

COVER PAGE

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What are the core educational knowledges to
be addressed in preservice teacher education?**

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Envisaging a New Education Studies Major: What are the core educational knowledges to be addressed in preservice teacher education?

I would like to acknowledge the collegial process through which many of the ideas in this paper came to be formed. In the first section, my thinking has been assisted by debates among colleagues in the Deakin University Faculty of Education. The second section sets down the outcomes of decisions by the Education Studies Major Committee at Deakin. The third section puts forward arguments discussed with that Committee but worked out most fully with Dr Andrea Allard with whom I have been co-developing the initial unit in a new Education Studies Major. I have been chairing the Education Studies Major Committee.

Developing more clarity about the professional knowledge base of the profession of teaching has become a matter of some urgency at an unfortunate historical moment. It is an unfortunate historical moment for clarity to be required because of the conjunction of external threat to the profession and of internal confusion about appropriate professional teacher education.

The professional status of teachers is assailed from many directions. On one side, educational managers are increasingly locating professional expertise in themselves and their consultants, — telling practising teachers what their educational tasks are as if teachers were largely technicians in the skills of teaching practice (Seddon & Brown, 1997). On another side, formal State accrediting bodies (eg Standards Council of the Teaching Profession, Victoria, 1998,1999) as well as national professional bodies (Australian College of Education, 2000; Australian Council of Deans of Education, 1998) have been busy devising itemised, untheorised, lists of what competencies teachers must have and what university-based teacher education courses must teach. On a third side, politicians are eyeing the prospect of short-course teacher training in order to deal inexpensively with a looming teacher shortage (eg Ramsay, 2000). Finally, there is a strong move among educators themselves to hand over much of teacher education to schools in a revival of a craft

apprenticeship model of teacher training . All these efforts either diminish the standing of teachers directly or diminish the status of teacher education to something akin to craft education and hence assail the status of teachers indirectly.

Those who believe in a fully professional education for teachers are in a poor position to counter these various threats because we currently have more division of opinion about the knowledge base of the profession than perhaps ever before. The Australian liberal consensus of a generation ago in which the knowledge base was seen to lie in a combination of subject matter knowledge and social 'science' has broken down. The debate about what should replace this liberal consensus has ranged from hyper-Modernist lists of classroom techniques which research somewhere in the world has suggested might lift the achievement of the average child, to the sentimental argument that teaching is simply an extension of personal knowledge and identity.

In the Deakin University Faculty of Education we have begun the process of thinking about what a new knowledge base with serious tertiary-level standing might be. This paper seeks to contribute some of our thinking to the current debate. I want, firstly, to argue a case for a new kind of knowledge base for teacher education and then, secondly, to go on to talk briefly about Deakin's new Education Studies Major. Finally, I will briefly explore how we might address the hardest question of all: how to help teacher education students to think differently about knowledge in a way that I believe the twenty-first century world will require. It is time to reach a new settlement on a coherent and justifiable university-level knowledge base for the teaching profession.

A knowledge base for the teaching profession in the 21st century

The move I have mentioned towards craft apprenticeship models of teacher education today is far from accidental. Nor, while it complies with the management push towards valuing competencies over knowledge, does it derive solely from this push. It follows from teacher educators' own doubts about the two traditional approaches to providing a knowledge base for teaching. It is here that we need to begin discussing the way forward. These traditional approaches were the two halves of what became the liberal consensus about teacher education around 1970 in Australia, a generation ago. Both halves — the subject matter approach and the social scientific approach — have lost their credibility.

In the subject matter approach the primary knowledge base of teachers was regarded as lying in the depth of their understanding of the subject matter they taught — their mathematical knowledge, their historical knowledge, or whatever it might be. This approach has a long and honorable past and, indeed, teaching gained its ancient status as a learned profession from precisely this source. The German *didaktik* tradition would still argue that the first knowledge a teacher must have is of the subject matter they are teaching (Westbury et al, 2000). However, no one today would argue for that expertise alone. Such an approach tends to entrench particular subjects in the curriculum: those subjects in which teachers have been educated as experts. It also fails to offer a common expertise to teachers as one profession.

