaching History for the Common Good*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Beane, J. A. (1993). *A Middle School Curriculum: From Rhetoric to Reality*. National Middle Schools Association.
- Boal, A. (1995). *The Rainbow of Desire. The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy*. (trans.) Adrian Jackson. London: Routledge.
- City of London Letter Books, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-letter-books/volk/pp16-30#h2-0001> Accessed August 5, 2015
- Davies, D., Jindal-Snape, D., Collier, C., Digby, R., Hay, P. & Howe, A. (2013). Creative Learning Environments in Education – A Systematic Literature Review. *Thinking Skills and Creativity* 8, 80 – 91.
- Davis, N. Z. (1975). *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Dixon, M. & Senior, K. (2011). Appearing pedagogy: from embodied learning and teaching to embodied pedagogy. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* 19(3), 473-484.
- Dowder, T. (2007). Relevant, Challenging, Integrative and Exploratory Curriculum Design: Perspectives from Theory to Practice for Middle Level Schooling in Australia. *The Australian Educational Researcher* vol. 34 Number 2, 51-71.
- Erler, M.C. (1994). Three fifteenth-century Vowesses. In C.M. Barron & A.F. Sutton (eds.) *Medieval London Widows 1300 – 1500*. London: The Hamledon Press, 165 - 184.
- Hanawalt, B.A. (1993). *Growing up in Medieval London. The Experience of Childhood in History*. Oxford: OUP.
- Haseman, B. & Winston, J. (2010). 'Why be Interested?' Aesthetics, Applied Theatre and Drama Education. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 15(4), 465-475.
- Heathcote, Dorothy (1971). Dorothy Heathcote: Three Looms Waiting. BBC Omnibus (Dir. Ronald Smedley) at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owKiUO99grw> Accessed August 5, 2015.
- Howard, J. (2006). *Australia Day Speech*. At <http://australianpolitics.com/2006/01/25/john-howard-australia-day-address.html> Accessed August 5, 2015.

- McLaren, M. (2008). Reading, writing and recording. Literacy and the London Chronicles in the fifteenth century. In M. Davies and A. Prescott (eds.), *London and the Kingdom: Essays in Honour of Caroline Barron*. Proceedings of the 2004 Harlaxton Symposium. Donnington: Shaun Tyas, 346 – 365.
- McLaren, M. (2013). Owning History: Building Historical Understanding through Creative Engagement, *Curriculum Perspectives* vol. 33, no. 1, 63-73.
- Newton, D. (2013). 'Moods, Emotion and Creative Thinking: A Framework for Teaching.' *Thinking Skills and Creativity* 8, 34-44.
- Prosser, B., McCallum, F., Milroy, P., Comber B. & Nixon, H (2008). 'I am smart and I am not joking'. Aiming High in the Middle years of Schooling. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, vol. 35, number 2, 15-35.
- Shulman, L.S. (1996). Just in case: Reflections on learning from experience. in J. Colbert, P. Desberg, & K. Trimble (Eds.), *The Case for Education: Contemporary approaches for using case methods*, Boston, Allyn and Bacon
- Shulman, L and Shulman J (2004). How and what teachers learn: A shifting perspective. *Journal of Curriculum Studies* vol. 36, no. 2, pp. 257-271.
- Slee, R. (2014). Evolving Theories of Student Disengagement: A new Job for Durkheim's Children. *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 40, No. 4, 446–465,  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2014.939414>
- Smyth, J. (2012). The Socially Just School and Critical Pedagogies in Communities put at a Disadvantage. *Critical Studies in Education*, 53:1, 9-18.
- Smyth, J. and McInerney, P. (2007). *Teachers in the Middle. Reclaiming the Wasteland of the Adolescent years of Schooling*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Strawson, J. (2003). *If by Chance. Military Turning Points that Changed History*. London: McMillan.
- Teese, R. (2013). *Academic success and social power: Examinations and inequality*. North Melbourne: Scholarly Press
- VanSledright, B. (2010). *The Challenge of Rethinking History Education: On Practices, Theories and Policy*. Taylor and Francis.
- Zipin, L. (2009). Dark Funds of Knowledge, Deep Funds of Pedagogy: Exploring Boundaries between Lifeworlds and School. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 30: 3, 317 -313.
- Zipin, L., Sellar, S. & Hattam, R. (2012). Countering and Exceeding 'capital': a 'funds of knowledge' approach to re-imaging Community. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 33:2, 179-192.
- Zipin, L. (2013). Engaging Middle Years Learners by making their Communities Curricular: A Funds of Knowledge Approach. *Curriculum Perspectives*, vol 33, no. 3, 1-12.

Zipin, L., Sellar, S., Brennan, M. & Gale, T. (2013). Educating for Futures in Marginalized Regions: A Sociological Framework for rethinking and researching Aspirations. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*. DOI: 10.1080/00131857.2013.839376

# **The Leadership Dispositions of Middle Level School Leaders: A Case Study - Jemila Goodman and Dr. Venesser Fernandes**

*Jemila Goodman, Thomas Carr College, Tarneit and Dr. Venesser Fernandes, Monash University*

This article is based on a qualitative case study that investigated the leadership dispositions of middle level leaders in a catholic secondary school. The study drew on literature to review the leadership dispositions of participants and investigated themes around transformational, transactional and servant leadership. Essentially, the study investigated which type or composite of leadership dispositions fitted well within this selected case-study school located in Melbourne, Victoria. The major findings of the study established that, the middle level school leaders demonstrated leadership dispositions that were aligned more towards a blend of transformational and servant leadership and to a lesser degree on transactional leadership.

One of the main findings of this research study is the importance of the on-going leadership development of middle level school leaders in transformational and servant leadership styles. The findings of this study may assist school principals and those involved in leadership development programs in the professional development of potential and actual middle level school leaders.

## **INTRODUCTION**

---

There appears to be incongruities in the role of middle level school leaders such as Year Level Coordinators (YLCs), who are perceived as influential yet remain invisible. The use of the term ‘invisible’ in the context of this study is a positive one, as many leaders have modelled this invisibility successfully.

Sorenson & Hickman (2013) describe invisible leadership as ‘leadership in which it is the common purpose, rather than any particular individual leader that inspires leaders and followers to take action on its behalf’ (p.1).

Perhaps, the reason for the invisible leadership style found within the leaders in this context stems from the fact that at a Catholic school, the expected attributes of a leader are guided by the Catholic faith.

With regards to the influential nature of YLC leadership, Kheng and Chua (2009) argue that, ‘the core characteristic of leadership is *influence*, which is often in the form of what the leaders say and do, and how the followers react’ (p. 204). YLCs routinely work collaboratively with other stakeholders within a school organization to ensure students receive ongoing academic and pastoral support. This study specifically investigated how YLCs perceive their own qualities and style of leadership within the school community

## **Purpose and Significance of Study**

---

The key purpose of exploring this specific area of research stems from the current lack of in-depth examination of how middle level school

leaders perceive themselves in their role as leaders. Although Earley's (2003) research was based on the role of followers and leaders in school leadership, the research did not investigate how middle level school leaders perceive themselves within these roles. Rhodes et al. (2008) focused on leadership talent identification and development perceptions of heads, middle leaders and classroom teachers in both primary and secondary school settings in England. While the study of Rhodes et al. (2008) has parallels to the current study, it fails to specifically focus on middle level school leaders within catholic school settings. This study addressed this gap by being based in a Catholic educational context.

The significance of this study stemmed from the absence of relevant literature on the leadership dispositions of middle level school leaders within Catholic settings. The available literature on leadership mainly focused on principal level or curriculum related leadership positions. Findings from this small scale case-study will provide future researchers with some insight in this particular area from which future studies can be designed. It also contributes in the provision of understanding the importance of 'due process' in the selection and leadership development of suitable candidates into middle level school leadership roles. The findings of this study may help inform key decision makers on the choice of the best leadership people for their particular school context.

### **Research Aims and Questions**

---

The aim of this phenomenological case study was to find out how YLCs make use of transactional, transformational and servant leadership dispositions within their regular leadership roles. The key research questions for this study were:

*How do YLCs use transformational leadership within their leadership roles?*

*How do YLCs use transactional leadership within their leadership roles?*

*How do YLCs use servant leadership within their leadership roles?*

To answer these questions, initially an extensive review of literature was conducted that aimed at providing a theoretical basis for the relationship between these three leadership dispositions and their effect on school leaders.

### **Literature Review**

---

Leadership is integral to the functioning and ongoing existence of any organization. Yuki (2002) describes leadership as the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives. Roach & Behling (1984) position leadership as, the process of influencing the activities of a group towards a shared goal. Blandford (2011) situates a middle level leader as someone who has contrasting roles within management teams and requires individuals to identify with different tasks and different people. These definitions identify that these leaders enact leadership by working collaboratively with followers towards the achievement of common educational and institutional goals. Within this study, leadership was identified as the conscientious and conscious facilitation of group efforts by the group leader to achieve shared results within a school community.

Brooks and Cavanagh (2009) argue that, '...within secondary school organizational structures, teachers and ancillary staff are typically organized within subject, pastoral or specialized program groupings. These departments or teams require a coordinator to organize and supervise the work being carried out' (p.2). YLCs regularly coordinate

the work of various school stakeholders to ensure a more cohesive and practical outcome. For example, the coordination and forwarding of assigned work to students unable to attend school involves communication with various stakeholders such as teachers, students and parents.

### **Leadership Dispositions: Transactional, Transformational and Servant Leadership**

Leadership dispositions refer to 'a leader's general personality, demeanour, and communication patterns in guiding others toward reaching organizational or personal goals' (Hoyle, 2006. p.595). The decision to focus primarily on the dispositions of transformational, transactional and servant leadership for this study was a conscious one that fitted with the context of this study, a Catholic secondary school where these dispositions are more likely to be employed by middle level school leaders.

Saeed, Almas, Anis-ul-Haq, & Niazi, (2014) situate transactional leaders as 'leaders who identify and clarify subordinates' job tasks and communicate to them how the successful execution of tasks will lead to the receipt of desirable rewards' (p.218). The definition emphasizes the reciprocal nature of transactional leadership, characterized by reward for successful completion of agreed job targets. It also highlights the routine aspect of the YLC role, which involves the coordination of student academic and wellbeing issues. Transformational leadership inspires people, develops innovative solutions and uses idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Humphreys, 2014). Within catholic school settings, YLCs who are able to successfully inspire their pastoral team into positive actions are perceived as effective leaders.

Moreover, transformational leadership encompasses the whole person. "... one who commits people to action, converts followers into leaders, and leaders into agents of change" (Nisivoccia, 1997, p.4). Through their collaborative working relationship with homeroom teachers, YLCs are able to implement policies aimed at improving student behaviour and student academic progress through the year.

Keith (1994) describes the servant leader as someone;

who is focused on serving others. ... an instrument for good, a person who has been given certain abilities or gifts which are meant to be used in helping others. A servant leader is not worried about the attention others pay to him, but the attention he pays to others. A servant leader loves people and wants to help them (p.5).

Thus, the focus of servant leadership is on establishing quality relationships with people who choose to work with their leaders in good faith. Servant leadership ensures the removal of overt social structures or hierarchies within most organizations. Instead, all members within the organization are seen as vital to the existence of the organization. Black, (2010) contends that 'servant leaders do not allow themselves to become isolated from their subordinates by layers of hierarchy' (p.442).

### **Method**

---

The epistemological position applied for the research was a post-positivist approach which assumes that reality is objective, transcending an individual's perspective that is expressed in observable behaviour (Wildemuth, 1993). This position has allowed for both the researcher's position as an insider (staff at the college) and outsider (objective researcher) and ensured the collected data reflected the lived

experiences of the participants. Fischer (1998), proposes that

...post-positivism focuses on science's account of reality rather than on reality itself. ..It is not the objects nor the properties per se, but rather, the vocabularies and concepts used to know and represent them that are constructed socially by human beings (p.135).

Thus, the language and themes used to describe the participant accounts of YLCs was true to the roles they perform within a school.

### **Selection of Participants and Method of Research**

Eleven (11) participants referred to as Year Level Coordinators (YLCs) from one Catholic secondary school were purposively sampled for this study. Purposive sampling is 'designed to enhance understandings of selected individuals or groups experiences(s) or for developing theories and concepts' (Devers & Frankel, 2000, p.264). The employment of purposive sampling was due to the small nature of the sample and ensured the targeting of specific participants (YLCs) within a specific organization (one Catholic secondary school). Suitable ethics clearances and permissions were sought and obtained by the researcher before conducting this small-scale research.

A case study design was used as it involved the exploration of multiple perspectives in the sample selected. The defining features of a case study are that it draws in multiple perspectives (whether through single or multiple data collection methods) and, is rooted in a specific context which is seen as critical to understanding the researched phenomena (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The use of case study design was appropriate, as it ensured that this study focused primarily on the leadership dispositions of participants from a particular middle level school

leadership role (YLC), thus giving cross-validation to this study.

### **Collection of Data**

Any research which relates to human behaviour, within a positivist paradigm requires the use of instruments that are both reliable and valid. Drost, (2011) suggests that 'reliability is the extent to which measurements are repeatable – when different persons perform the measurements, on different occasions, under different conditions, with supposedly alternative instruments which measure the same thing' (p.106). In this study, the 60 test items were made explicit for participants to understand and respond to. To elicit accurate responses from participants, test items were designed to ensure that respondents responded to the same queries in multiple ways. Bryman (2012) posits reliability as 'the consistency of a measure of a concept' (p.169). Structuring the same questions in multiple ways ensured the collection of data which was consistent with the participant's views on a particular concept.

Drost (2011) argues that validity 'is concerned with the meaningfulness of research components when researchers measure behaviours, they are concerned with whether they are measuring what they intended to measure' (p.114). The four criteria which applied to this research were credibility, transferability or applicability and dependability. Credibility refers to 'tactics to help ensure honesty in informants when contributing data, in particular, each person who is approached should be given opportunities to refuse to participate in the project to ensure that the data collection sessions involve only those who are genuinely willing to take part and prepared to offer data freely' (Shenton, 2004. p.66). No coercion of participants occurred; instead each was given

an ‘explanatory statement’ which outlined the scope of the study and right of withdrawal from the research. With regard to transferability or applicability criteria, Guba (1981) suggests that the researcher ‘can determine the degree to which the findings of a particular inquiry may have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects’ (p.80). The findings of this study are generalizable within Catholic secondary schools in Victoria and to some extent in other states and territories within Australia which have the same or a similar leadership framework. Shenton (2004) suggests that ‘in order to address the *dependability* aspect more directly, the processes within the study should be reported in detail thereby enabling future researchers to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results’ (p.71). Through the dissemination of findings from this article, information is available for similar studies to be conducted in future.

The theoretical basis of the instrument was established through the use of appropriate theory for each of the three leadership dispositions. The theoretical features of transactional leadership were taken from Humphrey’s (2014) model of transactional leadership which highlights two salient aspects - management by exception – passive; typified by a lack of direct supervision of followers and; management by exception active; characterized by active involvement of the leader in all aspects of the subordinate’s work. The theoretical features of transformational leadership were based on the four elements of transformational leadership discussed by Avolio et.al (1991) consisting of idealized influence; characterized by respect for others and empowering others. Inspirational motivation; consisting of having a charismatic personality and shared vision; individualized consideration; whereby leaders pay attention

to the needs of subordinates and, intellectual stimulation which involve leaders being innovative and encouraging followers to be problem-solvers. Finally, the concepts and theoretical features of servant leadership were based on its description by Tate (2003) who proposed the qualities of servant leaders as follows; service to others, being empathetic, appreciation of other people’s values, love of others and being non-servile.

The test items were built into a qualitative online data tool, aimed at eliciting detailed responses from the respondents. Burton et.al (2012) suggests that ‘respondents make significantly longer comments on the online form than on the paper form. In addition, comments made on the online form were judged to be more informative... than those made on the paper form’ (p.58). As the researcher was a colleague and peer to these participants being the twelfth YLC, chances of researcher influence, or bias was minimised through the use of an anonymous qualitative online survey. Using an unobtrusive method of data collection as employed in this research also ensured that participants did not feign or react to the questions which could not have been the case if they were interviewed face to face. Aurini et al (2016) argue that ‘researchers who use unobtrusive methods to capture the human experience, provide insight into the people, groups or institutions of interest’ (p.163).

## **Data Analysis**

---

Bryman (2012) describe data analysis as ‘the synthesizing of the information gathered from the research instrument to find out the extent to which responses align with the research objectives’ (p.13). Data analysis provided the researcher with information on the extent to which the instrument was able to address the research objectives. Aguinaldo (2012) argues that ‘the goal of thematic analysis is simply to paraphrase and summarize the dataset as a whole or in part in relation to particular research questions’ (p.769). Thematic data analysis was employed due to the different concepts the test items were based on. Groupings of the dispositions of transactional, transformational and servant leadership were used to discover recurring patterns in the data in order to develop a theoretical framework of the concepts under study.

Due to this being a small scale qualitative exploratory case study with N=11 participants who were all YLCs within one case study school, only one data set was collected through the qualitative online survey. The researcher’s background knowledge as an on-staff member within the school and as the twelfth YLC was used to provide an insider or emic perspective on data collected from the other YLCs. As ‘it is crucial for social researchers to clarify their researcher’ role, especially for those utilising qualitative methodology to make their research credible’ (Unluer, 2012. p.1). Nakata (2014) also emphasizes that it is important ‘to provide information about the researcher’s positioning as well as his or her background’ (p.170). The researcher’s role and background was made explicit right from the start of the study to the participants. Furthermore, Unluer (2012) argues that ‘insider-researchers generally know the politics of the institution, not only the formal hierarchy but also how it

‘really works’. Being an insider added to the richness of the interpretation of the data by enabling the researcher to draw on the shared experiences with the other participating YLCs in this study.

## **Results and Discussion**

---

### **Transactional Leadership**

‘Transactional leadership in its constructive form is characterized by working directly with individuals and groups, establishing contracts to achieve work objectives, determining individual capabilities, and setting up a compensation and rewards system, whereas in its corrective form, transactional leadership consists of waiting for mistakes to occur before acting (passive) and closely monitoring for the occurrence of mistakes (active)’ (Snodgrass & Shachar, 2008. p.227). Based on the findings around the ‘Transactional Leadership Dispositions’ of YLCs, it was found that most participants displayed the management by exception (passive) style of transactional leadership espoused by Humphrey (2014) in their current leadership roles. The data indicated that while most YLCs were likely to occasionally monitor followers, they also allowed followers to work unsupervised, only taking over when errors were made; without engaging in punitive or coercive management styles of leadership.

