

# Initial Teacher Education: Changing Curriculum, Pedagogies and Assessment

A. Jasman<sup>1</sup>

## *Abstract*

*This paper draws on the authors' experiences within a number of professional development projects, teacher education programs and the development of professional teaching standards in Australia. It is argued that initial teacher education is about to emerge from a period of relatively benign neglect. A number of conditions are suggested for this marginalisation of initial teacher education including:*

- *the different nature of the reform agendas for teacher education in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia*
- *the nature of the work of tertiary teacher educators considered with reference to the concepts invisibility, influence and identity,*
- *the development of standards and competency frameworks in Australia,*
- *recent policy developments at Federal and State level and*
- *ways of thinking about and doing initial teacher education programs.*

*It is argued that the intersection of these conditions is creating an opportunity for all those involved in teacher education, both tertiary and school based educators, to create the reform agenda for the curricula, pedagogies and assessment of initial teacher education programs. There is a window of opportunity for teacher educators to both provide leadership and work with others to articulate a quality agenda based on an understanding of professional expertise, its development and enhancement that bridges the divide between initial and continuing professional learning for educators. Teacher educators hold the practitioner knowledge of effective curricular, pedagogical and assessment practices that can shape the way in which new teachers are prepared for their work in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and support the development of existing teachers. An activist role for teacher educators (Sachs, 2000) is now even more of a priority if we are, in collaboration with others, to contribute to a socially just education for all.*

## **1. Meeting at the crossroads**

It is argued in this paper that initial teacher education has been subjected to benign neglect over the last decade. Circumstances that may have contributed to this positioning of initial teacher education and teacher educators on the margins are discussed and the opportunities created by this marginal space are explored. It is suggested that this has enabled some teacher educators to take an activist role in setting the agenda for quality in the curricula, pedagogies and assessment of teacher education in line with the development of a new form of teacher professionalism - activist professionalism – proposed by Sachs (2000).

However, at the same time as some teacher educators have developed a more activist role, other conditions in the context of their work have contributed to the marginal position of initial teacher education. For example, tertiary teacher educators have faced the conflict of re-negotiating their work within both universities and schools as these organisations underwent significant reform and restructuring in the 1990's. This negotiation of new work practices also took place during a time

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<sup>1</sup> Research Fellow, Quality Teaching Branch, Department of Education Science and Training, Canberra ACT 2617 and Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne, Parkville Campus, Melbourne VIC 3010

where ‘it would appear that neither the academy nor the teaching profession values the knowledge of teacher educators.’ (Jasman, Payne and Grundy, 1999: 18). Similarly Ramsey, Mowbray and Moore (2001) suggest teacher educators must not only meet the increased demands from being included within the academy but also that

*they need simultaneously to inhabit the worlds of schools and teachers, of children and adolescents, of parents and community organisations, of industry and the workplace, in the greatly increased diversity of setting where these worlds are found. These are the worlds that must relate to their practice. 2001: 96*

However, it is important to consider other contextual conditions to provide a backdrop to the current positioning of initial teacher education and its curricular, pedagogical and assessment practices and to suggest how the space to change may have been created in Australia.

## **2 Paths Leading to the Crossroads - Initial Teacher Education in Context**

A number of conditions can be identified that have brought us to our current position with regard to initial teacher education within Australia. These factors include the reform agenda for teacher education in the United States and the United Kingdom, changes in the workplace and work of tertiary teacher educators and the development of standards for initial teacher education programs, teachers and their teaching. Each of these areas is discussed here before considering the opportunity that now exists for different constituencies including teacher educators to contribute to a reform agenda for initial teacher education, and thus impact on the education of all Australian students.

### **2.1 The Reform Agenda for Initial Teacher Education**

Within the United States the reform of initial teacher education has been a major concern for over a decade. Cochran-Smith (2001b) notes that

*teacher preparation in particular has received enormous attention as part of highly publicised and politicised efforts to get tough about results and standards with concentrated pressure on higher education institutions to prepare teachers either to get better at teaching or get out of the business. 2001: 263*

Cochran-Smith (2001b) has also suggested that at least three agendas are driving reforms in teacher education at national and/or state levels. These are the agendas of professionalization, deregulation and over-regulation. Such bodies as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) have been part of the professionalization agenda for reforming teacher education. The work of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) as discussed by Darling-Hammond (2000) has been influential in creating this agenda. Symms Gallaher and Bailey (2000) note that this report, unlike others seems to have captured the attention of a wide range of policy makers, practitioners and the public.