The other traditional approach in the twentieth century was to argue that education could be a science: that we could discover a best teaching practice through careful scientific research, most particularly in educational psychology, and train teachers-to-be in the attitudes, knowledges and skills that such research would definitively set down. Discovering the science of teaching has been the hope of many educators and educational researchers since the mid-nineteenth century. It was for many years seen as the route to teacher professionalisation: scientific facts about the best teaching methods would become the exclusive expertise of a professionalised

teaching corps. Much teacher research still looks for generalisable, scientific answers to the question of how to improve student learning (eg Berliner, 2000, Manzano, 2000).

While useful teaching practices have been added to the teacher's repertoire through such research, the whole idea that children are likely to respond in the same way to a scientifically verified best teaching approach must now be regarded by thoughtful educators as wishful thinking. We have developed a new awareness of the extent to which children are enculturated, an awareness that teaching to the average child fails to match optimally the learning needs of most children. Children interpret the same environment and teaching behaviours differently because they are drawing on different experiences and looking through different cultural lenses. Teachers educated to believe that there are scientifically correct classroom practices, recipes for practice, will have difficulties with the need to understand their pupils as persons, and with the degree of pedagogical flexibility required in encounters with diverse students, diverse classes and diverse schools.

If we see both the subject matter tradition and the scientific quest as insufficient (although still of some relevance), where can teachers turn to find a more satisfactory, up-to-date knowledge base for professional practice?

One answer which has evolved over the past generation has been to turn to literature and debates on social justice and education (Gore, 2001). Beginning a generation ago in Progressive concern for the individual child, the social justice and education debate took a neo-Marxist turn in the late 70s into critical theory and the analysis of the differential experiences of schooling on the basis of dimensions such as class and gender. It is now exploring the post-colonial debate, and we are beginning to see dimly beyond our own cultural meanings towards some understanding of what a truly multicultural classroom might be like.

The critical theory approach to understanding educational injustice has made us more deeply aware of the ways in which inequity is built into schooling systems. It has resulted in programs which directly tackle peer group sexism and racism, at least for a while, in many schools. It has also given some clues about how to teach specific groups in ways which resonate with their own cultural styles. In short, it has made us aware of the huge problem of inclusivity and given us an orientation from which to address it.

However, the critical approach has been much better at analysis of what is wrong with schooling than at suggesting what teachers can do about the systemic educational injustice of schools. Indeed, much critical analysis points to a need for a revolution in community values and in the purposes of schooling. Even with the best will and the best reflective practice, for the critically aware teacher there is a gap too wide to be crossed successfully between their awareness of injustice, on the one hand, and daily institutional life with large classes of diverse students and a set curriculum framework, on the other. Although it is an important part of what is required, the critical approach alone will not do.

The more popular reaction to the problem of ensuring a sound knowledge base for the profession of teaching has been to run away from the issue altogether and to revert to the old craft apprenticeship approach to teacher education. Inside the craft apprenticeship mindset, effective teacher education is seen as mostly a matter of learning teacher-like behaviours, not knowledges, and thus the issue of a knowledge base is apparently finessed. In craft apprenticeship models, good teachers are produced by placing new recruits inside a community of practice: there they can watch what experienced teachers do, learn routines of class organisation, become familiar with curriculum materials and processes, learn how to behave to fit into the school as an institution, and rehearse teacher-like skills. In craft apprenticeship

models the most effective way to learn to be a teacher is thought to be immersion in schools where preservice students can work alongside those who already exhibit teacher-like behaviour.

The turn towards teacher apprenticeship is in tune with a broader ideological push towards valuing competencies which are conceptualised as craft behaviours rather than as knowledges (Collins, 1993). This ideology has justified the educational management initiatives, across Australia and elsewhere, to list and demand specified teacher competencies as required outcomes of teacher education.