### **Transformational Leadership**

Based on the findings that emerged around the ‘Transformational Leadership Dispositions’ of YLCs, it was found that most YLCs possessed qualities of idealized influence by being mentors and empowering followers. They displayed individualized consideration through their ability to actively listen and encouraged input from followers. In terms of inspirational motivation, YLCs did not consider themselves as role models but believed that they shared visionary ideas with followers. The intellectual stimulation exercised by the

YLCs was noted through their ability to encourage mutual problem-solving within their followers. Additionally, the data indicated that the YLCs had active listening skills, collaborated and encouraged input during discussions, empowered followers, acted as role models, respected the expertise of team members and had visionary ideas which were shared with their followers.

### **Servant Leadership**

Keith (1994) situates the servant leader as someone 'who is focused on serving others ...an instrument for good, a person who has been given certain abilities or gifts which are meant to be used in helping others. A servant leader is not worried about the attention others pay to him, but the attention he pays to others. A servant leader loves people and wants to help them' (p5). Based on the findings of the data, within the current case study regarding the Servant Leadership dispositions of YLCs, it was found that most demonstrate service to others by being trustworthy, compassionate and by empowering followers to achieve their best. Other qualities YLCs believe they possessed include: having a sense of justice, being empathetic and harnessing the self-identify of followers in the completion of tasks.

The data showed that most YLCs used mediation and restorative justice in conflict resolution, are reflective about the development of leadership, constructively utilize the strengths and weaknesses of followers, inspire and harness followers' identity and personal values in the successful completion of tasks, view followers as equals, have respect for followers and act as advocates for followers.

### **Conclusion and Findings**

---

Overall, participants demonstrated leadership dispositions that were aligned more towards a

blend of transformational and servant leadership and to a lesser degree on transactional leadership. The findings suggest that YLCs possess the qualities of idealized influence (through mentoring and empowering followers); individualized consideration (evident through active listening); inspirational motivation (are visionary); and, intellectual stimulation by encouraging mutual problem-solving within their followers.

The findings of the data indicate that YLCs demonstrated the core aspects of 'Servant Leadership', which espouses service to others, by being trustworthy, compassionate and empowering followers. Having a sense of justice, being empathetic and harnessing the self-identity of followers in the completion of tasks were additional features found in the data. Overall, the data suggested that YLCs predominantly demonstrated a servant style of leadership compared to the other styles investigated within this study.

### **Implications of Findings**

The implications of these findings suggest that in future leadership recruitment and ongoing professional development of YLCs within Catholic school organisations, the emphasis of leadership disposition should be closely aligned with transformational and servant leadership dispositions and less with transactional leadership. This is the case because; the main premise of transactional leadership is the establishment of contracts to achieve work objectives characterized by a reward and punishment ideology (Snodgrass & Shachar, 2008) which is not conducive to a Catholic educational environment.

The findings also indicated that YLCs possessed all the positive characteristics of the four I's of transformational leadership: idealized influence, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation and

intellectual consideration. This suggests that the development of these qualities should be included in the leadership development of aspiring YLCs as these skills are required to make them effective in their role.

The findings of this study strongly suggest that YLCs demonstrated the key attributes of being of service to others and having empathy for others. Indicating that, these attributes must continue to be nurtured within Catholic school environments. Dierendock & Patterson (2015) assert that; ‘the emphasis in servant leadership theory is on leaders whose primary aim is to serve their followers while developing employees to their fullest potential’ (p.119). Additionally, these key dispositions should essentially form a part of the mission and vision statements of catholic school organisations, where new and potential YLCs are trained in both these key attributes. One of the main recommendations would be that current YLCs who have these dispositions may be used in mentoring roles for future YLCs as they exercise what may best be termed as invisible leadership.

Finally, the findings suggested that in terms of transactional leadership, the YLCs aligned with

the dispositions of management by exception (passive). With most respondents indicating that they were ‘more likely to take control when things go wrong’. This disposition is unsuited to a school environment due to the fact that the ‘in passive management-by-exception, the leader waits until a task is completed before assessing and determining whether a problem exists’ (Brymer & Gray, 2006. p.15). This could lead to disastrous consequences particularly when a team member is entrusted with the wellbeing of a student. It may be ‘too late’ to ‘fix things’ if things are beyond repair. YLCs should rather be provided with training which will assist them in developing ongoing collaborative working practices with their peers. This may assist them in problem solving throughout the management process rather than trying to fix things too late. Vulnerable lives (students) may be at stake and the wrong actions could result in disastrous consequences for those involved. Senior leaders must consider this disposition seriously in future by providing professional learning to existing and new YLCs on the implications of ‘passive management’ and, devise activities which will steer them towards ongoing collaborative team work.

## References

---

- Aguinaldo, J. P. (2012). Qualitative Analysis of Gay Men's Health Research: Comparing Thematic, Critical Discourse, and Conversation Analysis. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 59, 765-787.
- Appleton, J. V (1995). Analysing qualitative interview data; addressing issues of validity and credibility. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 22, 993-997.
- Catholic Education Commission of Victoria. (2005). *Leadership in Catholic Schools: Development Framework and Standards of Practice*. Australia.
- Aurini, J. D., Heath, M. & Howells, S. (2016). *The How to of Qualitative Research*. SAGE Publications, London.
- Avolio, B. J., Waldman, D. A., & Yammarino, F. J. (1991). Leading in the 1990s: The four I's of transformational leadership. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 15, 9-16.
- Beck, C. T. (2003). Initiation into qualitative data analysis. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 42, 231-234.
- Black, G. L. (2010). Correlational analysis of servant leadership and school climate. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, 13, 437-466.
- Blanford, S. (2006). *Middle Leadership in Schools*. Pearson Education, Great Britain
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.
- Brooks, Z & Cavanagh, R. (2009). An examination of middle leadership in Western Australian secondary school. Paper presented at AARE 2009 International education research conference, Canberra, Australia.
- Brumback, G. B. (1999). The power of servant leadership. *Personnel Psychology*, 52, 807-810.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods*. Oxford University Press, New York
- Brymer, E. & Gray, T. (2006). Effective leadership: Transformational or Transactional?. *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education*, 10(2), 13-19
- Cavanagh, R., Brooks, Z., & Deller, G. (2011). Middle-level Leaders: Measuring their perceptions of the role in Jan Wright (ed), Proceedings of the AARE Conference, Nov 27 - Dec 1 2011. Australian Association for Research in Education, Hobart.
- Chang, L., & Krosnick, J. A. (2010). Comparing oral interviewing with self-administered computerized questionnaires. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 74, 154-167
- Choudhary, A., Akhtar, S., & Zaheer, A. (2013). Impact of Transformational and Servant Leadership on Organizational Performance: A Comparative Analysis. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 116(2), 433-440. doi:10.1007/s10551-012-1470-8
- Cooper, M. (2005). The transformational leadership of the apostle Paul: A contextual and biblical leadership for contemporary ministry. *Christian Education Journal*, 2, 48-61.

Crane, A & De Nobile, J. (2014). Year coordinators as middle-leaders in independent girls' schools: Their role and accountability. *Leading and Managing*, 20, 80-92.

Day, C. (2011). *Successful school leadership: Linking with learning and achievement*. Open University Press, Maidenhead: England.

Devers, K. J. & Frankel, R. M. (2000). Study design in qualitative research: Sampling and data collection strategies. *Education for Health*, 13(2), 263.

Dierendock, D. & Patterson, K. (2015). Compassionate Love as a Cornerstone of Servant Leadership: An Integration of Previous Theorizing and Research. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 128(1), 119-131. Retrieved from; doi:10.1007/s10551-014-2085-z

Drost, E. A. (2011). Validity and reliability in social science research. *Education Research and Perspectives*, 38, 105-124.

Fiedler, F. E. (1967). *A theory of leadership effectiveness*. McGraw-Hill, New York,

Fischer, F. (1998). Beyond empiricism: Policy inquiry in postpositivist perspective. *Policy Studies Journal*, 26(1), 129-146.

Foster, B. (2010). From administrators to leaders: developing middle managers who make a difference. *Australian Educational Leader*, 32, 18-21.

Guba, E. G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Communication and Technology*, 29, 75-91.

Gurr, D. & Drysdale, L. (2013). Middle-level secondary school leaders: Potential, constraints and implications for leadership preparation and development. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 51, 55-71.

Hofstede, G. (1996). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind: Intercultural cooperation and its importance for survival*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Hickman, G. R., & Sorenson, G. J. (2013). *The Power of Invisible Leadership: How a Compelling Common Purpose Inspires Exceptional Leadership*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks

Hollander, E., & Offermann, L. (1990). Power and Leadership in Organizations: Relationships in Transition. *The American Psychologist*, 45(2), 179

Holmes, G. (1993). *Essential School Leadership: Developing vision and purpose in management*. Kogan Page Limited, London.

Humphrey, R. H. (2014). *Effective Leadership: Theory, cases, and applications*. London. SAGE Publications, Inc. London.

James, N., & Busher, H. (2007). Ethical issues in online educational research: Protecting privacy, establishing authenticity in email interviewing. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 30, 101-113.

Keith, K. M. (1994). Servant leadership. Presented at the Meeting of the Social Science Association. Honolulu.

Kemp, R., & Nathan, M. (1987). *Middle Management in Schools: A Survival Guide*. Blackwell Education, Oxford: Great Britain.

Kheng, Y. Z. S., & Chua, C. (2009). Influential leadership: Harvard model vs an I-Ching model, *Chinese Management Studies*, 3, 200-212.

Kirtman, L. (2014). *Leadership and Teams: The Missing Piece of Educational Reform Puzzle*. Pearson Education, United States

Langley, N., & Jacobs, M. (2006). *5 Essential Skills for School Leaders*. Rowman & Littlefield Education, USA.

Leithwood, K. (1993). Secondary school teachers' commitment to change: The contributions of transformational leadership. Retrieved from

<http://search.proquest.com/docview/62770223?accountid=12528>

Mirsalimi, H., & Hunter, M. (2006). Influential Leadership - Rough Notes, 149:76-78. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/200351838?accountid=12528>

Morse, J. M. et al. (2002). Verification strategies in qualitative research. *International journal of Qualitative Methods* 1, 13-22.

Nakata, Y. (2015). Insider–outsider perspective: revisiting the conceptual framework of research methodology in language teacher education. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 38: 166-183. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2014.923835>

Nisivoccia, J. D. (1997). Transformational leadership: My journey to becoming an effective leader. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/62442884?accountid=12528>

Ritchie, J., & Lewis, J. (2003). *Qualitative Research Practice; A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. SAGE Publications, London.

Roach, C. F., & Behling, O. (1984). Functionalism: Basis for an alternative approach to the study of leadership. In J. G. Hunt, D. M. Hosking, C. A. Schriesheim, & R. Stewar (Eds.) *Leaders and managers: International perspectives on managerial behaviour and leadership* (pp. 51-61). Elmsford, NY.

Saeed, T., Almas, S., Anis-ul-Haq, M., & Niazi, G I. (2014). Leadership styles: relationship with conflict management styles. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 25, 214 – 225.

Schuttloffel, M. J. (2013). Contemplative leadership practice: the influences of character on Catholic school leadership. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice* 17: 81-103

Shenton, A. K. 2004. Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22, 62-75.

- Singer, M., & Singer, A. E. (1990). Situational constraints on transformational versus transactional leadership behavior, subordinates' leadership preference, and satisfaction. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 130: 385.
- Smith, J. (2008). Good cops call for back up. *The Times Educational Supplement*, 4795: 25.
- Smith, F. (1997). Survey research: (2) Survey instruments, reliability and validity. *The International Journal of Pharmacy Practice*. 5, 216-226.
- Snodgrass, J., & Shachar, M, (2008). Occupational therapy practitioners' perceptions of rehabilitation managers' leadership styles and the outcomes of leadership. *Journal of Allied Health*, 37,38-44.
- Sultmann, W., & Brown, R. (2011). Modelling pillars of Catholic school identity: an Australian study *International Studies in Catholic Education*, 3, 73-90.
- Tate, T. F. (2003). Servant leadership for schools and youth programs. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 12, 33-39.
- Unluer, S. (2012). Being an insider researcher while conducting case study research. *The Qualitative Report*. Vol.17.
- Vaught, J., Brown, G. B., Linsey, E., & Watson, J. (2010). Transactional and transformational leader behaviors and Christian school enrollment. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/858376581?accountid=12528>
- Wong, C. S., Wong, P. M., & Peng, K. Z. (2010). Effect of middle-level leader and teacher emotional intelligence on school teachers' job satisfaction: The case study of Hong Kong. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, 38, 59-70.
- Yuki, G. (2012). Effective leadership behaviour: What we know and what questions need more attention. *Academy of Management Executive*, 26(4), 66-85.

# **Praxis Learning - Living Praxis – Living Practice - Dr Brian Mundy**

*Victoria University*

This paper written by an experienced secondary teacher and more recently a teacher educator at Victoria University explores how the praxis inquiry protocol can be used as an evaluation tool by both teachers and teacher educators to support them to improve their own practice. Change is a constant in teaching and consequently educators have to continuously review their own practice with regard to new policies, directions, research, ideas and requirements. The praxis inquiry protocol is proposed as a tool that can support this ongoing process of review. A 5 stage process and suggested initial questioning framework within the structure of the praxis inquiry provides this support.

## **Introduction**

---

The author started teaching at a secondary school in the 1970s and taught his final year 7 class in 2009, since then he has been teaching pre-service teachers at Victoria University. Throughout 37 years of teaching he has observed that change and innovation has been a constant. New ideas are forever being introduced to teachers and schools, expectations of teachers are constantly growing. Learning how to deal with this constant stream of ideas, concepts and expectations was important throughout his career. Indeed, as a curriculum leader (Advanced Skills Teacher 3 or AST3), for those who remember that acronym, and more recently as a Leading Teacher, the leadership for change and the introduction of change were key elements of these positions. However, it was as an individual classroom teacher that he experienced the most change. Over time the entire classroom paradigm changed with the curriculum, its assessment and pedagogy all shifting to a very different nature and content. The very teaching process

itself is, and was understood to be, different. The author wrote and theorised about this transition from one paradigm to the next in the PhD he wrote whilst teaching in the western suburbs of Melbourne. This study was a narrative of his learning, and also the journey of his school, through part of this transition in the first decade of this century (Mundy, B. 2013).

The teacher education courses and subjects at Victoria University use a praxis model of education. Praxis is taken to mean the ethical actions and judgements that underpin living well and by so doing, the combination of practice and theorising for the public good. (Hooley, N. 2015). For the author as the lecturer, praxis teaching and praxis learning is about connecting theory to practice with the aim of improving outcomes for students. Praxis Learning is one of the 8 signature pedagogies discussed across the papers in this edition of the journal. ‘Praxis learning is illustrated when a change of teaching practice occurs through reflection on enacted practice. This awareness can result in an increase in

ethically informed action for the public good'. (Hooley, N. in Arnold et al, 2014).

## **Praxis Learning**

---

Praxis learning resonates for the author with his thinking and practice as a secondary teacher when he wanted to act as a reflexive practitioner to improve outcomes for his students. In his research and reading for his PhD studies he read much about reflective practice but his concern was that it could be a very passive approach and he saw that reflective practice and his studies of action research required an action component. This was when he determined the need for a more reflexive approach to improving his practice, 'Action research takes us beyond only reflecting upon our practice. Reflecting can be a passive practice' (Lyons et al, 2011, p.139). This passivity potentially leads to inactivity and no real change or improvement occurring. Indeed, the author would agree with Lyons and his fellow authors that, 'Effective teachers need to be thoroughly reflexive' (Lyons et al, 2011, p.139).

"Reflexive in grammatical terms means referring back to itself; in this professional context it means referring back to actions taken' (Lyons et al, 2011, p.139), and as teachers therefore 'They need to regularly reflect upon their practices and work out and implement strategies to improve these' (Lyons et al, 2011, p. 139). This reflexivity covers many aspects of a teachers work as one seeks to critically reflect on your own classroom and school work and seek to bring about improvement, indeed 'Thorough reflexivity integrates philosophy, values, theory and practice' (Lyons et al, 2011, p. 139).

This understanding of reflexivity connects very comfortably to that of the praxis model of education and signature pedagogy of praxis learning within which questioning of practice eventually leads to improved, re-imagined and changed practice. The praxis model is built upon a protocol that has been used extensively over a long period of time at Victoria University. Much of the use of the protocol has been for assessment of student work at the college. The protocol itself with its 5 stages (questioning, describing, explaining, theorising and changing of practice) also does to some extent underpin the other signature pedagogies. This protocol is now also being used in the classroom by the author within discussion based learning circles. Here the protocol is used as a teaching and learning tool and to provide a framework for questioning. The protocol is used by the lecturer to support pre-service teachers (PSTs) as they critically question their placement observations to improve understanding and practice.

## **Living Praxis**

---

The PSTs give initial explanations based on their understanding from the literature, previous studies or their discussions with their mentors on placement. These ideas are then further unpacked and refined during the learning circle discussions. Other literature is drawn upon, often with a range of different viewpoints/theories, and suggestions from the other PSTs in the class are incorporated into the discussion. The original PST then expresses their personal current theories and understandings. Finally, as a group we challenge the original PST to try and improve their practice or understanding and to improve the outcomes for the students within their classrooms. Ideas may be contributed from any members of the learning circle.

This process is what the author terms a ‘living praxis’ approach. PSTs are evaluating and developing their own personal theories of educational practice (Whitehead, 1989, 1993) to change their practice to improve outcomes for their current and future students. They are connecting theory and practice and indeed are in fact building theory based upon practice, using evidence and observations from within their own classrooms as well as the inputs from the literature, from the lecturer and other PSTs.

This living praxis approach, as it operates in the author’s classroom at Victoria University, can also be used more widely. Indeed, it is the belief of the author that this praxis learning process, based on the praxis protocol, can be used by any practicing teacher as a method to support formal or informal study of their own practice and for reflexive practices. This form of qualitative research, known as self study, (Samaras, A.P, 2002, 2011, Samaras and Freese A.R, 2006) can be used to support the improvement of teacher practice, and to improve outcomes for the students in any classroom.

Practicing teachers use many methods and processes to improve their own practice. They collect ideas and get suggestions from many sources. Praxis learning involving questioning, describing, explaining, theorising and then re-imagining practice and this can be an on-going process to improve practice and outcomes.

Figure 1 illustrates how varied inputs can lead to improved outputs for the classroom teacher and their students. Teachers are continuously exposed to new ideas, possibilities and suggestions. Teachers attend conferences, curriculum days, complete professional readings, attend subject association seminars, network meetings, work with colleagues, mentor PSTs or coach each other. Each of these, and potentially others,

provides potential new ideas on how to teach more effectively or improve outcomes. Each teacher then individually or in teams evaluates these ideas, trials, adopts or discounts the varied possibilities. The praxis learning approach supports the questioning of these and whether or not they will be implemented.

Eventually the classroom teacher decides on their latest and most current and effective practice. This decision does not however, remain static. Teachers as mentioned earlier are continually exposed to new ideas hence it is proposed that they are evaluating, developing and updating their practice in an on-going way. This, the author suggests, is a living praxis process. Living praxis is a process that leads to the continuing refinement of personal theory. It is an ongoing, to some extent cyclical process, an action learning process. It is also a lifelong learning process as the educator continuously up-dates their understanding, theory and practice in this reflexive manner. (Mundy, B, 2016).