The deregulation agenda in the US has emerged more recently (Murray 2000). Supporters of deregulation believe that ‘the requirements of teacher preparation programs and state licensing agencies present unnecessary hurdles that keep bright young people out of teaching and focus on social goals rather than academic achievement.’ (Cochran-Smith 2001b: 263-4). Whilst the over-regulation agenda is evident in a number of States where there are ‘unprecedented moves to establish external control of nearly every aspect of teacher preparation.’ (Cochran-Smith, 2001b: 264). Apple (2001) argues that there is

*no necessary contradiction between a general set of marketising and deregulatory interests and processes – such as voucher and choice plans – and a set of enhanced regulatory processes – such as plans for national or state standards, curricula, and testing.... They provide the mechanisms for comparative data that consumers need to make markets work as markets. 2001: 190-1.*

Apple also suggests that whilst there is some merit in the professionalization reform agenda his prediction is that within schools

*One of the powerful and damaging effects of the standards movement and the performance assessment movement will be to affix labels on poor children and their teachers that will be even harder to erase than before. 2001: 195*

He cautions also that teacher education needs to be prepared to have teacher education programs that educate student teachers who can ‘deconstruct the larger forces around them’ and ‘the tools to connect local and global tendencies, to think strategically about ways of interrupting neoliberalism and neoconservatism’ (Apple 2001: 195).

In the United Kingdom such marketisation of education has already occurred in initial teacher education with the determination of curriculum and assessment by the Teaching Training Agency (TTA). Eraut (2000) suggests that the

*.. move of TEI's into higher education has usually been accompanied by a reduction in direct government control; but nevertheless indirect control is exercised through institutional accreditation, specified curriculum frameworks, coordinating agencies or funding arrangements. 2000: 557-8*

In this context the indirect control of teacher education programs has resulted in a high level of regulation with very little opportunity for local variation due to the significant time pressures placed on providers of initial teacher education as new regulations are enforced. This regulation and control has teeth in both these contexts, for example, in the US the new mandatory Title II reporting requirements will affect eligibility for federal funding and the TTA must approve programs if they are to lead to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). As noted by Burgess (2000)

*The implementation of the National Curriculum for initial teacher training (ITT) has brought immense changes to course design and content, student assessment, teaching placements and the management and administration of PGCE and B.Ed. teacher education programmes. Change has been swift and directed by external agencies. The application of change by teacher training institutions has been closely monitored by inspection processes, and failure to meet new requirements has been dealt with by cuts in student numbers and funding, and in some cases the closure of courses 2000: 405-6*

The current climate for initial teacher education in the United States and the United Kingdom is very different from that found within Australia as will be discussed in the following section.

## 2.2 Invisibility, Influence and Identities

Sachs and Groundwater-Smith (1999) argue that while there has been ongoing radical change in the field of higher education and school education over the last decade; relatively little state mandated revision of the form and content of teacher education programs has occurred. They suggest that those changes that have occurred are a result of teacher education institutions ‘rethinking the professional work of teachers’ (1999: 216). They suggest that such rethinking took place within the

context of public sector reforms in the 1980's and early 1990's that were predicated on award restructuring (Preston 1996) resulting in new reward systems such as the Advanced Skills Teacher.

Nationally, there seems to have been a relatively benign neglect of initial teacher education for most of the 1980's and 1990's. There was a flurry of interest and activity between 1989-90 and again in 1995-6 on the issues of teacher quality and initial teacher education. In 1989, two reports were published: the first by Speedy (1989) on Mathematics and Science Teacher Education and the second by the Schools Council of the National Board of Employment Education and Training (1989) on teacher quality. These were followed in 1990 by the National Board of Employment Education and Training (1990) report on Teacher Education. In 1995 a report on teacher education in Language and Literacy was published (National Board of Employment Education and Training 1995) followed by the beginning teachers' competency framework (Australian Teaching Council 1996a; Australian Teaching Council 1996b).

During the 1990's state policies were variable in their impact on initial teacher education. For example, in New South Wales there have been several inquiries relevant to initial teacher education, see Brock (1999: 3), culminating in the Ramsey Report (Ramsey 2000). This report suggested strategies for improving the quality of beginning teachers and significant changes in the form and content of teacher education within the state.

Where teacher registration boards or other statutory bodies exist; for example, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria, initial teacher education programs have been subject to a limited degree of influence through program review processes. Such reforms that have occurred are usually focussed on broadening the curriculum of teacher education by mandating content such as knowledge of indigenous education, literacy and numeracy rather than a focus on pedagogies and assessment within teacher education. However, in such contexts teacher educators are generally working in partnership with other stakeholders such as employers, principals and teachers towards the mutually agreed goal of improving the quality of teacher education.

By contrast continuing professional education and the lifelong learning agenda has been the focus of much interest and financial support over the last decade from federal and state governments as well as teacher unions and professional associations. Such federally funded projects as the National Project for Quality in Teaching and Learning, the National Professional Development Program and the Quality Teacher Program have focussed on those teachers who are in-service, whilst initial teacher education has, to a large extent, been left to own devices. Why then has initial teacher education received so little attention over the last decade when compared with continuing teacher education and professional development? The intersection of a number of factors appears to have contributed to this relative neglect of initial teacher education by State and Commonwealth government and by the teaching profession itself.