Accompanying and giving respectability to the turn towards craft competency approaches to teacher education has been a government-encouraged research agenda which has attempted to pin down what teachers actually do (eg Louden & Wallace, 1996). What is the common sense knowledge of teachers? How do teachers make decisions in the complexity of day to day life in classrooms? What is it that best-practice teachers know? How do they apply this knowledge to what they do? In these questions we can see a refreshing respect for teachers and what they achieve. This in itself has been a valuable research outcome. There is a realisation that good teaching is a matter of highly skilled orchestration and performance.

Yet, at the same time, there is a dangerous and growing lack of respect for formal, university-based teacher education. If teaching is a craft which can be pinned down to a list of competencies, then the efficient way to acquire new teachers is simply to put them in classrooms, tick off competencies as they are acquired, and not to invest in long years of tertiary-level teacher education. The push towards a competencies ideology and its accompanying craft apprenticeship approach to teacher education has justified government initiatives to scale back, or even abolish, university knowledge components of teacher education and to upscale cheaper school immersion components. This has already happened in England, where it is raising

alarm because of its consequences for the professional status of teaching (Whitty et al, 2000).

While strong university-school partnerships in teacher training are crucial, there are serious dangers unless an independent, university-taught, knowledge base is maintained. Professionalism does require that the profession itself defines and controls its own membership and this aspect of professionalism is increasingly being addressed in Australia. Immersion periods in classrooms are necessary and important, and the current move to improve school-university partnerships is vital (Hogan and Down, 1996; Sirotnik, 1999). Yet a craft apprenticeship model is insufficient on its own as a route to improving either the practices or the standing of the teaching profession. A teaching profession also requires a knowledge base which has serious tertiary level standing, not just craft knowledges and introductions to current practices (Adams and Tulasiewicz, 1995; Soder, R, 1999).

A third direction in which teacher education has moved has been towards a reflective practice model. Reflective practice is perhaps the most commonly used phrase of the last decade in teacher education. Schon's call (1983) for reflective practice has been taken up by all professions to some extent, but by teaching most of all. Reflective practice is important and, like critical theory, part of what we must retain into the future.

The idea of reflective practice is often added to craft-apprenticeship models of teacher education. Grafted onto this revived craft training tradition, reflective practice can be seen as raising to the level of mindfulness what is otherwise a process of learning by watching and practicing. Through the idea of reflective practice, the possibility of change and improvement in practice is opened up and an intellectual dimension is added. Reflective practice appears to build in a component which redeems pure training, turning it into education.

Yet, reflective practice is simply a technique. It can accompany almost any view of teacher education and be used in relation to any teacher knowledge base. It does not, in itself, begin to address the issue of the appropriate knowledge base for a teacher's reflections and actions. And this brings us to the heart of the issue: with what knowledges do we want teachers to be able to reflect? On what knowledge basis do we want them to practice their craft? With what knowledges should teachers make the myriad decision required in their everyday professional lives?

It is crucial that we face the common limitation of both the craft apprenticeship and the reflective practice approaches. This limitation applies when these two approaches are offered by themselves or combined together. This limitation is that there is no way within these approaches for teachers to enlarge their common sense ways of seeing and understanding what they do (Smyth, 1987). The quality of reflection on practice is dependent on the concepts and theories — the ways of seeing — to which teachers have access. In so far as we move into an apprenticeship model of teacher knowledge, we trap reflective practice inside the concepts and theories which are either currently used in schools or are present in the common sense of the teacher's daily life beyond the school. These are the only concepts and theories to which those trained under an apprenticeship model have access. Teachers who are asked to see reflective practice as a mode of teacher education in its own right are similarly trapped.

If we are to get beyond this limitation of educating new practitioners simply to reflect inside the limits of the current common sense of schooling and private life, they must have access to knowledges beyond their own immediate experience of life and of schooling (Liston and Zeichner, 1987). Like all of us, teachers can only think through the lenses provided by the language and ideas to which they have been

introduced. The concepts and theories to which they have access quite literally set the limits of their capacity to reflect.