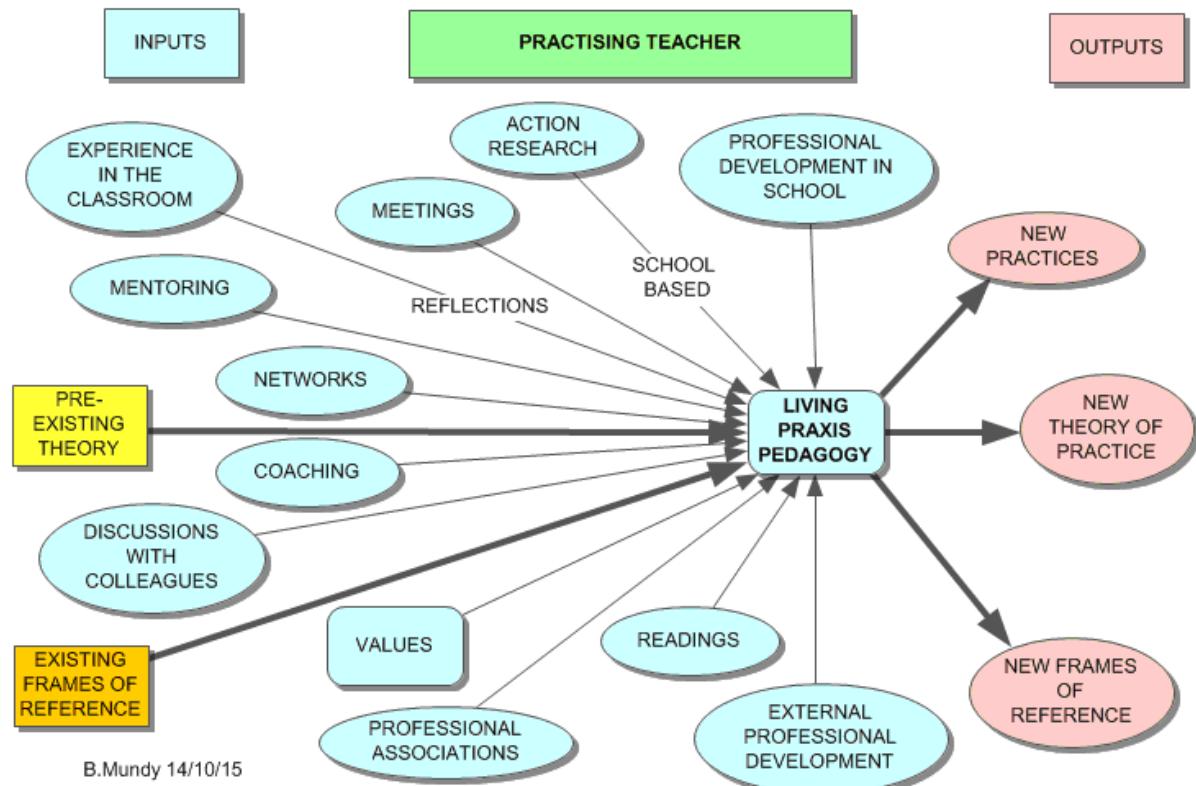


Figure 1: Inputs and Outputs within a living praxis pedagogy

## **Living Practice**

---

Jack Whitehead and Jean McNiff have discussed this process of personal theorising over many years. They re-inforce the idea that understanding is not fixed, it evolves and changes. Our understanding of best practice does not remain the same. It also evolves and changes. What was best practice in 1996, 2006 or 2016 is not the same and will not remain so:

Your theory is created from within your work and represents your present best thinking. It is always developing because you are always in the process of development. Your theory is not static; it is living, part of your life. It is your own living theory (Whitehead, 1989, 1993).

These theories are living in the sense that they are theories of practice, generated from within our living practices, our current best thinking that incorporates yesterday into today and which holds tomorrow already within itself.  
(Whitehead and McNiff, 2006 p. 2)

As teachers we try to keep the best of our old practices and add to them the new ideas and suggestions that work for us in our own contexts. Hence yesterday, today and tomorrow are linked as our practice evolves in what the author describes as an ongoing living praxis process.

To support the use of the praxis learning signature pedagogy, Table 1 has been included. This is an adaptation of the praxis inquiry protocol used at Victoria University. Here it has been modified and designed to assist teachers and teacher researchers as they use the protocol to evaluate their own practice.

Some guiding ideas and suggested questions are included for each stage of the protocol. For this particular evaluation context 5 stages have been identified. This begins with questioning, then continues to describing, explaining, theorising and finally re-imagining or changing practice in the classroom. The protocol could be used either by a teacher in their own classroom informally and reflexively for self study or as part of a more formal action research process. With these situations there would be extensive internal dialogue as the teacher considered their own practice in the light of the questions they wished to ask.

The protocol could however, also be used by groups of teachers within a school. For example, pairs of teachers either team-teaching or co-teaching together might decide to use the protocol. Alternatively, it might be adopted across a small team such as a year level group or a faculty to investigate a common area of interest. Indeed, it could be used at a much larger scale by a curriculum committee or school leadership group to explore school improvement. In the context where more than one person is using the protocol then there is the opportunity for much wider external dialogue as is the situation in classes at the university. The questions and ingredients are flexible and can easily be adapted to target or focus on one aspect of student outcomes for a teacher or alternatively to address a wider issue of concern such as the physical classroom environment, the school curriculum, teaching practice and pedagogy or a component of the school vision.

The process of developing a vision for one's classroom or indeed school is a very important one. The author considers it valuable to think about what type of students you want to develop, what type of learning

environment and of course what type of teaching. This envisioning process allows one to know where you are heading and the potential direction for improvement. It also supports the potential development of some form of action plan. This can then lead to backward planning towards that vision. The vision should be concrete, practical and shape one's practice as John Loughran has suggested:

In essence, a vision of teaching should be sufficiently concrete and useable to genuinely shape one's practice. Teaching for quality learning requires sophisticated knowledge of and in practice. Teacher education should therefore support students of teaching to make that vision robust, articulable and realizable in their practice. In that way, teachers' professional knowledge of practice might be catalysed. (Loughran, J. 2016, p.258).

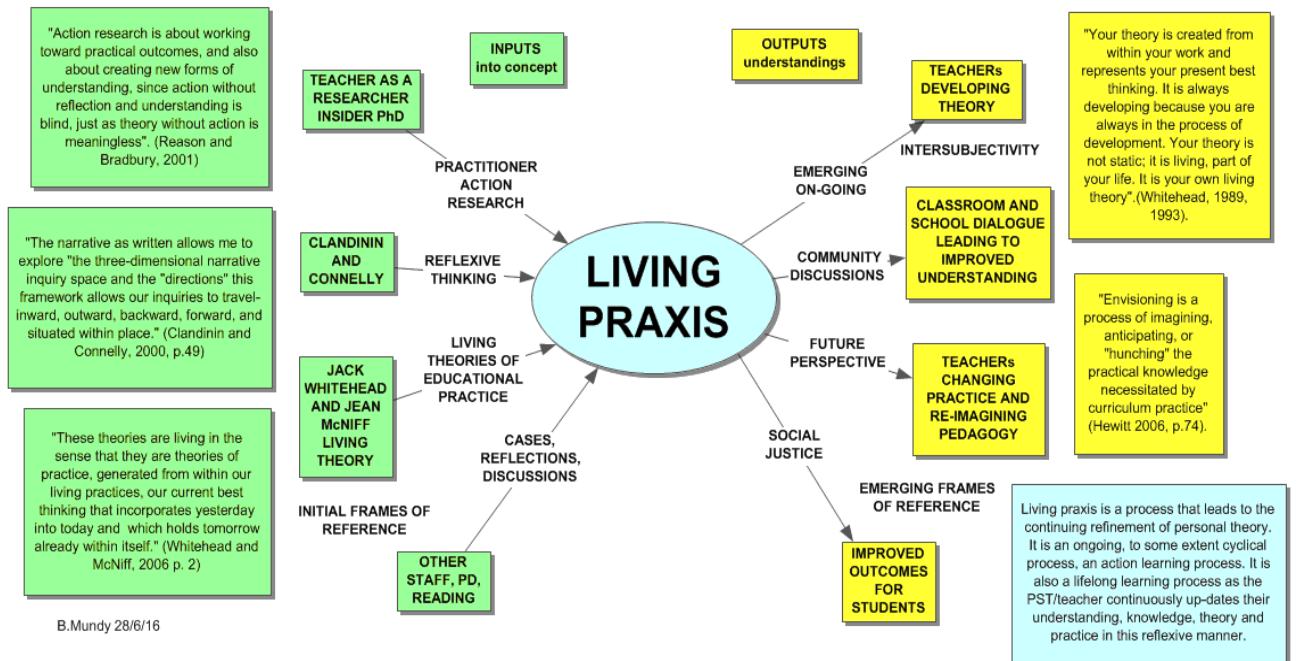
Use of the praxis protocol, as suggested in Table 1, supports practicing teachers in the implementation of strategies as they work towards their imagined classroom or pedagogy. The protocol can assist the catalysis process that Loughran mentioned above. 'Envisioning is a process of imagining, anticipating or "hunching" the practical knowledge necessitated by curriculum practice' (Hewitt, 2006, p.74). The constant reflective and reflexive processes inherent within the protocol leads the practitioner towards the achievement of components of their continuously re-imagined and up-dated vision.

Figure 2 summarises the key conceptual ideas in this paper regarding a living praxis for teachers. It identifies the key inputs into this theorising and the practical ideas contained in the paper. Living praxis is seen as an example of a living educational theory of practice (Whitehead, 1989, 1993, Whitehead and McNiff, 2006). The concept has also emerged

from the general realm of action research and in particular school based, insider practitioner research (Reason and Bradbury, 2001). This type of reflective and reflexive thinking and theorising is also commonly told through stories hence the work of Clandinin and Connnelly (2000) is relevant along with other authors working in the field of narrative inquiry

	<b>Practice</b>	<b>Activities – components - possibilities</b>
Teaching process - Rationale Dialogue and Collaboration Integrating and connecting theory and practice Linking praxis – and practice Living praxis process  Teaching and learning moments  Teaching for the possibility of being taught	Changing / re-imagining	What is a good vision? How are you improving life? How is the new vision emancipatory? What values and virtues underpin this new vision? How are you developing a vision? What would you change? What could you do differently in your own classroom? Imagine this situation in your classroom in 3 years, what would you do? What does it look, sound and feel like?
	Theorising	Understanding – learning from – being taught by- second knowing - who we are – how we are – is that what I desire? Personal theory – I believe, I think, I value. What do YOU think? Inter-subjectivity – intra-subjectivity - developing your ideas – refining and exploring possibilities.
	Explaining	Consciousness – complexity – sophisticated business - dialogue – uncertainty –truth/reality – responsibility – co-producers. Why? Rationale – what do you think? – What do your peers think? Other people's ideas and theories – peers, mentors, learning coaches, leading teachers, principal's perspective. Introduction - Use of the relevant literature – theory.
	Describing	Situated context – judgements in concrete situations – challenges – pragmatic reality –subjectivity. What do you see? Authentic cases – Sharing and Discussion of artefacts from different classrooms. Un-packing the situation or case. What? – When? – Where? – Who? – How?
	Questioning	How can we find space? Teacher and school priorities – Interruptions – Challenges – Purpose. Questions. Ontological (experience, understanding and commitment) - Epistemological (knowledge and its application) - Technical (effective strategies and techniques). What do I wonder about? What are your current issues and questions from your own classroom, the school, the system? What do I do well? What can I do better? How can I do better?

**Table 1: The Praxis Inquiry Protocol and questions for its use as an evaluation tool by practitioners**



**Figure 2: A living praxis summary for the practicing teacher**

## **Conclusion**

---

This paper has proposed a model and process for improving outcomes in schools by making systematic use of a praxis protocol. Important inputs for teachers in having them improve their practice may include ideas from colleagues, other schools, readings and professional development as was suggested in Figure 1. What potentially emerges from the praxis learning process is identified in both Figures 1 and 2.

An increased understanding leading to the updating of individual teacher theory is a very important outcome. Improved understandings can occur across schools as individual teachers discuss and share their thinking with colleagues. Changed practices in the classroom, improved individual teacher pedagogies and re-imagined classrooms are all potential outcomes as teachers improve their reflexive processes and change their frames of reference.

Finally, and most importantly there should be improved outcomes for students as a result of the processes suggested in this paper. Praxis learning is about connecting theory to practice with the goal of improving outcomes and creating a more just world starting one classroom at a time. In this way praxis learning leads to a living theory for individual teachers and a living practice in their classrooms. Individual teacher practice is constantly up-dated, evaluated and re-theorised thus becoming a living practice.

## References

---

- Arnold, J, Peter Burridge, P, Cacciattolo, M, Cara, C, Edwards, T, Hooley, N and Neal, G. (2014). Researching the signature pedagogies of praxis teacher education, AARE – NZARE, Brisbane.
- Hewitt, T. W. (2006). *Understanding and shaping curriculum. What we teach and why*. California: Sage Publications.
- Hooley, N (2014), PraxisTeaching, Learning, Living: Progressive theorising of teacher education – Arnold, Burridge, Cacciattolo, Cara, Hooley, Kelly, Neal and Williams. A presentation at ATEA Conference, Charles Darwin, 8-10 July 2015.
- Loughran, J. 2016, p.258 Teaching and Teacher Education: The need to go beyond rhetoric in *Teacher Education Innovation, Intervention and Impact* edited by Brandenburg, R. McDonough, S. Burke, J. and White S. Springer (2016)
- Lyons G, Ford M, and Arthur-Kelly M. (2011). *Classroom Management, creating positive learning environments*. Cengage, Melbourne, Victoria
- Mundy, B. (2013). The millennial school: A theoretical basis for curriculum design in a time of educational transgression (Doctoral thesis). Melbourne University, Australia.
- Mundy, B. (2016). Connecting theory and practice through a living praxis approach to preservice teacher education. Presentation at ATEA, Ballarat, Australia
- Samaras, A.P. (2002). *Self-study for teacher educators: Crafting a pedagogy for educational change*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Samaras A. P. and Freese A. R. (2006). *Self-study of teaching Practices*, Peter Lang New York
- Samaras A.P. (2011). *Self-study teacher research improving your practice through collaborative inquiry*. Sage, California.
- Whitehead, J. (1989). ‘Creating a living educational theory from questions of the kind, “How do I improve my practice?” *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 19(1):42-52
- Whitehead, J. (1993). *The growth of educational knowledge: Creating your own living educational theories*. Bournemouth. Hyde.
- Whitehead, J. & McNiff, J. (2006). *Action research and living theory*. London: Sage publications.

# **Beginning the Journey of Reflexive Teaching and Learning Practices: A Study of First Year Preservice Teacher Exposure to Praxis Inquiry and Signature Pedagogies - Coral Cara**

*Victoria University*

This paper examines and documents first year preservice teachers (PSTs) perspectives of developing reflexive practices. During the first year of a Bachelor of Education P-12 in Melbourne, Australia, the PSTs studied core mandated education units using a reflective lens of Praxis Inquiry (PI) whereby practice in the real world of schools was closely linked to studies and theory. Additionally, the Signature Pedagogies (SP) of core teaching and learning practices were utilized to build the PST skills, knowledge and understandings of their practice, their profession, and in the development of both their personal and professional growth. The paper evidences the PSTs perceptions of the PI/SP frameworks on their development.

## **Introduction**

---

Julie Andrews once sang: 'Let's start at the very beginning, it's a very good place to start' (Rodgers and Hammerstein 1965). This is apt for the discussion of first year preservice teachers (PSTs) because the author strongly believes that during the first year of their studies, first year education students need to experience both the lived experience of practice in the real world of schools whilst concurrently studying the theory and literature about practice. Additionally, the first year cohort also need to develop reflexive practices which will support informed decision making and the establishment of consolidated frameworks of practice throughout their four years of tertiary study. Within the College of Education at Victoria University, the staff and PSTs focus on reflexive practices of Praxis Inquiry (PI) and Signature Pedagogies (SPs).

PI refers to a format for developing evidenced and reflective practice. The PSTs and staff use the sequence of describing practice, explaining practice, theorizing practice and then modification of practice. This enables the real world of practice to be documented and analysed with a clear view toward improving practice. SPs refers to the use of core professional pedagogies which also support the development of evidenced and reflective practices. These practices are promoted in the core education units and are encapsulated as a 'map' (Hooley©2014).

National research on first year tertiary students clearly notes the hardship of transitioning and adjusting to the requirements of tertiary education (Scanlon, Rowling and Weber, 2007). The first year of university study is arguably the most crucial time for engaging students in their learning community and equipping them with the

requisite skills, not only to persist, but to be successful and independent in their new learning throughout their undergraduate years and for a lifetime of professional practice (ALTC, 2009). This is a world-wide issue whereby Terezini and Reason (2005) note that the first year of college is a make or break period for learning, with abundant evidence that links student first year academic performance to both persistence and degree completion (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991, 2005). Tinto also notes that:

...George Kuh, and I have long pointed to the importance of academic and social integration or what is more commonly referred to as involvement or engagement to student retention. The more students are academically and socially involved, the more likely are they to persist and graduate.

(2009, p.1)

Therefore, it is imperative that within the first year of study, PSTs receive both the lived experience of real practice so that firm decisions about career choice can be made; whilst beginning the life long journey of reflexive practice which informs decision making and supports academic engagement and development into effective educators.

### **The Study and Rationale**

---

Bridgstock et al. (2012, p.1) note that 'It is now widely accepted that first year students benefit from pedagogies which mediate and support their transitions to university and assist them to develop an adaptive student identity'. Additionally, research clearly recognises that the first year is a pivotal period which can strongly influence outcomes for students during their courses and beyond. McInnis identifies the first year experience as 'the glue that holds knowledge and the broader student experience together' (2001, p. 9). It follows that the first year experience

and curriculum must engage students, make them feel supported, and help them to develop a sense of belongingness and student identity (Scanlon, Rowling, and Weber, 2007).

All 500 first year PSTs study core mandated education units. This study documents and reflects upon the first year experience of PSTs using the Signature Pedagogies (SP) and the Praxis Inquiry (PI) frameworks over a 2 year period across two campuses. Fifty volunteer first year, Bachelor of Education P-12 PSTs participated in post unit group focus interviews. The initiating questions were:

*What is the current usage of the SPs and PI for first year PSTs in core education units?*

*What do PSTs think about PI/SPs post studying the core units?*

*What recommendations arise from the findings?*

The findings and ensuing recommendations for future application are presented in the following discussion.

The author is a lecturer/academic who co-ordinates and teaches in the first year core education units within the Bachelor course. For this study, the author provides staff input to augment the PST perceptions.