This limitation narrows down what is possible further than appears at first glance. This is because no one can see that in which they are simply immersed. Once new teachers have been introduced to institutional ways of interpreting situations and reacting to them, they learn to take on these interpretations and reactions as a second skin, not as clothing which can be taken off, appraised and changed. Common sense habits and attitudes — the habitus in which we are comfortable — are not part of our awareness. They cannot be reflected on for they have become part of the natural order of being and doing (Beyer, 1987). Without access to concepts and theories that are outside their usual way of looking at things, teachers are unable even to see much of their current practice.

The ability to see what we do requires, at a minimum, some glimmer of how things might be done differently. Teachers cannot ask deep questions as they try to reflect unless their own minds are stimulated by ways of thinking and viewing — and they acquire the language and theory which enable those new thoughts and perceptions — beyond the skills and ways of seeing taken on through immersion in school life. Thus school-bounded models of teacher education almost invariably train into a habitus rather than enabling educationally fruitful reflection about it.

Thus, I would argue, we cannot run away from the need to specify and teach a knowledge base. There is a serious, university-level, knowledge task for teacher education. It is to assist student teachers to learn a range of concepts and theories that will enable rich reflective practice. The test of whether a concept or theory is worthy of inclusion in the knowledge corpus is whether that concept or theory offers an illuminating means for a teacher to reflect on their teaching practice and to change to more effective practice. Reflective practice is to be endorsed and it is here to stay,

one would hope. But it has little point unless teachers have also acquired a range of concepts and ways of thinking which enable, indeed provoke, questions from 'outside the box', and which also suggest practices which may be more fruitful (Lieberman and Miller, 1999).

This position is not a return to the view that there is a canon of social science subjects that student teachers should be taught. Rather, it is an argument for making students aware of a variety of meaningful concepts and related theories from a wide range of research-based enquiries both within and beyond the traditional disciplines. What students need is a variety of lenses through which practice might be examined, justified and/or changed. These lenses should include social justice and other ethical lenses, cultural lenses which shed light on children, adolescents and educational institutions, rich theories of human development, insights into diversity and inclusivity, experience in a wide range of learning sites, knowledge of the variety of human learning practices and the research and debates about them, knowledge of the history and debates about curriculum and the purposes of schooling, and research-based knowledges about enhancing human relationships and institutional arrangements. The purpose of introducing student teachers to these ways of seeing is not to give them recipes — much as they want them and much as we might want to believe we have them. Instead, it is to enrich their conceptual repertoire so that they can engage in wide-visioned rather than blinkered reflective practice.

The new Education Studies Major at Deakin University

The question of what knowledges should provide the base for teacher education became increasingly an issue at Deakin towards the end of the 'nineties. While Deakin is also concerned about the 'how' issues which dominate in an instrumental era — issues of professional practice and of flexible learning — in this paper I want

to focus on the less popular question of what learnings, in the sense of knowledges, we should be aiming for.

Unlike some other Australian teacher education programs, Deakin managed to salvage the idea of Education Studies during the university amalgamations of the early 'nineties. Following the amalgamations, the preservice programs at Deakin were built around four kinds of components: subject matter knowledge, usually taught in other faculties of the university; Curriculum (Methods) Studies, which linked subject matter knowledge to current school curricula and appropriate pedagogy; school experience, in which students learned practical classroom skills and knowledges on school sites; and Education Studies, which taught core educational knowledge. Education Studies was, and still is, conceived of as a Major with six semester-length units, all of them compulsory for undergraduate preservice teacher education students.

The post-amalgamation preservice programs of the early nineties at Deakin were necessarily political compromises between the traditions of the amalgamated institutions. As a result there were a number of dysfunctional aspects to these programs and one of the most criticized components was Education Studies. By the end of the decade, in the Education Faculty there were both a few more resources and a willingness to turn from grieving for the past to planning for the future. It is not surprising that Education Studies, with its status as a Major and its problem of coherence for students, became one focus of change.

At the beginning of 2000, the chairs of the Education Major units at Deakin's Waurin Ponds and Melbourne campuses formed an Education Studies Major Committee. In the first half of the year, the Committee held a series of seminars in which we attempted to explore future possibilities. We invited speakers from other teacher education institutions to talk about what they were doing; we attempted to get a

sense of Commonwealth and State government policies and initiatives in relation to teacher education; and we explored the professional debate and the literature across Australia and internationally. The point of all this was to provide a basis for discussion of what the Education Major could become and to move beyond investments in the remnants of what had been. We began to develop some common theories and commitments.

Around the middle of the year, we agreed to a set of five qualities in a teacher which summarised our convictions, on the basis of the research literature and debate, of the new characteristics needed by a sound beginning teacher in the twenty-first century. In due time the list of qualities was adopted not just by the Education Studies Major Committee but by its parent, the Preservice Courses Committee, and thus now applies across all units in Deakin's preservice programs.

The five agreed graduate qualities are as follows (Deakin University, Faculty of Education, 2000):

Deakin education graduates will:

1. Be inclusive in their teaching practice

- Be aware of and respond to cultural and ethnic diversity
- Work for equity for all for whom they are professionally responsible
- Teach for the success of all students

2. Be aware of students as active meaning makers

- Understand students to be constructors of meaning
- Understand that meaning is embedded in socio-cultural experience
- Be facilitative teachers

3. Be committed to teaching for deep understanding and clear thinking

- Know that a core part of their task is to teach for deep learning
- Move beyond teaching information and skills development
- Facilitate generic levels of understanding

4. Be skilled at quality professional relationships

- Understand themselves and their reactions to others
- Understand that the core of their work involves professional relationships
- Work professionally and warmly with students
- Work professionally and productively with other teachers, other school-based professionals and parents
- Have a strong sense of professional ethics

5. Be committed to life-long learning as reflective, professional practitioners

- Research their own practices and the practices of schools
- See themselves as professional life-long learners
- Maintain habits of action-reflection-replanning in relation to their practice

These qualities do not express all we believe that a teacher education student should learn. Rather, they are orientations towards teaching practice, orientations which incorporate what the best educational research and debates to which we currently have access suggest hold the keys to greater classroom effectiveness. ('Greater classroom effectiveness' is defined here as practice which either reaches a wider range of students or which deepens their quality of learning.)

In the second half of 2000 the Education Studies Major Committee sketched out a new set of six units. This involved heeding a range of demands. Underpinning all was our own frame of the qualities we were aiming for. These provided the general

map of what good teaching practice looks like. We also generally reflected on the literature on teacher knowledge (eg Beyer, 1987; Shulman, 1987; Darling-Hammond, 1999). At a more pragmatic level we heeded the formal competency demands for beginning teachers set by the Standards Council of the Teaching Profession in Victoria (1998,1999), as well as the generic Graduate Characteristics which Deakin University (2000) demanded that all Faculties address in their programs.

Pedagogically we were attempting to structure a logical sequencing of questions and areas of enquiry through the six units of the Major. Sequencing was a particularly sensitive issue because it was one of the perceived inadequacies of the Education Major we were replacing.

We took the view, expressed throughout this paper, that the primary task of the Education Major was to introduce preservice students — in a sequence that made sense — to underlying knowledges which would provide the best possible resource for teaching practice. As far as possible, these knowledges would be rich concepts and theories, rich because they were academically reputable rather than faddish and because they would provide a fruitful basis for reflection in the planning-action-reflection cycle of good,reflective teaching practice.

The new Major was accredited in November 2000. Units have been written to address particular areas of enquiry rather than being academic discipline-based. They are taught by multi-disciplinary teams. We have worked throughout 2001 on the two new first year units and this year's intake will pilot them.

In brief, the six semester-long units look like this.

The initial unit asks: what are some of the most useful ways in which teachers might think about children and adolescents as persons? It begins with student teachers reflecting on their own childhood/ adolescence and their own treatment as persons

in educational institutions. It goes on to introduce important conceptualisations of children as enculturated and therefore different. Its third component explores liberal, universal conceptualisations of children. This unit will be spelled out in more detail in the last section of this paper.

The second unit asks: what do we know about how children and adolescents learn? It looks at theories of learning and of what affects learning. It will include an observation component in schools.