### **The Process**

---

Within the first year core education units, the focus was on the learner and learning; personal and professional practices and learning in a changing world. The PSTs were exposed to a range of ways and means of documenting their practice and the practice of educators in schools through key signature pedagogies whilst also using the Praxis Inquiry framework as a reflexive tool to inform their evolving practices. Evaluation and monitoring of PST development occurred through scaffolded authentic tasks and post unit group focus interviews.

The study examined 3 core education units and was offered to all 500 PSTs. Of that cohort 50 volunteers took part in group focus interviews which were semi structured and transcribed. Key questions were used to initiate the discussion, but PSTs input also guided the discussion. The post unit interviews were conducted over a 2 year period across two campuses. The data collection occurred post unit to ensure that the PSTs had experienced the use of the SP and PI; whilst being able to reflect upon those experiences. Post unit collection also ensured that there was no influence upon PST unit marking. The group focus questions related to the PI practice in schools and the SP as reflective tools.

The data collection was transcribed, and the findings will be used in multiple ways to reflect, publish and to inform future practices. This paper is a means of sharing the study with teachers and academic colleagues.

## **The Literature**

---

The most powerful lever for reform is the transforming of teacher practice. Teachers have a professional responsibility to continually improve their knowledge and understanding about the craft of teaching and translate that knowledge into practice. (DE&T 2005)

Review and modification of practice requires documentation and analysis of current practices. Therefore, this study aimed to document current practice and to review such practice through PST reflections. Loughran (2004) describes self-study as researching practice and uncovering deeper meaning which in turn strengthens underpinning praxis and endeavours to construct a culture of critique within practice. The purpose of such study is to:

improve that practice, in this case teacher education, in order to maximize the

benefits for the clients, in this instance pre-service and in-service teachers and their current and future students. Thus, the aim for teacher educators involved in self-study is to better understand, facilitate, and articulate the teacher learning process...it is enormously complex, highly dependent on context and its multiple variations, and personally and socially mediated. (La Boskey 2004, p.858)

Therefore, by providing PSTs with reflexive practices (SPs and PI) they too can evolve their understandings and practices.

First year PSTs face multiple challenges and issues including adjustment to the demands of tertiary academic requirements, independent responsibilities, and school placement environments. A reduction in student attrition can be achieved by improving the social and academic support for first year students through engagement in active collaborative learning (Pascarella and Terenzini 2005; Krause et al. 2005).

Alternatively, higher rates of attrition are associated with tertiary under-preparedness (McMillan 2005). Research also 'affirms that strong supportive relationships with peers and with teachers, which can be fostered in classroom settings, provide better transition experiences and encourages retention' (Milne 2009, p.20). The development of practices tying theory and practice with ongoing 'real world' experience in classrooms (PI); supported by core reflective practices (SP) supports first year PSTs to begin the journey of life long reflexive practice. It initiates practices which are built upon over the four years of their course and into their future practices.

Funston et al. reported:

that the majority of first-year students surveyed were generally well pleased with their first year at university. The

majority had performed academically at the level they had expected or exceeded that level and most felt they had acquired substantial knowledge and skills.' (2014, p.16)

However, despite this success, 25% did not return to the second year of their studies due to the early challenges of disorientation, extreme loneliness, confusion about lecture/tutorial expectations, and anxiety about academic writing. Therefore, the author believes that teaching, scaffolding and using PI and SP would be likely to help first year PSTs to 'find their feet' and to begin to understand professional practices.

Shulman (2005) notes that signature pedagogies are the fundamental ways in which future practitioners are educated for their new professions; the way novices are instructed in critical aspects of their professions and 'that such pedagogical signatures can teach us a lot about the personalities, dispositions, and cultures' (p.53) of professions. Shulman (2005) also notes this is not for understanding alone but also 'it is preparation for accomplished and responsible practice in the service of others. It is preparation for 'good work' (p. 56).

The Victoria University College of Education emphasizes eight signature pedagogies of praxis teacher education that have been identified around which programs can be designed and implemented (Hooley 2014) and by which pre-service teachers can investigate the realities of teaching and learning. The PSTs use these core practices to become reflexive and informed practitioners.

Praxis inquiry (PI) is a constructivist approach which recognises that the PSTs develop their own understandings and realities through study and real world application and interactions; followed by discussion and reflection. The application of constructivist

learning-teaching practices sees personal and professional reflection in classrooms as integral to PST development; whilst incorporating the explicit use of constructivist theory and practice as subject matter within the core units. The PSTs therefore co-construct meaning and skills, with lecturers and peers, from realities taken from a range of ideas and applications. Presenting both constructivist reflective processes and constructivist theory ensures effective teaching and learning delivery and content for enriched application (Oxford 1997).

Praxis Inquiry,

transfer[s] to the practitioners...the power to ask the questions that they regard are personally and professionally significant...The focus on personal teacher agency in the Praxis Inquiry Protocol has presented opportunities for teacher education at [this] University to have what we would claim is an authentic social content in our work.

(Cherednichenko and Kruger 2006, p. 4)

PI also supports PSTs and teachers as they,

engage in joint construction of knowledge through conversation and other forms of collaborative analysis and interpretation...From this perspective, inquiry communities exist to make consequential changes in the lives of teachers and, just as importantly, in the lives of students and in the social and intellectual climate of schools and schooling. (Cherednichenko and Kruger 2005, p.5)

Building reflective practices from the first year onwards consolidates the skill over time whilst creating informed decision making. Therefore, in order for this study to provide rich and useful data, the scope of inquiry needed to include PST voice. Documentation and analysis occurs through Praxis Inquiry (PI), which is a staged process of practitioner

inquiry or self-study, used extensively within the College of Education (Figure 1). The four stages (describe, explain, theorise, modify) are not intended as a rigid procedure but allow the inquiring practitioner to avoid making assumptions and instead, through evidence and argument, develop informed decision-making about curriculum and pedagogy. The four stages are complemented by a questioning framework, which brings to light the complexity of the simplest questions about practice.

### **The Praxis Described: What is the current use of PI and SP in the core education units?**

---

It has been argued that institutions need a holistic view of student experience that is learner focused and not hindered by the silos of academic, administrative and support areas that can overtake the core mission of education (Kift 2009). It has also been argued that an effective institutional pedagogy might be significant in addressing student retention (Kift, Nelson and Clarke 2010; Tinto 2009). The use of PI and SP may be the beginnings of such a pedagogical approach in this college.

Tertiary education is often directed by top down, prescribed courses, units and content; therefore, it is important to create grassroots classroom level ownership, belonging and support. Self-study through PI and SP, supports PST access and success when correlated with base beliefs; since it promotes critical thinking and informed decision making. Paramount is a belief that all learners can succeed given adequate time and support. Furthermore, PI and SP application enables differentiation of the learning and teaching styles (Gardner 2011) which ultimately supports all participants. Student centred inquiry in a supportive ethos (Cara 2006, 2006a) enables relationship building since first year units are taught by the same

team over the year. Tinto (2009) notes the importance of both academic and social engagement for student retention. Open ended explicit tasks enable a range of levels of attainment (Bloom 1984) and inquiry based teaching and learning. Similarly, targeted progressive tasks scaffold the learning (Vygotsky 1978). These strategies complement the PI and SP reflexive practices whilst role modelling core principles of practice which PSTs utilize in schools. Research also demonstrates that students engaged in metacognition; and the use of explicit language and discussion regarding teaching and learning; facilitates the learning process (Beeth and Hewson 1999; White and Gunstone 1989).

PI and SP support vital practitioner research. Practitioner research is an important means of effecting educational change since it is ‘an invitation to learn, a means to tackle the tough questions that face us individually and collectively as teachers, and a method for questioning our daily taken-for-granted assumptions...’ (Mills 1999, p.v). Teachers have a professional responsibility to continually improve their knowledge and understanding about the craft of teaching and translate that knowledge into practice (DE&T 2005). Likewise, PSTs have a responsibility to develop their thoughts, actions and theorised ideas around their own and others’ practice.

To stimulate such inquiry, Praxis Inquiry systematically ties the theory to the practice in ‘real lived’ experience in schools. PI is a constructivist approach which acknowledges PSTs development of their own understandings and realities through study and real world application and interactions; followed by discussion and reflection. Such application of constructivist learning-teaching practices sees personal and professional reflection in classrooms as integral to PST development; whilst incorporating the explicit

use of constructivist theory and practice as subject matter within the core units. The PSTs therefore co-construct meaning and skills, with lecturers and peers, from realities taken from a range of ideas and applications.

Presenting both constructivist reflective processes and constructivist theory ensures effective teaching and learning delivery and content for enriched application (Oxford 1997).

PRAXIS INQUIRY PROTOCOL FOR REFLECTIVE ENQUIRY (PI)			
Phase of Inquiry	Experience, Understanding and Commitment  Ontological questions-  What is the current use of PI and SP in core education units (Praxis Inquiry, Signature Pedagogies)?	Effective Strategy and Technique  Technical questions-How effective are these strategies from the PST viewpoint; from a staff member's viewpoint?	Knowledge and its Application  Epistemological questions-  What recommendations can be made from the findings?
PRACTICE DESCRIBED	PRACTICE EXPLAINED	PRACTICE THEORISED	PRACTICE MODIFIED
Practitioner describes the practice, participants and the situation (e.g. journals, observation, records of practice, interview)	Practitioner explains the practice using explicit discourse/s for interpreting the action. (e.g. personal reflection, mentors, colleagues' insights and published research literature)	Practitioners construct their personal theory of the practice through the evolved insights, understandings and skills developed	Theorised practice enables review of current practices, the proposal and trial of new practices and/or modification of the current practice

**Figure 1: Praxis Inquiry Framework (Cherednichenko & Kruger, 2005, Amended Cara, 2014)**

Praxis Inquiry is demonstrated by the PSTs in multiple settings and scenarios. For example, all PSTs complete projects in schools which arise from a collaboration of school needs, student needs and PST inquiry. Additionally, core unit SP applications, demonstrates PSTs as teacher researchers (Figure 2) through a range of inquiry practices. The authenticity of this teacher research lies in the fact that the PSTs self-select their foci, their methodologies

and link this to their work in classrooms. It encompasses work integrated learning that is authentic, purposeful and linked to the PST studies (Calway 2008). The unit guide and task requirements clearly state the related Signature Pedagogies and Praxis Inquiry framework; allowing the PSTs to effectively understand and use such core practices in their reflective tasks. Figure 2 provides an example task.

Student Name: _____ Lecturer: _____			Does not meet criterion	Meets criterion in a basic way	Meets criterion in an adequate way	Meets criterion to a high level	Meets criterion to a very high level
Praxis Described	New learning experience:	The new learning experience is captured in depth and involves analysis of the learning journey	N (0-49)	P (50-59)	C (60-69)	D (70-79)	HD (80-100)
Praxis Explained	Content:	The process of the learning experience is expressed in the form of a visual narrative with a clear beginning, middle and end					
Praxis Theorised	Literature:	Connections to relevant theoretical perspectives that directly relate to and explain the new learning experience. Strong evidence of critical thinking					
Praxis Changed	Reflection:	Evidence of reflection in regards to the new learning and the learning process. What complications did you encounter and what was the outcome?					
Planning & Organisation		Evidence of planning and achieves the goal / intent of the project. Information is presented in a logical and interesting sequence which engages the intended audience					
Movie design:		Graphics, text, audio, music, effects, edits and videography are appropriate and enhance effectiveness of the product					
Creativity:		Innovation in composition and delivery.					
Tertiary standards/ Harvard Referencing:		Bibliography/credits included; Correct Harvard Referencing has been used Tertiary Standard of language used in presentation Explains learning experience using ideas from two or more academic texts (not websites)					
Comments:							Total:

**Figure 2: Sample Unit guide task using Praxis Inquiry framework (Cara, 2015)**

## **The Praxis Explained: Evidence of current usage of Praxis Inquiry and Signature Pedagogies in core units**

---

The author ensures that the PI/SP practices are embedded into the core units since they are specifically and explicitly scheduled into the twelve-week core units, inherent to the assessment tasks and stated in the unit guides. For example, the SP are acknowledged in the unit guides and specifically and explicitly used, referred to and scaffolded in classes. An extract from a course guide is presented below

Shulman (2005 p.52) notes that Signature Pedagogies cover ‘critical aspects of the three fundamental dimensions of professional work –to think, to perform, and to act with integrity’. The Signature Pedagogy Map in your unit guide, lists core educational practices that will help you to develop an understanding and application of the cultures of your professional work, and early socialization into the practices and values of the education field. These signature pedagogies are embedded into your core units of study so that you can begin to form the ‘habits of the mind, habits of the heart and habits of the hand (Shulman, 2005 p. 57) Sample Unit guide excerpt: 1101, 1210,1250 (Cara 2014, 2015)

This study intentionally examined first year core education units using the Signature Pedagogies (SPs) map to firstly ascertain and document what was actually occurring (Figure 4). It was significant to find that first year PSTs were covering a range of SPs in their core units and on further analysis that they were frequently used in multiple tasks; so that PSTs begin to form the ‘habits of the mind, habits of the heart and habits of the hand’ (Shulman, 2005 p. 57), which will support PSTs professional development.

Additionally, the frequency of practice across the core units was documented. For example, Figure 5 provides evidence of the application of signature pedagogies consistently across the twelve weeks.

<b>Signature Pedagogies</b>	<b>Characteristics of Signature Pedagogies</b>	AEB1101	AEB1210	AEB1250
Professional Practice (Schatzki, Kemmis, Green)	Recognises personal learning from immersion in practice	✓		✓
Repertoires of practice (Kalantzis, Cope)	Identifies and articulates features of pedagogical, curriculum, assessment practices	✓	✓	✓
Teacher as Researcher (Stenhouse)	Systematically investigates own practice for improvement		✓	
Case Conferencing (Shulman)	Generates case and commentary writing for understanding of practice	✓		✓
Community Partnership (Sizer, Moll)	Connects with local communities			✓
Praxis Learning (Freire)	Investigates / provides description, explanation, theorising and change of practice in response to reflection on practice	✓		✓
Portfolio Dialogue (Freire, Dewey, Brookfield)	Compiles and discusses artefacts of personal learning over time	✓		✓

**Figure 4: Signature Pedagogies Map (Hooley, 2014) of core education units in first year pre-service teacher courses at Victoria University**

AEB 1250 Frequency and type of Signature Pedagogies utilized over 12 week core unit													
	Weeks												Total
Signature Pedagogy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Signature Pedagogy		✓	✓	✓							✓	✓	5 out of 12
Repertoires of Practice					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8 out of 12
Teacher as Researcher						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	13 over 12 sessions
Practices embedded													

**Figure 5: Frequency and type of Signature Pedagogies used in core unit AEB 1250 at Victoria University**

### **The Praxis Theorised: What are the PST post unit perceptions of the PI and SPs?**

Posing PSTs as teacher researchers allows for the development of learner-centred pursuits which can result in improved learning outcomes (Bower 2010), improved academic performance and decreased course exits (Justice et al. 2007). Evidence also notes enhanced critical thinking and reflective judgement (Bauer and Bennett 2003), and enhanced problem-solving ability and research confidence (Ryder, Leach et al.

1999). The opportunity for PSTs to develop such habits of critical inquiry supports effective practices, since these graduates will become:

‘professionals worthy and able to make reflective decisions or judgements and plans based upon principled knowledge that is adapted to the particulars of their teaching situations, their students, their unique experiences, their special insights, self-knowledge, values and commitments’ (Reynolds 1989, p.x).

Secondly, the research examined PST perceptions of PI and SP through group focus interviews across two campuses. Even at first year level, PSTs were strongly articulating their knowledge, usage of and reflective practice in Praxis Inquiry both within their university studies and within the workplace of schools. One PST noted that:

*Signature Pedagogies are about the types of teaching and the fundamental ways in which we as future practitioners are educated into our profession.*

Another expressed the benefits of using PI to review their classroom experiences:

*Each week we focused on something else. It made you keep your eye out for your assessment – had I not had to look out for it I would not have thought about this. I got to assess the kids on an oral presentation and this was important...The debrief session at the end was effective and useful because I felt I had struggled to identify things in classroom. But when we debriefed at the end with the lecturer, I could say yeah I did see that and jot stuff down – debriefing was important to me.*

One PST also acknowledged gains made to their current practices:

*It gives us the tools to think reflectively about what we experience  
and future benefits since  
Being able to go to participate in a school and research topics would help me as a future teacher.*

Even at the first year level the praxis was apparent:

*I thought it was a good way to reflect on what I did at the school and what my influence is on children*

*This task gave me an opportunity to ask questions that I may not have otherwise asked*

*in my situation...It did help me with the analysis of the situation.*

The inquiry highlighted the range of skills and understandings, and a growing professional maturity among the first year PST students. Aptly, in the words of the PSTs, it was noted that signature pedagogies provided the means for professional growth and development:

*Signature pedagogies are the core practices of our profession ... It gives you an insight into how you are going to teach and how you will change things and that is what the research will do. I now know that I will do things differently in my classrooms.*

## **The Praxis Modified- So What? What recommendations for future practice arise from the findings?**

---

Throughout the four years of their studies, the PSTs are developing their use of Praxis Inquiry and Signature Pedagogies and their identity as teacher researchers and reflective practitioners. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of practice enables review and modification.

The findings of this study suggest that the use of PI and SP is beneficial to the first year preservice teachers since all participants (100%) noted the benefits of using these strategies.

It is also important to acknowledge what may be limitations to this study. Firstly, this study related to first year PSTs only. The volunteer cohort was relatively small and may not have captured the full range of PST thoughts. Secondly, this study relates to a particular locality and cohort of students; which may suggest issues of transferability. Finally, the passion and enthusiasm for the PI and SP of the author and the team may also have influenced the outcomes of the findings. But once again, proactive positive teaching and learning is what educators wish to achieve, and if this strengthens application and student enthusiasm then this is a gain.

## **Conclusion**

---

This study has consolidated the author's belief in the application of Signature Pedagogies and Praxis Inquiry as a means to supporting PST development as reflexive and informed practitioners during their course, but more importantly, in their future roles as educators. Interestingly, all participating first year PSTs (100%) voiced their belief in the value of such reflective practices and the benefits they derived by reviewing educational practices. Importantly, PSTs had ownership of the tasks since they were open ended and empowered the PSTs to decide what, how and why they wished to pursue certain elements of practice. As Shulman notes, the one thing that is clear is that 'signature pedagogies make a difference. They form habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of the hand' (2005, p. 59). This is what we desire for future educators, the ability to be the best practitioners that they can be.