The third unit shifts the focus from learning to teaching. It addresses the question: if you now have some ways of thinking about who children and adolescents are and of the variety of ways they can learn and the factors involved, what then might be effective and ethical ways to support learning and to create good learning environments? This unit, in the first semester of their second year, accompanies the preservice students' first attempts to move beyond classroom observation and to put their own lesson plans into effect in the role of teacher.

In the second semester of second year, the fourth unit asks: what is taught in schools and what should schools be teaching? It introduces current curriculum, assessment and reporting policies in Victoria. It also addresses historical and current debates about curriculum in order to make students aware of crucial curriculum and assessment issues and arguments.

The last two units of the Education Studies Major will not be encountered until the fourth and final year of the undergraduate program. The third year of the program is taken up with subject matter studies in other faculties, Curriculum Studies, and Field Experience. Thus the final two Education Studies Major units aim to move students, who have had field experiences in schools for over two and a half years, beyond beginning competence as teachers. We hope to deepen their understanding

of the qualities of good practice to which Deakin wants its graduates to be committed.

The fifth unit explores the idea of teaching as a profession requiring expertise in human relationships and will teach the knowledges which such expertise requires — understanding the self; understanding students as encultured persons and learners; and developing professional skills in listening, in negotiating, and in working comfortably and effectively alongside others whether they be student, fellow-teacher, or parent. It will also look at schooling as an institutional, political arrangement of human relations.

The sixth and final unit, taken in the student's last semester, is called *Transition to Beginning Teaching*. It will be double-stranded. One pragmatic strand is to ensure that our graduates are familiar with the institutional and professional responsibilities and administrative tasks required of teachers in schools. A second strand consists of a research and reflection project of some value to a school, agreed between the student and the school, and built around an issue of inclusivity in teaching practice. This may well be a collaborative strand with other final year units in Curriculum Studies.

We hope that all these units will introduce a range of fruitful issues and a variety of ways of thinking about them and answering them. The sequencing is designed to ask questions and offer concepts and theories in an order which should both make sense to students and also introduce fundamental concepts and theories before others which are dependent on them. All units will offer conceptual/ theoretical knowledge validated through debate and research, beyond current popular ideology and common sense, and from whatever academic traditions have relevant things to say in relation to the questions being asked in that unit. We would argue that an awareness of the issues being asked in this sequence of units, and the development

of a range of sound conceptual lenses for addressing them, is necessary professional knowledge for twenty-first century teachers.

What should we be teaching preservice students about the nature of knowledge?

The most difficult question of all for teacher educators practising in our post-liberal consensus generation is: what epistemological status are we going to give to the concepts and theories we offer to students as a resource for reflective practice?

It is this issue which makes the escapism of craft apprenticeship models attractive. Yet it is precisely because of new epistemological understandings that we now know we cannot accept escapist evasions of the knowledge issue. Craft apprenticeship models cling to the intellectually demolished naivité that practice is theory-free and therefore theoretically innocent, and that teachers can thus be trained through pure practice. In fact all practice, indeed all structure, is theory-saturated. Research and debate on language and culture over the past generation has established, beyond any capacity for honest doubt, that all human perception and practice is theory-immersed. Common sense is simply theory that fits so comfortably within our cultural assumptions that it feels natural. We are compelled to offer teacher education in an era which must acknowledge the theory-saturated nature of all schooling structures and practices. We must also offer it in a postmodern moment when there has been a turn towards theoretical relativism and a scepticism that any one way of viewing reality (that is, theorising about it) is better than any other. If we must teach theory in such an historical moment – and I have just argued that we must – how are we to frame what we are doing, and how are we to teach that epistemological framework to our students? How do we help preservice students to understand that all knowledge is unavoidably theoretical — theory is ubiquitous? How do we help them to accept that knowledge is always uncertain? And how,

having grasped both these things, are students to be helped to both discern and appreciate good theory?

We have turned to face these issues as we have tried to write the first unit, the introductory unit, in the new Education Studies Major. I thought it might be of value to share with you where we have got to as we start to address this challenge. Hence this final section.