## References

---

- Alvesson, M. and Sköldberg, K. (2009). *Reflexive methodology: new vistas for qualitative research*. Second edition. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Australian Council for Educational Research. 2009. *Engaging Students for Success*. Camberwell: Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd.
- Bauer, K. and Bennett, J. (2003). Alumni perceptions used to assess undergraduate research experience. *The Journal of Higher Education* 74(2), 210-230.
- Bower, M. (2010). 'Developing Preservice Teachers' Research Capabilities Using LAMS'. Proceedings of the 5th International LAMS Conference 2010. Accessed May 2011  
<http://lamsfoundation.org/lams2010sydney/papers.htm>
- Burnett, L. (2007). 'Juggling First -year Experience and Institutional Change: An Australian Experience'. Paper presented at the 20<sup>th</sup> conference on first year experience. USA: Hawaii. July 9-12, 2007.
- Bridgstock, R., Thomas, A., Lyons, K., Carr, L. and Zelenko, O. (2012). 'Putting the cart before the horse? Driving student engagement through first year career identity development in a large multidisciplinary Creative Industries cohort'. Nut and Bolts. Australia: Creative Industries Faculty, Queensland University of Technology, Queensland, Australia. The First Year in Higher Education Conference 2012, 26 - 29 June 2012, Sofitel Brisbane Central, Brisbane, QLD. Accessed: 15/8/16, <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/52633/1/8C.pdf>
- Calway, B. A. (2008). *What has Work-Integrated Learning Learned? - A WiL Philosophy*. Lilydale: Swinburne University of Technology.
- Cara, C. (2006). 'The Power of One with Many: Creating Inclusive, Accessible, Collaborative Education for All'. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences*. 1(4): 115-124.
- Cara, C. (2006a). 'Multiple Opportunities Benefitting all Students'. Meeting Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools. Australia, Sydney: IES Conferences: 189-210.
- Cherednichenko, B. and Kruger, A. (2005). 'Social justice and teacher education: Re-defining the curriculum'. Paper presented at the 12<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Learning, Granada, Spain.
- Department of Education, Employment, and Workplace Relations. (2009). *Students: Selected Higher Education Statistics*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Department of Education and Training. 2005. *Blueprint for Education*. Melbourne
- DEEWAR. (2009). Annual Report 2009. Accessed July 2016:  
[https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/.../annual\\_report\\_200910\\_part\\_1.pdf](https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/.../annual_report_200910_part_1.pdf)
- Downey-Skochdopole, L. and Jenice Goldston, M. 2000. 'Preservice Teachers' Debut as Researchers: An Active Learning Process.' *Journal of Elementary Science Education*, 12(1) (Spring 2000): 1-18.

- Gabb, R. (2006). *2004 First Year Experience Survey: Findings from VU Respondents*. Melbourne: Victoria University Press.
- Gabb, R. (2006a). *Overview Paper Student Attrition*. Melbourne: Victoria University Press.
- Gabb, R., Milne, L. and Zhongjun, C. (2006b). *Understanding Attrition and Improving Transition: Literature Review*. Melbourne: Victoria University Press.
- Gardner, H. (2011). *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.
- Justice, C., Rice, J., Warry, W., Inglis, S., Miller, S., and S. Sammon (2007). Inquiry in higher education: Reflections and directions on course design and teaching methods. *Innovative Higher Education*. 31(4): 201-214.
- Kift, S. (2009). Articulating a transition pedagogy to scaffold and to enhance the first year student learning experience in Australian higher education. Final Report for the ALTC Senior Fellowship.
- Kift, S., Nelson, K., and Clarke, J. (2010). Transition pedagogy: A third generation approach to FYE—A case study of policy and practice for the higher education sector. *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education*, 1(1), 1-20.
- Krause, K-L. (2005). The Changing Face of the First Year: Challenges for Policy and Practice in research-led Universities. Keynote paper at the University of Queensland First Year Experience Workshop 2005.
- LaBoskey, K. V. (1994). *Development of Reflective Practice: A Study of Preservice Teachers*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- LaBoskey, K. V. (2004). The methodology of self-study and its theoretical underpinnings. In J. J. Loughran, M. L. Hamilton, V. K. LaBoskey & T. Russell (Eds.), *International handbook of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices* (pp. 817–869). Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Lawrence, J., Ashwood, A., Burton, L. and Brown, A. (2013). Ch. 9. Anticipating a responsive, relevant and agile institutional pedagogy. England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp.156-186.
- Loughran, J. J. (2004). ‘Learning Through Self-study.’ *International Handbook of Selfstudy of Teaching and Education Practices*, Eds. J J. Loughran, M. L. Hamilton, V. K. LaBoskey, and T. Russell, 151–92. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- McInnis, C. (2001). *Signs of disengagement? The changing undergraduate experience in Australian universities*. Melbourne: CSHE. Accessed March 2009, <http://repository.unimelb.edu.au/10187/1331>
- Milne, L. (2009). Students in Transition: Articulation, Expectations and Attrition. *First Year Experience*. 41(1), 20-27.
- Oxford, Rebecca L. (1997). ‘Constructivism: Shape-shifting, Substance, and Teacher Education Applications.’ USA: *Peabody Journal of Education*. 72(1): 35-66.

- Pascarella, E. and Terenzini, P. (1991). *How college affects students: Findings and insights from twenty years of research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Pascarella, E. and Terenzini, P. (2005). *How college affects students (Vol. 2): A third decade of research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Reynolds, M. C. (Ed.). (1989). *Knowledge base for Beginning Teacher*. Oxford, England: Pergamon Press.
- Ryder, J., Leach, J. and Driver, R. (1999). Undergraduate science students' images of science. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 36 (2), 201-219.
- Scanlon, D. L., Rowling, L. and Weber, Z. (2007). 'You don't have like an identity: you are just lost in a crowd': Forming a student identity in the first-year transition to university. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 10(2), 223-241.
- Shulman, L. (2005). 'Signature Pedagogies in the Professions'. *Dædalus Summer 2005*: 52-59.
- Smith, L. (2011). Towards a transition pedagogy: a case study of a regional Australian university's approach to enhancing the first year experience. Paper presented at the First Year in Higher Education Conference, Fremantle.
- Terenzini, P. T. and Reason, R. D. (2005). 'Passing the First Year of College: A Conceptual Framework for Studying College Impacts'. Paper presented at the meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, November 19, 2005, USA: Philadelphia, PA.
- Tinto, V. (2009). Taking student retention seriously: Rethinking the first year of university. FYE Curriculum Design Symposium 2009, Brisbane. Accessed March 2009:  
[http://www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/resources/SPE\\_VincentTinto\\_5Feb09.pdf](http://www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/resources/SPE_VincentTinto_5Feb09.pdf)
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press.
- Wubbels, T. and Korthagen, F.A. J. (1990). The effects of a pre-service teacher education program for the preparation of reflective teachers. *Journal of Education for Teaching*. 16(1).

# Working Globally in Teacher Education - Greg Neal

*Victoria University*

This paper highlights a pedagogical approach involving an international project that responds to the increased inclusion of digital resources for preservice teachers. A global collaboration project was established to provide preservice teachers the opportunity to engage in a glocal (global and local) connection to share and transfer pedagogical knowledge and co-create an end product to demonstrate new learning. This case is consistent with the principals of a repertoire of practice where the preservice teachers engage in a social online context to explore and evaluate curriculum, pedagogy and assessment as part of their teacher education development. This paper reports preservice teachers' reactions to working glocally and how they responded to co-constructing knowledge in an online pedagogical initiative. The preservie teachers' commentary included in this paper highlights how the experience enhanced their confidence levels with digital resources while being socially challenged to work in a collaborative online network.

## **Introduction**

---

The journey of a preservice teacher undertaking a teaching degree inevitably faces the challenge of confronting their preconceived ideas about the teaching-learning process. Cognitive psychology offers valuable insights for the teaching and learning process to help understand the importance of prior beliefs and cognitive behaviours in the learning process. An unconscious challenge for preservice teachers is the impact of bringing personal practical knowledge and prior experience to the teaching-learning situation where they shift from being the learner to being the educator. Richardson (1996), for example, suggests that both attitudes and beliefs are important considerations in understanding classroom practices. Thomas (2011) discusses 'unlearning' and its implications for changing practice.

With the passage of time, prior beliefs tend to become fixed and resistant to change. Because of this, prior beliefs can be major impediments to learning, especially to conventional or traditional classroom-based instruction and the style of teaching that accords with 'telling' (Marchese, 2009). MacGregor (2013) suggests that academic staff need to move away from traditional teaching lectures to 'the multi-faceted teaching possibilities now available' (p. 2).

The Australian Communication and Media Authority (ACMA 2008) research reports that an emerging trend confronting education and teachers today is the significance placed on emerging Information and Communication Technology (ICT) resources. Some of these resources include social networking, collaboration and communication usage and the use of mobile technologies These resources are having a much bigger impact in education than ever before given the explicit standards and expectations for teacher

graduates to demonstrate and use ICT in their teaching and learning (AITSL, 2011). When considering the use of ICT knowledge and skills in 21<sup>st</sup> Century classrooms there is a need to ensure teacher education courses adequately utilise the latest technology resources as part of their course offerings.

In many teacher education courses there is a noticeable shift toward expanding opportunities for conversations and reflection based on evidence from classroom practice (Green, 2007), assessment that includes the integration and demonstration of technology resources (Britten & Cassidy, 2005), and additional blended learning opportunities with self-directed learning (Sriarunrasmee, Techataweewan & Panichkul, 2015). The intent is to promote a community of learners that will be collaborative and where preservice teachers can exchange ideas and explore new pedagogies.

Changes in teacher education course design are aimed at working to improve the student's knowledge domains. These changes have arisen in response to a need for preservice teachers to engage with evidence-based research as a key part of the learning process (Brew, 2010). One example of an evidence-based approach aimed at further improving the quality of course design is the signature pedagogies that aim to link theory to practice (Kalantzis and Cope, 2012). Repertoires of Practice, one of the signature pedagogies described by Hooley (2015), has been introduced to the course design in the College of Education at Victoria University.

Repertoires of Practice have the following three main characteristics:

- ♦ Identifies and articulates features of pedagogical, curriculum, assessment practices

- ♦ Links key features of pedagogy, curriculum, assessment for change and improvement
- ♦ Critiques repertoires of educational practice as social activity that supports satisfaction and progress (Arnold et al, 2016).

Similar approaches have been used internationally to link theory to practice. In the Netherlands for example, some teacher educators have developed an approach where 'the educators work with realistic examples taken from the student teacher's recent practice, and simultaneously attempt to deepen their experiences by linking them to theory' (Tigchelaar and Korthagen, 2004, p.666). In Finland teacher educators found that student teachers' reflective and critical thinking was a goal for their teaching. They believed that when a student teacher's own internalised pedagogical thoughts were confronted with new ideas, there was an ability to evaluate and possibly change a previous way of thinking. Engaging in quality reflection can facilitate the preservice teacher to overcome old preconceptions and find new educational thinking. (Tryggvason, 2009).

At Victoria University the theoretical approach that underpins their teacher education program is called praxis-inquiry. Praxis inquiry is a process of learning that encourages preservice teachers to engage in critical inquiry. This process enables preservice teachers to consider those teaching and learning approaches that support a social justice standpoint (Arnold, Edwards, Hooley & Williams, 2012). This approach is designed as a cyclic way for preservice teachers to examine their own practical understanding, by describing and generating explanations of practice. Praxis inquiry enables preservice teachers to confront and solve problems encountered during teacher education. What evolves throughout this process is a deep

understanding of the constant need to assess and reflect upon one's own practice in action.

There are very few first-hand accounts provided to the wider education community that showcase how teacher educators develop new knowledge and understandings about teacher practice with preservice teachers. This paper highlights one situation where an international project played an integral role in changing teacher's prior knowledge about effective pedagogical practice.

### **Repertoires of Practice**

---

Repertoires of Practice, an identified signature pedagogy and an integral part of praxis inquiry, requires students to work in social situations in order to organise and learn together as one approach to sharing in the theory-practice relationship. There are similarities to a community of practice, a term grounded in a social constructivist approach to learning and frequently applied to the management of organisational knowledge (Hartnell-Young & Neal, 2006). Wenger (1998) describes a community of practice as a social system for students with a focus on learning that must have a sense of connection or interest in particular topics, or areas of practice, over time. Simply put, a community of practice can be viewed as a social learning system (Wenger, 1998). Repertoires of practice exist within the boundaries of a situation and are required to deal with students as part of a focused learning community.

Lave and Wenger (1991) describe the process by which newcomers e.g. preservice teachers, become part of a community of as legitimate peripheral participation. This is particularly relevant for preservice teachers who will have experienced education from the learner's

perspective but are very new to it as aspiring teachers.

Wenger outlined indicators of a community of practice that include sustained mutual relationships, shared ways of acting together, rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation, and knowing what others can do' (Hartnell-Young & Neal, 2006, p 2). Three facilities are necessary:

- ♦ Engagement - or physical and virtual places for people to come together
- ♦ Imagination - that is, materials and experiences with which to build an image of the world and themselves
- ♦ Alignment - ways of having an effect on the world through action

Many educational projects have the potential to support communities of practice at a number of levels for participating students.

At Victoria University contextual circumstances of teaching and learning that emphasise the practice-theory relationship aligns with the concept of repertoires of practice. The promotion of learning circles to engage in professional discourse is an integral part of the preservice teachers' practice and enables the explicit linking of theory to practice using first-hand accounts from teaching experiences. Learning circles place an emphasis on working together, building relationships, and sharing knowledge-building to analyse and to draw conclusions about the practice being studied. The use of portfolios as part of their repertoire allows students to explain, capture and disseminate their newly discovered understanding. It was these approaches that supported preservice teachers to participate in a global collaboration with an international partner.

## The global collaboration project

---

Victoria University introduced into the Master of Teaching (Primary) course a global collaboration project as a Repertoire of Practice.

The project involved working collaboratively between local and international colleagues to model and promote the necessary skills to become an exemplary educator for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Preservice teachers in the Master program were partnered with teacher education students from a university in the United States. Online groups of students from both universities were established and guidelines were provided to the group members. The aim of the project was to have the preservice teachers position themselves as:

- ♦ Adaptable and capable 21<sup>st</sup> century citizens to communicate effectively, work collaboratively, think critically and solve complex problems
- ♦ Responsible and ethical citizens to participate in inter-cultural understanding and contribute to local and global communities.

As stated by White (2008) 'collaborative learning is pushing the educational community to develop new forms of interaction and assessment' (p 5). The global collaboration involved students from two very diverse universities being linked together to interact and contribute to developing teaching capabilities, understandings and shared knowledge. This required them to use selected online technology resources and social software to enhance and build connectedness with local group members and with international counterparts.

In each semester for 4 weeks, the students were required to use different synchronous

and asynchronous communication resources in a new social situation. Once initial contact was made between the two universities preservice teachers began to exchange and share information, locate and present current literature and research evidence, and most importantly, add personal commentary to uncover and confirm similarities and differences between the two education systems. Guiding question and prompts were provided to the groups to ensure there was a minimum amount of investigation happening with the weekly topic. The project occupied 4 weeks in each semester according to the following structure:

- ♦ In week 1 preservice teachers made initial contact via email to formalise online group arrangements. They were then required to begin the process of co-learning within their group to exchange and share information. The emphasis was on understanding the different school systems from both countries.
- ♦ In week 2 preservice teachers linked up using a synchronous forum e.g. Skype, Facetime, to interact in real time with their overseas partners and exchange information about issues confronting education in their respective countries.
- ♦ In week 3 preservice teachers used a multimedia program to locate and disseminate information about their culture and society and the ways teachers in the respective countries adopted strategies to accommodate and teach learners of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- ♦ In week 4 preservice teachers concentrated on assessment practices and how they impacted on teaching and learning. The preservice teachers were required to co-create

a shared account of the main facets of assessment in schools.

To successfully complete the global collaboration the preservice teachers were required to produce a shared product that portrayed collated evidence about the respective education cultures and contexts and to also demonstrate that they engaged in a blended (online) learning experience. The opportunity was designed to enhance graduate capabilities such as:

- ♦ Work effectively in a professional learning team – identify and solve problems
- ♦ Plan and implement self-directed learning as part of an interdisciplinary learning experience
- ♦ Employ analytical skills to disseminate and present new information
- ♦ Employ a Praxis Inquiry protocol of Describe, Explain, Theorise and Change to assess, evaluate and analyse information
- ♦ Effectively lead and participate in online discussions using new technologies
- ♦ Convey a rich understanding of new learning in a global educational context.

The focus of the global collaboration initiative was to challenge the preservice teachers to move beyond the traditional model of the instructional teacher delivering subject matter to one that involved them in a student-centred learning situation. The project was designed to model effective teaching and learning strategies appropriate to current primary classroom practice. It encouraged preservice teachers to be active participants in the learning process and engage in shared knowledge building through a global connection. It was considered important to

ensure that the preservice teachers used online resources in a real world context. Their involvement in this project was designed to help them become more expert in the use of various technologies that could be readily transferred into their future teaching practice. The international network was designed to help the preservice teachers develop new ways of thinking and to understand culturally diverse ways of being.

## **Data Collection**

---

Online data collection methods were utilised to allow the participants to respond at their convenience within a given timeframe. While there are some acknowledged uncertainties about how the collation of data through online technologies, Meho (2006) and Curasi (2001) reported that the quality of data gained through online research e.g. email, blogs, is much the same as traditional means.

Data was collected through two processes:

Firstly, to provide an overview from respondents over three years of the project, surveys were distributed and collected from 2012 to 2014. The online surveys were distributed at the beginning and end of each semester to the various cohorts from both universities.

Secondly data was gathered from preservice teachers involved in the project during the first half of 2014. Two cohorts from Australia (semester one) and two cohorts from the United States (semester two in the northern hemisphere). The preservice teachers were provided access to online questions and were able to asynchronously respond to the researcher. Any identifying features from the online sharing of data such as email addresses, were changed to pseudonyms prior to data analysis. Ethics approval was

granted from Victoria University for the duration of the three year project.

The following section includes quantitative data from 2012-4 and qualitative data from the Australian contingent involved in the collaboration during 2014.

## Discussion

The survey data provided pre and post comparative data for the cohort of students in the global collaboration. The survey was designed to capture and compare the confidence levels of the preservice teachers before and after the global collaboration experience. The confidence levels of the preservice teachers influence their preparedness to integrate the latest ICT resources into their own classroom teaching practice so is an important consideration as part of their professional growth as a teacher.

In the figure below the preservice teachers responded to a series of questions relevant to 'confidence in knowledge'. These were determined by questions such as 'How confident are you to teach strategies that are responsive to student needs, that enable you to design learning activities with ICT, that personalise learning for students?'.

The results highlight the shift in confidence levels over three years (2012-4) and clearly indicate increased confidence levels over the duration of one semester as a result of the global collaboration experience (as well as

other ICT related teaching and learning that happened e.g. school placements, other ICT assessments). As such, to fully appreciate and understand the significance of the global collaboration and its contribution to increased confidence levels, there is a need to present a deductive analysis of the voice of the participants.

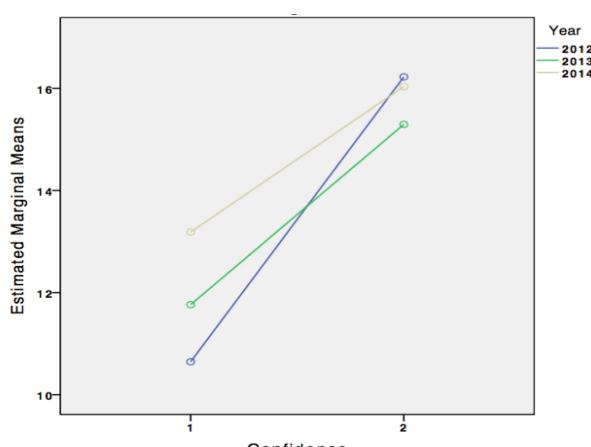
To examine the value of the experience it was important to capture the voice of the student participants as a way to recognise and improve the process and to ascertain whether the approach was a valuable learning experience. The preservice teachers were invited to develop narratives to elaborate on whether the project was productive and whether the pedagogical intent was justified. Their personal reflections drew attention to what they gained professionally and personally from the global collaboration project and what challenges they encountered as a result of their online experiences.

A thematic analysis was undertaken to unpack and report preservice teacher responses and reactions to explain significant events. A thematic lens enabled the most recurring themes to be identified from relevant literature. The responses to the global experience were grouped into three main themes:

- ♦ working together
- ♦ relationships (in virtual space)
- ♦ shared knowledge-building as a means

### Working together

Working collaboratively is one of the desired 21<sup>st</sup> century learning approaches that promotes deep learning (Fullan, 2013). To extend collaborative learning with the use of online resources further exposes the learner to alternative viewpoints by encouraging individuals to collectively perform online



functions, solve problems, and apply different thinking strategies to achieve academic objectives. These types of enforced practices (in this case as part of the university assessment requirements) seek to engage learners with others as part of shared knowledge-building and encourage students to be active participants in the learning process which are important aspects of effective pedagogy.

In most cases the ideal group consisted of two pairs of students from each university making a collective group of 4.

The first challenge was for the individual preservice teachers to identify what worked well with their local partner in terms of the physical contact and support that was required to contribute and co-produce a final joint assessment product. The majority of local students reported positive relationships with their local partners particularly when they were able to self-select rather than have partners allocated:

*The exercise was generally fruitful. [Local student name] and I had to work together, and I enjoyed this.*

*I've found it good to get an opportunity to work with a colleague of my choosing- zpd [zone of proximal development] and all that. It's been a very pleasant experience from that point of view.*

*I was fortunate that my partner [local student name], and I are good communicators, flexible and adaptable.*

However, there were slight grievances from some individual students when they were allocated local partners, rather than having the opportunity to self-select partners:

*There were a number of logistical challenges for me, particularly being partnered with*

*someone I don't know well and was not forthcoming when trying to arrange things (which I understand is kind of the point...).*

However, there was also recognition by some that the experience of working with others provided the opportunity to broaden their working relationship and potentially gain from the experience – important attributes of being a team player so often required in primary school teaching:

*The assessment really highlighted the interpersonal skills of other students and their frustrations at working with people that they wouldn't necessarily have chosen had they had the option.*

One of the biggest challenges for each collective group came as a result of the reliance on overseas partners. It was necessary to allocate international partners by way of shared email addresses provided by the lecturers who matched pairs of local students with overseas pairs. The initial contacting was not a problem (via email) and there was genuine initial interest shown between the newly formed groups. This was evidenced by two typical responses:

*My partner and I were lucky enough to get paired up with students who worked well and were keen to learn about teaching in Australia.*

*I was a bit sceptical at first, but we were lucky to be paired with 2 great students who were very collaborative and we were able to engage in meaningful discussions, comparing the two different educational systems.*

A major aim of this collaboration was to compare and contrast the two education systems, gain an understanding of the different contexts and conditions and ultimately gain alternate strategies and curriculum knowledge to extend their own

global understandings. To demonstrate changes to their initial thinking and prior knowledge there was a requirement to co-produce a final multi-media product. As such, the local students had to rely on their international partners to contribute information and responses to guiding questions. It was the exchange of information that helped the preservice teachers become better informed about their own context as they had to research their curriculum and assessment practices as well as gather notes from their partners who provided an international perspective. It was anticipated that this would then enable the depth of learning to be co-presented in a final product. However, the quality of the exchange of information caused quite a few concerns for many groups once the global collaboration continued beyond the initial contact. Two examples are provided below that highlight the challenges of working in a global space:

*The information I received from overseas was of little significance. They were sparing in sharing information and took too long between communications to make for any useful conversation.*

*The global collaboration task I felt was a really good thing in theory. I learnt a great deal of information about their curriculum and the issues that students deal with. However, I found it really hard to get responses from the [university name] students. Sometimes they wouldn't reply to our tasks. The time difference was a real issue.*

One of the most significant obstacles confronted by virtually all of the students was dealing with the time difference between the two countries. Given this remains an ongoing problem for any global connection it was a relatively new learning condition for these global newcomers. With a 14 or 15 hour time difference (depending on Australia's daylight

saving during the semester) the students found the synchronous communication frustrating.

The time difference between the two countries was a challenge many students had not previously encountered when delving into their own social spaces. Typically, their social space provides immediate responses and satisfaction and is predominantly on their own terms of use. Working in a social space with others from a very different time zone was a new challenge.

However, it wasn't just the time difference causing frustration among the preservice teachers. The response rate to reply asynchronously was often disappointing because students from both countries had other life priorities and some individuals did not appear to value or prioritise the exchange of information. There was a lack of investment in each other's learning because they didn't really know each other. Karau & Williams (1993) describe this phenomenon as social loafing which is defined as 'the tendency to reduce one's efforts when working collectively' (Karau & Williams, 1993, p 683) particularly when individual production cannot be associated with individuals and responsibility is diffused.

To further encourage a shared ownership for the collective group and increase the likelihood of responses between partners, the inclusion of synchronous, face-to-face communication became a pedagogical change to improve the social activity. This became an integral part of week 2, early in the project. Skype became the most common real time application used and was well received when it happened early in their collaboration:

*I thought that the Skype session was the most important. It was instant (synchronous) and*

*we were able to ask questions and get responses right away, not two days later.*

*I found the skype the most interesting communication as it was more personal and we could put a face to a name. We could also change our questions depending on their answers to get the information we needed or we could ask more about a particular topic of interest.*

The real time communication appeared to be the preferred way to socialise, to seek and ask questions about the other world and to get a better understanding of intercultural education perspectives. The real time communication provided opportunities to build their collegial appreciation and get a better understanding of limitations from their overseas partners.

### **Building relationships (in virtual space)**

Overcoming some of the challenges of connecting in an online space required the students to deal with digital resources and new partners in a virtual space. As one preservice teacher stated:

*There is always the human and technological aspect to these collaborations.*

It was in fact the real time link, even with the challenge of time difference that made many of the connections more viable, productive and sustainable. The face-to-face connection combined the human and technological resources and encouraged the preservice teachers to personalise their group membership. Two responses highlight the significance of real time communication that showed the immediate impact and how it helped to build relationships and significantly broaden the professional discourse between group members:

*Skyping with our group members allowed me to put a face to someone's name, experiences*

*and opinions. By talking to them, I was able to create a better mental image of these people, understanding better their points of view, stopping me from being judgemental or confused. Traditional resources speak in general terms, and that is valuable, but hearing personal stories was much more meaningful, it enabled me to relate to the information provided on a deeper level*

*We did successfully have a Skype conversation which allowed for rich and immediate exchange of information, clarification of responses etc. This medium is ideal for gaining greater understanding of another culture. This conversation provided us with an impression of how the students feel about their home towns, the education system they learn in and also their future roles as teachers that you cannot get from static research.*

One of the identified strengths of the global collaboration was the personal vignettes and stories that individuals shared to strengthen the exchanged information:

*I enjoyed hearing about cultural diversity in their classrooms and I heard another group had spoken to someone (overseas) who told them about the metal detectors in schools. It made me feel lucky about teaching here. It's those anecdotes that are meaningful for me, more than anything.*

It was an objective of the project to have the individuals within each group socially construct new knowledge with a variety of digital resources as a way to transfer 21<sup>st</sup> century pedagogy. Given the combination of personalities and various technology resources, all groups experienced varying degrees of success in terms of discovering and exchanging new information. The willingness of the individual preservice teachers to have-a-go and work through the challenges of a new online group experience was evident:

*The exercise was generally fruitful. [Name] and I had to work together and I enjoyed this. I learnt more about different apps and a new culture at the same time. I wanted to have greater contact through Skype with the overseas students. The exercise pushed the boundaries with my knowledge of various apps and it gave me a chance to use different apps and figure that some are better than others.*

*The global collaboration was a good exercise and certainly more engaging than an essay. It has given me an authentic opportunity to work with Voicethread (a multimedia package), which I had not done before. We had a couple of teething issues with Voicethread and Skype not working well and had to show flexibility around it, which I don't mind and I actually think it is part of the exercise.*

### **Shared knowledge-building**

A contemporary understanding of learning emphasises the importance of an active approach that promotes the social construction of knowledge, individual metacognition and self-regulatory strategies.

These constructs shape, in turn, one's own understanding of pedagogical practice. A strength of the global collaboration promoted these attributes through an online learning approach where the co-construction of knowledge was integral to successful learning. For the preservice teachers the opportunity to engage in a cultural exchange, a reacculturation, was a way to validate knowledge as a social construct (Thompson, 2004) and provided an impetus to transfer new knowledge into new learning:

*I found the collaboration successful overall. I gained more experience learning about the Australian curriculum, having to research*

*topics before I would share with my overseas colleagues.*

*I thought the activity also gave me the chance to link the education theories we had learnt about and apply these to another (non-Australian) setting.*

*Encouraged me to research our own education system, 'teach by doing'. It provided insights into the similarities and differences of our education system*

In addition, the inclusion of new digital resources promoted the opportunity for students to authentically integrate the resources, so they learnt with technology not about technology (Neal, 2007). The global collaboration aimed to provide preservice teachers the social opportunity to learn collegially and to transfer newly developed online skills and applications into their own future pedagogical practices:

*The concept of global collaboration is something I am recently starting to consider as part of my teaching practice and taking part in this exercise allowed me to experience it from the student's perspective. Global collaboration via email, skype, blogs and so on is something I would like to explore with older students. I believe that by learning about someone else's culture and values, one learns a great deal about themselves, as well as providing children with the understanding that they form part of a larger community. Using ICT for purposes such as these teach students that IT is much more than just video games but gives IT an educational purpose.*

*It's well intentioned and, indeed, it was an experience I will value. It has increased my perspective on my place in the global education community and given me the tools to collaborate globally with other educators.*

## **Conclusion**

---

New national standards for teacher education require Australian universities to prepare pre-service teachers well for their careers in the classroom (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2013). The requirements of their respective courses demand opportunities for the preservice teachers to have authentic opportunities to compare and contrast the inclusion of new resources designed to assist teaching and learning relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Preservice teachers involved in this joint exercise participated globally. That is, they co-contributed to the workload and worked toward group productivity with global and local partners to achieve required objectives.

As a Repertoire of Practice case, the evidence from the voice of the participants represent a reflective account that has highlighted a community of practice opportunity. The perspectives from the preservice teachers have demonstrated changes in their confidence levels, their appreciation of the glocal connection and an awareness of new skills and knowledge that occurred as a result of their participation. As part of their teacher education course, this Repertoire of Practice has provided the opportunity for preservice teachers to investigate pedagogical, curriculum and assessment practices.

Students generally agreed it was a valuable learning experience albeit with frustrations caused by human interactions and the limitations of technology. This finding supports the online research of Brindley, Walti and Blaschke (2009) that has shown collaborative learning groups do contribute to preservice teachers learning and overall university success. The evidence presented in this case has also shown that the group connection has provided the participants a virtual space to reflect and challenge their

own understanding. This in turn has provided the opportunity for new knowledge and new ICT skills to be scaffolded with their own prior educational thinking and practice. However, there is no absolute evidence that suggests the collaboration experience has changed their practice or even informed them better than other means of learning. The collaboration has at least attempted to integrate online technologies with a forum to self-direct and explore beyond their own social space.

It can be confirmed that the real time connection early on was clearly seen as a very valuable part to the global collaboration for the participants. The preservice teachers were more willing to socially connect when they felt comfortable and were able to build relationships more readily than utilising asynchronous communication. The evidence suggests the preservice teachers treated their real time sessions like an online learning circle to collaborate and discuss a variety of personal and professional topics. They appeared to become more interculturally competent and alert to the challenges dealing with others from afar. This demonstrates that the global connection aligned with current thinking such as those expressed by White (2008) where social networking, collaboration, communications usage with mobile technologies were all evident and have contributed to the learning experience.

As a Repertoire of Practice case the intent of the project was to promote a community of learners to work in a socially constructive way to extend their knowledge and understanding in a global context. The global connection has provided the capacity for preservice teachers to interact in new ways to co-create knowledge through the use of various Web 2.0 applications. In many ways it appears to be addressing a void highlighted by White (2008) where 'researchers have been almost

uniformly silent on the effects of collaboration on learning and the successes of virtual communities in learning' (p17). The online international project provided an opportunity for preservice teachers to gain a first-hand account of diverse cultures and other ways of knowing by working with others from diverse cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. participate in a repertoire of practice where they have been able to question their own attitudes and beliefs from learned experiences beyond traditional teaching-learning approaches.

This teaching approach has helped beginning teachers to use relevant technology to facilitate meaningful learning as a way to promote their confidence levels and to challenge their own pedagogical assumptions (Ertmer & Ottenbreit, 2010). The individual has become part of a glocal collective with local and international partners and their cultural ways. As an exemplar of good practice in higher education, the global collaboration has encouraged the preservice teachers to participate in a Repertoire of ractice where they have been able to question their own attitudes and beliefs from learned experiences beyond traditional teaching-learning approaches.

## References

---

- Arnold. J, Burridge. P, Caciattolo, Cara. C, Gavran. S, Hooley. N, Kelly. C, Mundy. B & Weaven. M 2016, Three Domain Theory of Praxis Education: Experience, Inquiry, Consciousness. Melbourne, Australia: AARE.
- Arnold, J, Edwards, T, Hooley, N & Williams, J 2012, Conceptualising teacher education and research as 'critical praxis', *Critical Studies in Education*, 53(3), 281-295
- Australian Communication and Media Authority (ACMA) 2008, Making media and communications work for all Australians, viewed 9/9/16 <http://www.acma.gov.au/>
- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. 2013, Australian professional standards for teachers. Australian Government, Melbourne.
- Brew, A 2003, Teaching and Research: New relationships and their implications for inquiry-based teaching and learning in higher education. *Higher Education Research and Development*. Vol 22, Issue 1.
- Brindley, J. E, Walti, C & and Blaschke, L M 2009, Creating effective collaborative learning groups in an online environment. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, Vol. 10, No. 3.
- Britten, J S & Cassady, J C 2005, The Technology Integration Assessment Instrument: Understanding Planned Use of Technology. *Classroom Teachers in the Schools* Vol. 22, No. 3/4, p 49-61
- Curasi, C 2001, A critical exploration of face-to-face interviewing vs. Computer-mediated interviewing. *Journal of the Market Research Society*. Vol 43, No. 4 p 361-376.
- Ertmer, P A & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, A T 2010, Teacher technology change: How knowledge, confidence, beliefs, and culture intersect. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*. Vol 42 No. 3. p 255-284.
- Fullan, M 2013, Great to excellent: Launching the next stage of Ontario's education agenda. viewed 31/10/16 from [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/fullan.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/fullan.html)
- Green, M 2007, Submission to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into effective strategies for teaching professional learning. Association of Independent schools of Victoria, Melbourne.
- Hartnell-Young, E & Neal, G 2006, Addressing the Education of Boys: A Community of Practice Approach. In AARE Annual Conference p 1-14. Paramatta NSW Australia: AARE.
- Hooley, N 2015, *Learning at the Practice Interface: Reconstructing dialogue for progressive educational change*, Oxford and New York: Routledge, p 165-168.
- Kalantzis, M & Cope. B 2012, *New learning: Elements of a science of education*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne.
- Lave, J & Wenger, E 1991, *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

MacGregor, K 2013, A higher education avalanche is coming, says new report, University World News, no. 263. viewed 20/04/17

[www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20130316093956321](http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20130316093956321)

Marchese, T J 2016, The new conversations about learning insights. viewed 5/9/16

<http://education.jhu.edu/PD/newhorizons/lifelonglearning/higher-education/conversations/>

McIntyre, D, Pedder, D & Rudduck, J 2005, Pupil voice: Comfortable and uncomfortable learnings for teachers. *Research Papers in Education*, Vol 20, No. 2. p 149-168.

Meho, L I 2006, E-mail interviewing in qualitative research: A methodological discussion. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science & Technology* Vol 57, p 1284-1295.

Office of School Education 2005, Professional Learning in Effective Schools: The Seven Principles of Highly Effective Professional Learning Department of Education & Training, Melbourne. viewed 12/12/16

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/profdev/proflearningeffectivesch.pdf>

Richardson, V 1996, The role of attitudes and beliefs in learning to teach. In J. Sikula (Ed.). *Handbook of research on teacher education* Second edition p.102-119. New York: Macmillan.

Thomas, N 2011, Towards a new definition of unlearning: rethinking individual level unlearning and its implications for practice change. viewed 12/9/16

<https://weatherhead.case.edu/departments/organizational-behavior/workingPapers/WP-11-01.pdf>

Thompson, J 2004, *Cooperative learning in computer-supported classes*. University of Melbourne, Melbourne.

Tigchelaar, A & Korthagen. F 2004, Deepening the exchange of student teaching experiences: Implications for the pedagogy of teacher education of recent insights into teacher behaviour. *Teaching and Teacher Education* Vol. 20, p 665–79.

Tryggvason, M 2009, Why is Finnish teacher education successful? Some goals Finnish teacher educators have for their teaching. *European Journal of Teacher Education*. Vol. 32, No. 4, November 2009, 369–382

Wenger, E 1998, *Communities of Practice: Learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge University Press

White, G. K. (2008) ICT Trends in Education. viewed 12/08/16

[http://research.acer.edu.au/digital\\_learning/2 Accessed July 2016](http://research.acer.edu.au/digital_learning/2)

# **Invited article – reflections from a teacher, feminist, unionist and pre-service educator - Claire Kelly**

*Victoria University*

Teachers have played a critical role in shaping policy and reform in Victorian education. From the 1960s onwards there were enormous school-based changes in learning and teaching. This paper presents a case study of one Victorian High School teacher who as a feminist unionist was involved with educational reforms with particular emphasis on rights and opportunities for women and girls. It explores her educational journey from being a student through to her role as a teacher educator by examining a praxis model of learning and teaching, in particular the Signature Pedagogies used in the Victoria University College of Education.