We are aware that preservice students arrive expecting recipes for teaching. Most of them are familiar, from their own schooling, with a form of teaching which has treated knowledge in a positivist way, as if it consists of facts. In addition, most new teacher education students already have a sense of what they think teaching is all about. What they think they need are facts about teaching, techniques for teaching, and practice at teaching.

We have struggled to find a way, in this first unit, to move students out of their positivist understanding of knowledge and their belief in recipes. We want our preservice students to grasp the epistemological standing of knowledge as inevitably partial and cultural, not simply factual, and to begin to think about knowledges as lenses for viewing and reviewing, for reflecting, and for planning. The lens metaphor is helpful because lenses can be changed back and forth. They can even be discarded if they simply 'blur the vision' or 'distort the picture' although this is not to argue that professionals should pick and choose any lens they like. Preservice students need to understand that good theories are evidence-based and have stood the test of strong debate in communities of reputable scholars.

The first unit in the Education Major needs to confront both students' likely expectations about the kinds of knowledge they need and also the related issue of their understanding of what knowledge is. It can only do this if it works with the

grain of the likely desire of these students to become good teachers and if we can support each student as the unit pushes them beyond their epistemological comfort zone.

Here is what we are trialling in the first semester of 2002 in the pilot of the new Major's first unit: *Understanding Children and Adolescents*. After a four week introduction to themselves, to each other, to university study skills, and to group work, the bulk of the unit will consist of two modules: one on ways to think about children and adolescents as different; the other on ways to think about them as the same.

These two modules move students beyond a simple view of knowledge by insisting that they confront the binary of sameness and difference through the very structuring of the unit. The module on difference looks at theories of social division and of cultural location, and explores what these theories and concepts are saying about who children are — gendered, classed, members of different ethnic cultures, with identities which have been constructed through quite different 'common senses'. Through this lens, children are very different and different in ways which will deeply affect their approach to learning.

The module on sameness explores the liberal concept of the universal child. It will explore ethical theories such as universal children's rights and universal 'needs', as well as important theories of Child Development each of which assumes a common pattern of growing up in all children and adolescents.

In this first unit we will work to help preservice students move beyond the naïve positivist notion that one must choose between understanding children as either the same or as different, as if one of these ways of seeing must be factual and the other wrong. Instead we want them to learn to think 'contrapuntally' (McCarthy, 1998,

p.260) — that it can be enlightening for the classroom teacher to consider children as both encultured beings and therefore different, but also to affirm that all children, through other lenses, should be understood as much the same. Students in the unit will address important concepts and good theories which have understood children and adolescents through one or other of these lenses. We are attempting to help them to envisage these concepts and theories as the best ways we currently have for envisaging children and adolescents, not as objective facts, nor as disturbing contradictions, nor as eternal truths. We are hoping that having to confront the simple truth of the way in which language functions through distorting binaries will help our students to dismantle the old positivist Australian belief that real knowledge is an innocent description of a transparently evident reality.

We do not know whether we will succeed in this ambitious new beginning unit for the new Education Major. It is indeed ambitious, not just in its content but also in its enquiry-based pedagogy and its expectations that students will work between classes in syndicate groups. (I have omitted describing the process aspects of the unit because this paper is deliberately about the knowledge which we want those processes to aim at.) We are well aware that we are trying to construct something new in a post-modern moment when it is no longer tenable to believe in a science of teaching, nor to affirm as simple truth any one Grand Theory — either of who children are, or of how they learn, or of what one must teach, or of how one must teach it.

What we do know is that we need to find an intellectually honest way to introduce student teachers to the highest quality theories and debates, the best food for thought, about the elements and complexities of good professional practice. We are not prepared to give up on that. Deakin's new Education Studies Major is one attempt to find a way. The most skilled craft competencies are not enough. Unless those who care about teacher education satisfactorily address the problem of

constructing a theoretically sound, challenging knowledge resource for reflective teaching practice, teacher professionalism will stagnate and perhaps die.

Professional teaching is not just a matter of habitual practice and of change through common sense. It is rather a matter of theorised reflecting, of justifiable planning, and of knowledge-aware decision making. All three of these practices require the best knowledge base we can offer.

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