The journal editors note that this article has not been peer reviewed.

## **Beginnings**

---

This article is a case study of my development from learner to teacher to teacher educator, reflecting on my experience and understanding of the significance of praxis in my learning and teaching, beginning with my years as a student in the 1960s at Frankston High School through my undergraduate university education, into becoming a secondary teacher at Glenroy High School in the 1970s. After employment on other education-related policies and projects, I finally came to the College of Education at Victoria University where I have been working with pre-service and graduate teachers for the past twelve years, also completing a PhD entitled Reconstructing the Australian story: Learning and teaching for reconciliation (2013) following my long concern as a learner and teacher that Indigenous knowledge and experience was and is excluded from school curricula. Case writing, one of the Signature

Pedagogies used in the VU College of Education, encouraged me to articulate and analyse my knowledge and experience in relation to my own practice and to reflect on how that practice has been influenced by theories of curriculum and teaching. Feminist methodologies do this also and are part of the tapestry of my journey as a learner and teacher.

## **The influence of feminism**

---

I still remember the powerful effect that my year ten English teacher at Frankston High School had on my appreciation of the connections between experience and knowledge – through the extended discussions and listening to each student that took place in her class. As well as reading outside ‘the canon’ about amazing women such as Marie Curie, students were encouraged to understand that we were thoughtful, interesting knowledge

constructors who had ideas and experiences to share and learn from. My experience as a learner in that class changed my attitude to learning. I could see a future in further education beyond high school – not commonly encouraged for girls in the 1960s. My high school aspirations to become a veterinarian or a geologist were squashed by the careers teacher. These were still the days when the girls in my class were timetabled into home economics when the boys did woodwork and into sewing when the boys did metalwork.

By the advent of second-wave feminist examination of education in the 1960s and 70s, schools still presented very different experiences to males and females. Explicit segregation... in both curricular offerings (and).... The “hidden curriculum” of gender, too—from what and who were left out of lessons, who was called on in class and how, who was disciplined and how, and even how students interacted in the lunchroom or the playground—structured the realities and possibilities of schooling for students and educators. (Marcus Weaver-Hightower & Christine Skelton, *Gender and Education: An Introduction to Some Leaders in the Field*, in Weaver-Hightower & Skelton, 2013, p. 5).

However, my mother was very supportive of my continuing education. She had longed to continue her own education into university

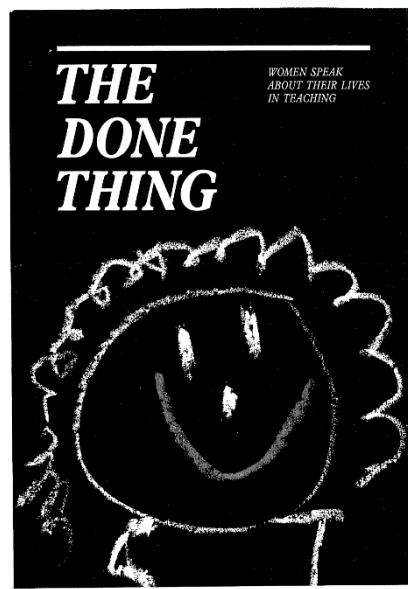
studies but was forced by economic circumstances to enter the workforce. She always remained committed to the power of education and always encouraged her children to read, listen, talk, think and question. My father, who along with many other country boys from poor families, also had to leave school after Grade 6 in order to contribute to the family income, thought that perhaps ‘teaching was a good job for a girl because the pay was higher than hairdressing or working in the bank’. The following quotes are from other women of my generation reflecting on their experiences

As a woman you have to show yourself as being three times as good as anyone else. I don't think, necessarily, that men are inferior, but I think they have been made to feel superior.

I suppose from about the age of eight I always wanted to teach and aimed at that. My mother was very supportive. She had come from a family of accountants and teachers.

My father was different: he left school at thirteen and was in World War 1 when he was fifteen; he didn't see any value for education for a girl and expected me to leave school at fourteen and go to work in the local match factory. I was lucky to get a scholarship.

I was very conscious of being a role model for my daughter so that she could see me, not just as a mother, but as an independent professional woman (Teachers Federation of Victoria, 1986).



**Figure 1** Front Cover of *The done thing - Women speak about their lives in teaching*. (1986)

*The Done thing* was based on interviews about their lives (lifeworlds) with sixty women teachers from city and country schools, recruited through the teacher unions women's networks. The issues to be investigated in the interviews were advertised in union journals as being discussed on a Saturday afternoon. Two hundred women members arrived for the discussion and wonderfully dynamic and detailed considerations for the interviews were decided upon. The process of creation and production of *The done thing*, clearly a feminist methodology, can also be understood as an example of one of the Signature Pedagogies, Professional Practice, which recognises personal learning from immersion in practice, positions participant interest as a central concern, supports communities of practice to support inquiry for improved learning environments and contributes a continuing critique of practice for changing conditions to formulate ideas of new practice.

Forty years after my own experience of exclusion from the full range of curriculum and career choices, as a girl studying in a state high school, Smyth and Hattam (2004) offered data and analysis of the experiences of early school leavers which explored the 'complex interweaving of socio-cultural, political, economic and organizational factors, together with a constellation of class/race/gender factors' (p. 157) affecting students' choices and futures. 'School cultures are not the prerogative or domain of any one group — teachers, students, parents, politicians, the business community or policy makers. Rather, school cultures emerge out of and are continually constructed and re-constructed through the ongoing struggles between and among each of these groups as they vie to have their particular view of schooling represented' (pp. 157-158). However the experience of schooling is very different for students compared to the other groups. They are the ones having the socio-cultural, political, economic and organizational factors imposed upon them, together with the constellation of class/race/gender factors in

which their lives are situated. Pre-service teachers in their placements today still often report that students are not being offered opportunities for authentic learning and research (Zipin & Brennan, 2006), based on their knowledge and experience, their funds of knowledge (Zipin 2009, 2013), such as my English teacher offered us at Frankston High School. This was almost always the case for girls in the 1960s, and is still the case for many of our students today, that school curriculum fails to resonate with their home/community cultural lives, and transmits a deficit view of their life-based knowledge and capacities.

I did manage to gain a place at Monash University in 1970, on a teaching scholarship, which meant that I could afford to go to University and my father and mother were both happy.

### **Learning activism**

---

In the 1970s Universities were places where content knowledge was delivered by Professors in very large lectures, then PhD students and tenured staff ran tutorials of approximately 10-12 students where intense discussions and questioning could and did take place. I studied history and politics and loved it. Student politics at Monash in the late sixties and early seventies was full-on. It was considered absolutely normal that you'd get up and speak in front of a meeting of two, sometimes three thousand people out on the lawn between the Union building and the "Ming Wing", express your point of view on Australia's role in the Vietnam War, and expect the university to take notice of your demands. I joined the Women's Liberation Movement, which meant marching on the streets, shared households, consciousness-raising discussions, reading, writing and agitating against discrimination wherever we found it – as well as becoming immersed in musical, artistic and theatre celebrations of

women's existence, resistance and strength. I read many old and new explorations of power and resistance, including Faye Gale's *Woman's role in Aboriginal society* (1970), Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970), Alexandra Kollontai's *Autobiography of a Sexually Emancipated Communist Woman* (1926/1971), Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* (1935/1971) and Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (1972) amongst many other powerful insights into the values and experiences of empathy, courage and solidarity which became embedded in my determination to be part of creating a more socially just world.

After my history and politics degree I studied in the Diploma of Education program at La Trobe University with Doug White, prior to beginning as politics and history teacher at Glenroy High School (GHS) in the working class suburbs north of Melbourne. Doug White was both inspirational and challenging. He wanted us, the pre-service teachers in his program, to think about and take action in our classrooms to support students to ask questions and to undertake research rather than answer tautological questions at the end of double page topics in set texts. He too, was concerned with empathy, courage and solidarity and encouraged us to take those values into our teaching.

At GHS I was faced with classes of thirty history students where the set texts were uninspiring and unconnected to the students' lives and concerns. The books in the school library were mostly uninteresting and often inaccurate. 'Australia was discovered in 1770'. I did develop a great relationship with the school librarian who was excited to find a colleague who was interested in the books in her domain and keen to make recommendations about library acquisitions. Thirty years later I continue to remind my current pre-service teachers that a good

relationship with their school librarian is a satisfying and influential relationship to cultivate.

The image below shows the author and two of her Year 9 history students during an excursion to Sovereign Hill, the historical reproduction of a goldfields setting at Ballarat, the home of the developing nationalist sentiments which led to the Eureka rebellion, the 'birth of Australian democracy' in 1854 (Wright, 2013). It snowed all day. The

students ended up at Glenroy train station at seven pm that night, soaked to their skins, saying 'it was the best excursion ever'. I have described this photograph as 'Teaching is the joy of working with students to support their curiosity, self-awareness and enthusiasm for life-long learning' (in Sadler et al 2016). The two young students were particularly shy and quiet when they joined my class that year. The photograph shows their growth in confidence and self-awareness that developed as we worked together.



**Figure 2 Author (centre) and her students. Glenroy High School Year nine history excursion Sovereign Hill 1977. It's snowing!**

### In search of democratic schools and curriculum

My relationship with the school leadership was not so productive. One incident in particular exemplified an attitude to the female staff, many of whom were attempting to change the way the learning and teaching happened at GHS. One a particular day a school leader came walking down the corridor, peering over the top of the bank of grey metal lockers through the windows into my Year 10 history class. The class, 10 F, was

composed of mostly boys on the cusp of being able to leave school. They really didn't want to be in a history class. The first few weeks had gone badly, and I knew I must put my principles and Doug White's challenges into practice. I had reorganised the rows of tables and chairs that were the configuration of all the GHS classrooms so that now there were groups of tables with four students sitting around them. This, together with developing questions with the students that used the set text for examples rather than as a set of

glorified worksheets, meant that a class that had been unruly and unproductive was now noisy, creative and engaged. On this day this school leader threw open the door and stormed into the room. He ignored me and said to the students, "move those tables and chairs back into rows the way they are supposed to be, and the boys sit on that side and the girls sit on that side". He waited there with folded arms until they'd done it. I was standing there absolutely stunned and so were the students. It was the first time they had ever been silent in class. They looked at me, waiting to see what my reaction would be. I didn't know how to react. We waited in silence for the few minutes until the end of the period to elapse. Then I said, "next time we'll put the chairs and tables back the way we want them because I'm the teacher", and I walked out of the room.

There were many teachers at the school who disagreed with my teaching and assessment methods. But even they were prepared to support my right to be treated in a professional manner. And of course there were many of us who did support each other in our efforts to overhaul an antiquated curriculum and outdated ways of working with students both at GHS and in schools throughout Victoria. The education system had been undergoing changes begun in 1966 by the establishment of the Curriculum Advisory Board which included teachers and parents as well as Departmental officials. The emphasis was on providing a universal secondary education to cater for all students between the ages of eleven and fifteen, to encourage independence in students and for learning to be thought of as a co-operative, not an authoritarian situation (Hannan, 1970). Some schools began putting these principles into practice but there was still resistance from some principals, teachers and parents (McCallum, 1979). However the pedagogy of

listening to students was becoming more widespread

As it became clear in the 1960s that the huge postwar expansion of formal education had not eliminated old inequalities (indeed was adding to them new forms of credentialling, exclusion and privilege), pressure for reform of the newly-created mass systems built up. This came from diverse sources but had a common focus: the problem of unequal access to educational goods. At every level from the corridors of central government (where the 1973 Karmel Report adopted a 'needs' basis for funding schools) to the inner-city classroom (where many teachers abandoned talk-and-chalk in the attempt to respond to different cultures and experiences), reformers sought to open up the education system to disadvantaged groups (*Ashenden, Connell, Dowsett, & Kessler, 1980, p. 1*).

I was able to implement what can be understood as the Signature Pedagogy of Community Partnership, which connects with local communities, integrates community culture and knowledge into curriculum and investigates community to understand local aspiration, history, knowledge, language, through the Year Eleven Politics Unit I designed at GHS. One of the two major projects for the students to complete was for each student to join a local community group for the year, to attend meetings, interview the community participants on what they were hoping to achieve and to report and analyse their research in classroom discussions and written Reports. The groups ranged from the Glenroy Gardening Club through to the lobby group campaigning to get a Children's Hospital campus established in nearby Broadmeadows.

One example of a curriculum that failed to respond to the needs and wishes of the

students was the lack of any subject which looked directly at the lives of young people, at sex and sexism, relationships and respect. At GHS and in other schools, particularly where members of the Elimination of Sexism in Education sub-committee of the VSTA (The Victorian Secondary Teachers Association, the union for secondary teachers, now amalgamated with the TTUV, Technical Teachers Union and the VTU, Primary Teachers Union as part of the AEU, Australian Education Union, Victorian Branch) were working, we decided to heed our students' requests and implement a Health and Human Relations (HHR) Unit. History and English teachers, Physical Education and Home Economics teachers got together to develop resources and activities to engage young people on issues such as sexuality, self-defence, nutrition and contraception. Such material was not being taught in most schools in the mid-1970s. In particular, as female teachers, we could see that the female students weren't getting a fair deal in terms of school curriculum; and we could see that we weren't getting a fair deal either in terms of equal employment conditions and that the two were absolutely intertwined.

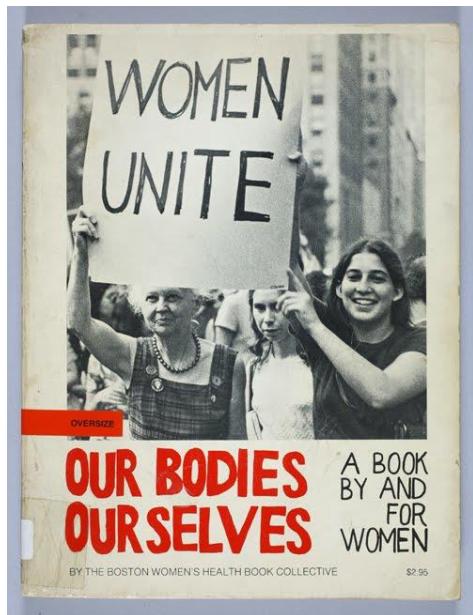
The reactions to this initiative to introduce HHR education at the local level and at the Departmental and government levels were varied. There were a number of parents at GHS who were opposed to such matters being explored in the curriculum. They believed that those issues were to be kept at home. By this time I had become the Convenor of the School Council Curriculum Committee so I invited parents to attend a meeting to discuss why we wanted to introduce the HHR Unit, to gain an insight into what the students had requested and what we would discuss in classes. The parents, in talking with each other and with the history and English,

physical education and home economics teachers, came to see what a great opportunity such discussions would be for their teenagers and indeed for themselves.

### **A move to collective action – teacher unionism**

---

The assistant Minister of Education in the then Liberal/National government, advised that he would issue 'lawful instructions' (failure to obey such instructions meant dismissal) to any teachers implementing HHR Education in Victorian schools. The VSTA surveyed members and found wide support for and implementation of HHR in schools across the State. Members and supporters of the Elimination of Sexism sub-committee, often with parent organisations' representatives, visited city and country regions where public meetings were being called by opponents of HHR Education. The official Parents' organisations were in support of HHR Education being introduced into High Schools. The Minister called an Advisory Committee together, chaired by a matriarch of the Liberal Party, Dame Phyllis Frost. I was the teacher representative on the Committee. To the Minister's consternation the Committee heard from parents and teacher representatives, and from Dame Phyllis herself, that there was strong support for the initiative in schools and the community. So we were able to implement Health and Human Relations Education across Victoria (see Kelly, 1986b). This campaign can be understood as an example of the Signature Pedagogy of Participatory Action Research, which identifies and advocates key issues of policy and participates in collecting data for analysis, contributes to project discourses with internal and external team members and theorises and critiques research findings in the public domain. It is also feminist action research.



**Figure 3 Example of class materials used by feminist Health and Human Relations teachers in the 1970s**

Writing on the role of feminist teachers in the teacher unions of the time, Francis notes that our activism was evident in both curriculum and organisational matters in schools for our female students in particular and also for female teachers as employees and as unionists

...the women's liberation movement provided the female activists with the ideological basis for challenging the entrenched attitudes and privilege of the VSTA leadership. They were able to identify the systemic disadvantages under which female teachers worked and devise strategies to dismantle the privileged position of the male teacher, both in the teaching service and in the VSTA. They were able to expose the constructions of masculinity and femininity that underpinned the continuation of masculine privilege. It was clear that equal opportunity in the teaching service and the workforce generally could only be achieved when the ideology of the male breadwinner was dislodged. The feminists worked to ensure equal opportunity for

female teachers and their female students with some success (2003, p. 70).

The HHR education initiative was just one of many led by feminist and other progressive teacher unionists. The Schools Year 12 and Tertiary Entrance (STC) group had a strong basis in Melbourne schools where progressive teachers and the communities they worked with supported school-based course development and collaborative, non-competitive and descriptive assessment. Malvern Girls High school and Exhibition Girls High School (EGHS), both implemented STC courses with working class school populations that had high numbers of newly-arrived migrants, single parents and families on education maintenance allowances to support keeping their children at school (Jonas, 1990, p. 213). In 1985 teachers at EGHS, as part of a wider VSTA campaign to end competitive assessment, negotiated with various tertiary institutions in Melbourne to accept their year 12 students into their Bachelor Degrees and Diplomas on the

recommendation of the teachers as opposed to the results for the end of Year 12 state-wide examinations.

*...the most important aspect of Exhibition Girls High School according to Chris Roughhead and Jenny Herbst (STC coordinators in 1985 and 1986) is the development of the girls' ability and enthusiasm for taking responsibility for their own learning; learning how to work in teams; gaining insight into oneself, confidence and independence.... They are very supportive of each other, learn to sort things out, develop independent learning and through goal-based assessment, value themselves and know their own strengths....*

The following is from a Year 12 student report to a parents' meeting:

I was very satisfied with STC because I was able to negotiate the work I wanted to do. I noticed that throughout the [six] years I had become more confident about myself and school work. I satisfactorily passed all my subjects and wanted to go into further studies. Through STC I have achieved some of my goals and have enrolled at Lincoln Institute of Health Sciences to become a nurse (Kelly 1986a, p. 7).

All the young women at EGHS in 1985 gained tertiary entrance on their teachers' recommendations and all went on to successfully complete their studies. Initiatives such as the STC group were implemented on the basis of research and connection with communities. It is an example of the Signature Pedagogy of Praxis Learning which investigates / provides description, explanation, theorising and change of practice in response to reflection on practice, supports autonomous, non-coercive practices, demonstrates a curriculum developed from praxis and in response to reflection and

constructs learning environments of ethically-informed action for the public good. And again, feminist methodology and pedagogies can be seen in action.

In their book of Australian educationalists' critical responses to the topic of girls and self-esteem Kenway and Willis (1990) point to researching practice as a basis for improving it through

...collaborative participatory educational research, research and practice in educational reform, and to...the possibilities for education for emancipation and active and productive participation in a democratic society – expressed for example, in the development of critical pedagogy and the development of communitarian perspectives in the organisation of education (p. viii).

Two decades later when undertaking my Masters' research I had another opportunity to understand the connection between listening and language, and to appreciate the power of community knowledge, empathy, courage and solidarity, when I interviewed participants in a 1990s land-use agreement between pastoralists, conservationists, miners, local government and Indigenous representatives on Cape York Peninsula (Kelly, Connellan, Davie & Robb, 1999). The key factor nominated by all the participants, which led to the publication of an extraordinary and unanimous document on sustainability (Cape York Regional Advisory Group 1997), was the influence of the Elders brought by the Indigenous representatives to each meeting of the reference group. Listening to their experience and perspectives opened the hearts and minds of the other initially antagonistic participants to what the deep dimensions of a social justice standpoint on sustainability could look like. The Advisory

Group members listened to community knowledge from all parties and showed empathy, courage and solidarity when they came under political pressure to recommend more intensive development on the Cape. When a new Commonwealth government under John Howard wanted to reduce Indigenous representation to only one position on a revamped Committee the other appointed members said they wouldn't serve unless there were an equal number of Indigenous representatives.

These qualities of community responsiveness, empathy, courage and solidarity are ones that I hope to continue inspire in my students (see Figure 3 below).

### **Teacher educator**

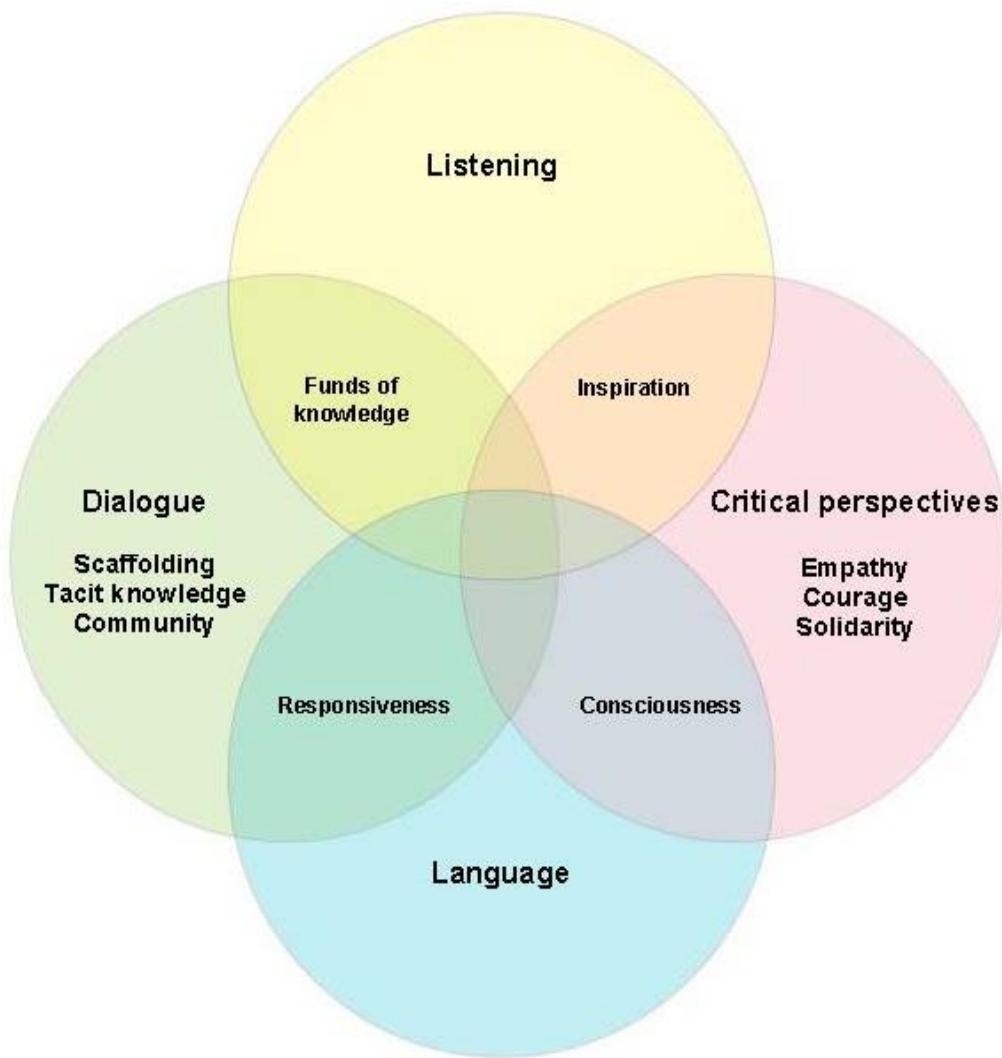
---

When I began working with pre-service teachers in the Bachelor of Education program at Victoria University (VU) in 2005 I felt like I had come home. Using the Praxis Inquiry (PI) Protocol which was developed at VU as a scaffold to support learning and research with pre-service teachers has demonstrated that the attainment of inclusive community responsive pedagogies – in schools and in teacher education programs - is situated in the public/personal dialectic between the transformation of individual values, world views, ethics and practice, and the socio-cultural and structural factors that mediate equity, access, and opportunity in educational system (Gudjonsdottir, Cacciattolo, Dakich, Dalmau, Davies, & Kelly, 2007).

The Signature Pedagogies of teacher education that underpin the conduct of teacher education at Victoria University require that relationships between university educators, pre-service teachers and school

students include a repertoire of practices that enable negotiation and investigation of significant questions within different social and educational contexts. Project-based teaching around issues of personal and community interest enables inquiry to proceed, drawing on the culture, aspirations and community background of participants. Teacher educators acting as 'critical friends' to school-based curriculum projects positions pre-service teachers as continuing team members both in the school placements and in their university seminars and offers opportunities for guidance from experience and evidence from the literature to be included when appropriate. As in any educational situation, this role of critical friend is particularly difficult when constrained by regulation, timelines, program requirements and student assessment procedures. The following diagram and discussion therefore propose a set of praxis teaching values and processes that include participatory inquiry learning, valuing and utilising students' funds of knowledge, democratic dialogue between all participants and discursive and public forms of student learning. Praxis learning and praxis teaching are not predicated on the inculcation of known truths, or the application of known remedies regardless of context, but on the mutual investigation of mutual interest through repertoires of social and educational practice.

It has been my experience that the Signature Pedagogies all connect to ways of responding to students' and colleagues' work in schools that are also demonstrated by feminist methodologies and feminist teachers and pedagogies.



**Figure 4**      **Praxis Teaching** Claire Kelly & Neil Hooley 2015

The diagram in Figure 3 above arose as the result of many hours of discussion, note-taking, reflection and further discussion between the author and Neil Hooley (2009) at Victoria University about our work with Pre-Service Teachers (PSTs).

We initially wanted to explore the question of assessment. In PI based pedagogy, assessment tasks form an integral component of learning and teaching, rather than a quantification of the knowledge transfer that has occurred. We could agree that authentic assessment tasks should be:

- predominately formative using multiple approaches (providing PSTs with the information and understanding they need to improve both their practice and their response to assessment tasks e.g., through collegial feedback on drafts)
- based on PI Protocol and Partnerships rather than highly prescriptive
- related to PSTs experience and collaboratively negotiated

- ♦ intrinsic to the pedagogy, supportive of critically reflective practice and developed by communicative action
- ♦ completed across the learning period and aligned with relevant timetables in schools and communities.
- ♦ significant opportunities for PSTs to make sense of, validate and celebrate their emerging professional understanding and competencies.
- ♦ graded according to negotiated criteria

But what sort of learning environment could provide the conditions for such assessment?

The first feature of a praxis learning environment Neil and I discussed was that of listening. In general terms, listening is taken to mean an intense or concentrated process of participants attempting to identify key words and ideas that are used in discussion as thoughts and issues are reported and described and any underlying themes or meanings emerge. When one person or group comes to an understanding of what is being said, they can then respond with ideas of their own. Participants are not seeking to have their current views accepted by this process, but to understand the views of others by which held viewpoints can be refined and recast. Language use is therefore central to meaning making as discussion proceeds and new ideas and concepts are constructed by each participant. It is usual for comments to be made and questions asked to clarify what is meant and to move understanding forward. This is often a tentative process, as participants explore the ideas of others and relate to their own experience, checking for similarities and differences. It is interesting to speculate as to why and how a new idea emerges at a particular point, as the act of language experience offers new insights. This is what my English teacher did at Frankston

High School. Various strategies can be used as discussion and dialogue proceeds, such as the scaffolding of ideas and concepts as participants seek meaning, the bringing to bear of a broad base of experience and tacit knowledge to particular concepts and the incorporation of community understandings into the network of language and practices being considered. These approaches can be explicit, but they are present in all democratic dialogue as groups of people enter into a partnership of meaning for mutual interest. Throughout this process of listening, language and dialogue, participants will encounter different perspectives or world views that may be their own, or those of others. They will be in the position of taking risks in expressing hidden or uncertain views and ideas that may not be accepted, they will struggle to understand the different viewpoints of others so that they are in a position to explore further and to redraft their own thinking in comparison and they will generally and hopefully express through their words and deeds an intention of working in concert, side by side, with others to understand and help to create a better world.

Our key concepts include listening (and its reflection - language) as the overarching elements, together with the concomitant responsiveness involved in the dialogue of scaffolding students' prior (tacit) knowledge, their social and cultural capital (their communities/funds of knowledge to which they are explicitly connected through language). Many pedagogies of education refer to scaffolding as a method to support student learning by providing advice and resources to assist in the accomplishment of a task. This assistance in the form of 'guidance from experience and the literature' is important but we propose that students' own knowledge (bringing the community into the classroom) is an indispensable element of

praxis learning and teaching, one that itself needs to be part of the scaffolding done with students.

The right hand side of the diagram names more controversial elements of our praxis, elements which we recognise as inspirational to us as learners/teachers, elements we hope to inspire in the consciousness of our students in this time of local and global urgency: empathy, courage and solidarity, the consciousness and inspiration to see possibilities for action. Thus we have named these elements critical perspectives, inspirations to support consciousness: class consciousness, feminist consciousness, environmental consciousness, consciousness of Indigeneity, ethnicity, sexuality, and other understandings which may be brought to the praxis learning/teaching dialogue. Indeed, in our experience, these critical perspectives are tangibly connected with knowledge generated through scaffolding learners' own funds of knowledge. Using the Praxis Inquiry Protocol with pre-service teachers has demonstrated that the attainment of inclusive community responsive pedagogies – in schools and in teacher education programs - is situated in the public/personal dialectic between the transformation of individual values, world views, ethics and practice, and the socio-cultural and structural factors that mediate equity, access, and opportunity in educational

system (Gudjonsdottir, Cacciattolo, Dakich, Dalmau, Davies & Kelly, 2007).

It is inspiring to see students and teachers responding to issues which continue to confront them today by listening to students and working with them to develop curriculum materials. The Fitzroy High School Feminist Collective is one example of praxis learning and teaching which is confronting sexism today. See their Unit *Fightback* (O'Keeffe, B. & the Fitzroy High School Feminist Collective, 2014, Jack 2015).

### **Final thoughts**

---

So Praxis learning and teaching has been a revelation and inspiration in my journey, from my year 10 English teacher at Frankston High School scaffolding her students' learning to include and value our life experiences; to Doug White's challenge to his Diploma of Education students that we learn to teach through collaboration with colleagues and through engaging our students in cooperative learning; to joining the School (now College) of Education at Victoria University and participating in the development and theorising of the Signature Pedagogies. It is a journey I feel privileged to have undertaken and to be able to continue, working with students, communities and colleagues towards social justice in schools and society, with empathy, courage and solidarity.

## References

---

- Ashenden , D. J., Connell, R.W., Dowsett, R.W. & Kessler, S. (1980). *Class and secondary schooling, in Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 1:1, 1-19, DOI: 10.1080/0159630800010101*
- Boston Women's Health Collective (1973). *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Cape York Regional Advisory Group (1997) *Cape York Peninsula Land Use Strategy – Our Land Our Future: A Strategy for Sustainable Land Use and Economic Social Development*. Queensland Department of Local Government and Planning and Commonwealth Department of Environment, Sport and Territories.
- Delpit, L. (2006). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York: New Press.
- Francis, R. (2000). *Of secondary concern? Women in the Victorian Secondary teachers Association 1953-1995*. Unpublished PhD thesis. The University of Melbourne.
- Francis, R. (2001). *The making of a feminist union activist: Claire Kelly and the Victorian Secondary Teachers' Association*. Canberra: Australian Society for the Study of Labour History.  
<http://labourhistorycanberra.org/2014/12/2001-conference-the-making-of-a-feminist-union-activist/>
- Francis, R. (2003). Challenging Masculine Privilege: The Women's Movement and the Victorian Secondary Teachers Association, 1974-1995 *Journal of Australian studies* vol:27 iss:78.
- Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin.
- Gale, F., & Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. (1970). *Woman's role in Aboriginal society* (1st ed.). Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.
- Gonzalez, N., Moll, L., & Amanti, C. (Eds.) (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorising practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. New York: International Publishers.
- Greer, G. (1970). *The Female Eunuch*. London: Paladin.
- Gudjonsdottir, H., Cacciattolo, M., Dakich, E., Dalmau, M. C., Davies, A., & Kelly, C. (2007). Transformative pathways: Inclusive pedagogies in learning and teaching. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education, 40(2)*, 165-182.
- Hannan, B. Three Years of Change. *Secondary Teacher*, July 1970, p. 5.
- Hooley, N. (2009). *Narrative Life: Democratic Curriculum and Indigenous Learning*. Explorations of Educational Purpose, 7. London & New York: Springer.
- Jack, T. (01.11.2015). Fighting school sexism: feminist theory hits classrooms. *The Age*  
<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/fighting-school-sexism-feminist-theory-hits-classrooms-20151030-gkn7an.html>

- Jonas, P. (1990). Improving self-esteem: A whole school approach in J. Kenway & S. Willis (Eds). *Hearts and Minds: Self-esteem and the schooling of girls*. New York: The Falmer Press.
- Kelly, C. (1986a). Exhibition High: A year 12 success story. *VSTA News*. Melbourne: Victorian Secondary Teachers Association.
- Kelly, C. (1986b). *Women in the VSTA: A record of the curriculum and industrial policies towards the elimination of sexism in education*. Melbourne: Victorian Secondary Teachers Association.
- Kelly, C. V. (2013). *Reconstructing the Australian story: Learning and teaching for reconciliation*. Unpublished PhD thesis, RMIT University, Melbourne.
- Kelly, C., Connellan, J., Davie, C., & Robb, K. (1999). *Regional agreements and sustainability: The land needs its people*. Unpublished Master of Environmental Science, Monash University, Melbourne.
- Kenway, J. & Willis, S. (Eds.) (1990). *Hearts and Minds: Self-esteem and the schooling of girls*. New York: The Falmer Press.
- Kollantai, A. (1971). *The Autobiography of a Sexually Emancipated Communist Woman*. New York: Herder and Herder.
- McCallum, D. (1979). 'The educational inequality problematic', in L. Johnson and U. Ozolins (eds.), *Melbourne Working Papers 1979*, Sociology Research Group, Department of Education, University of Melbourne, pp. 83-109.
- O'Keefe, B. & the Fitzroy High School Feminist Collective (2014). *Fight Back: Addressing Everyday Sexism in Australian Schools* <http://fhsfemco.com/portfolio-type/resources/>
- Sadler, K., Selkirk, M., & Manathunga, C. (2016). Teaching is... opening up spaces to explore academic work in fluid and volatile times. *Higher Education Research and Development*. doi:10.1080/07294360.2016.1171299
- Smyth, J. & Hattam, R. (2004). *"Dropping out," drifting off, being excluded: Becoming somebody without school*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Teachers Federation of Victoria. (1986). *The done thing - Women speak about their lives in teaching*. Melbourne: Teachers Federation of Victoria.
- Weaver-Hightower, M. B. & Skelton, C. (Eds) (2013). *Leaders in Gender and Education: Intellectual Self-Portraits*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Wright, C. (2013). *The forgotten rebels of Eureka*. Melbourne, Vic.: The Text Publishing Company.
- Zipin, L. (2009) Dark Funds of Knowledge, Deep Funds of Pedagogy: Exploring Boundaries between Lifeworlds and Schools, in *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, v30 n3 p317-331 September.
- Zipin, L. (2013). Engaging middle years learners by making their communities curricular: A Funds of Knowledge approach. *Curriculum Perspectives*, 33(2): 1-12.

Zipin, L. & Brennan, M. (2006). Meeting Literacy Needs of Pre-service Cohorts: Ethical dilemmas for socially just teacher educators. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* Vol. 34, No. 3, November 2006, pp. 333–3.

# **Core Beliefs of Teacher Learning Network**

---

## **Education**

1. Education is a social good with the power to transform the lives of individuals and communities. It has a value beyond test data or economic prosperity.
2. We believe relationships are the foundation of education.
3. We respect high quality, academic peer reviewed research as central to education and professional development.

## **Teaching**

4. We believe teaching is one of the most valuable of all human endeavours.
5. We believe that teaching is one of the most complex of human endeavours.
6. We believe that teaching is leading and all teachers have a responsibility to exercise education leadership.
7. We believe that teachers are the experts in teaching and should be involved in teaching one another.

## **Community**

8. We seek to contribute to creating workplaces that support the dignity of all those accessing them.
9. We believe that education is a communal pursuit and education centres should be engaged with their community.
10. We actively support the role of unions in making a positive contribution to the teaching profession and the education debate

# **Submissions to the Journal of Teaching, Learning and Society**

---

*The Journal of Teaching, Learning and Society* (JTLS) is an online peer reviewed publication, launched in 2018, through a partnership between the Teacher Learning Network (TLN), and academic staff from Victoria University, Melbourne (VU), and Australian Catholic University (ACU).

The philosophy that underpins the journal is that teaching and learning are social experiences.

JTLS seeks to publish and promote work undertaken by teachers and academics working collegially on teacher practice; by teachers and academics working with their community; and/or innovative teaching practices that emphasise the social experience of learning.

The journal will find its audience among leaders and teachers in school and early childhood education and care settings, and academics engaged in teacher education.

The journal will preference qualitative research.

Article length is 5,000 words (a 100 word abstract and referencing are additional to this). Further details for manuscript submission are available at <http://journal.tln.org.au/>

The journal editors welcome a diverse range of publication formats and will seek to accommodate the interests of author(s) who would like to propose innovative contributions that include for example audio, video or digital works as part of their contribution. Please make initial contact with the editors through [admin@tln.org.au](mailto:admin@tln.org.au)

The call for papers and timelines for upcoming issues will be posted to <http://journal.tln.org.au/>