First, initial teacher education has become almost *invisible* to the profession, community and politicians. This invisibility began when Colleges of Education became Colleges of Advanced Education broadening their offerings beyond initial teacher education. The rationalisation, regulation and control of higher education further exacerbated the invisibility of teacher education following the creation a unified tertiary education system where Colleges of Advanced Education became universities or were further subsumed into existing universities. Teacher education also lies at the boundary of state and federal responsibilities and between school and university sectors. Decisions about school education and the employment of teachers are state-based and those about higher education are located at the Commonwealth level. Occupying the margins in this way has also contributed to the invisibility of initial teacher education.

Second, initial teacher education is not only less visible but with a declining number of teacher educators working within the academy there was less opportunity to interact with and therefore *influence* the profession and the universities. This decline in numbers of teacher educators was fuelled by the creation of the unified tertiary education system and in the early 1990's by a significant reduction in demand for teacher education places linked to an oversupply of beginning teachers. With tertiary sector amalgamations, rationalisation and reduction in demand for new teachers many teacher educators were forced to leave or chose to leave the tertiary education sector.

The increasing demands on universities to fund their own operations and the reduction of the proportion of public funding they received also impacted on teacher education as it did on other faculties. This further reduced the number of tenured staff within teacher education. Whilst there were differences in the impact of such changes between States and Territories it would be fair to say that all teacher education faculties have been subject to substantial contraction in staff numbers relative to student numbers resulting in increased staff-student ratios.

Third, not only were there fewer teacher educators and proportionately more students but the nature of the teacher educators' work was expected to undergo change. There were substantial differences in the cultures of universities and teacher education institutions. Such differences are played out in universities in different ways. As argued by Sachs (2001) there are two competing discourses of professionalism – democratic and managerial – that are shaping the professional identity of teachers. In similar ways there are competing discourses for teacher educators. For example, Bullough et al. (1997) describe how each of three groups: clinical faculty, field researchers and discipline driven researchers has its own priorities,

*clinical faculty see their primary commitment to their pre-service students, as well as to the teachers and students in public schools. Discipline driven researchers view teacher education as one of several important missions of the department ... and field-focussed researchers are torn between doing substantive research connected to schools and the demands of a research university which values theoretical journals over teacher education journals. 1997: 92*

A major personal and professional issue for individual teacher educators through the 1990's has been resolving the conflict between these different orientations within the university sector (Acker 1997; Cooper et al. 1998; Acker 2000). Teacher educators needed to take on new *identities* to be successful within the changed environment. Teacher educators were expected to contribute to the research mission of the university sector and place less emphasis on the professional dimensions of their work. Such changes in teacher educators' work also impacted on the significance of initial teacher education within the academy and the degree of influence they could exert within the profession. The near demise of the Australian Teacher Education Association in the late 1990's is evidence of the degree to which teacher education had become marginalised.

Thus, it is argued that in Australia initial teacher education has largely been invisible, and teacher educators have lacked influence and undergone substantial changes in their identities. At the same time neither state nor federal governments have implemented substantive initial teacher education policies. This would appear to be linked to the oversupply of beginning teachers. Beginning teachers who were appointed to a teaching position at a time of oversupply were likely to be the most able and accomplished. However, the teachers within schools belonged to a very experienced group, but in some cases were in need of professional renewal. Thus interest shifted to those in need of professional development to cope with the restructuring and reform of school education.

The reform of schools has produced significant changes in the nature of teachers' work as well as that of tertiary teacher educators. This has been explored extensively through research on teacher

professionalism and the professionalization of teachers (Hoyle 2001; Talbert and McLaughlin 1996) as well as studies into the nature of teacher work (Shacklock 1998; Smyth et al. 2000). The characteristics of the professionalization reform agenda and its connection to teacher education in Australia has been largely played out with reference to teachers already working in schools. Sachs (1997a) describes the impact of award restructuring and the Teaching Accord negotiated between the Australian Education Union and the Independent Education Union and the Commonwealth that provided for its financial support for professional development, curriculum, assessment and research projects as well as the involvement of the profession.

*... several national initiatives survived which had their focus on the revitalisation of teacher professionalism. These projects offered teachers the opportunity to reclaim the agenda for defining the nature and scope of teacher professionalism 1997: 266*

A key part of this agenda was the involvement of tertiary teacher educators and teachers in schools in a number of collaborative, research oriented projects focussed on school reform. These projects were not usually directed towards the reform of initial teacher education but as a result of their involvement in such projects both tertiary teacher educators and teachers found new ways of working with, in and for schools (Grundy et al. 1999). These projects have also engaged teacher educators in changes to their understanding of how professional knowledge is constructed (Jasman, Payne, and Grundy 1999) and in their relationships with teachers and schools (Jasman, Cooper, and Klemm 2001).

There are, however, two sides to the coin of teacher professionalization. One side of the coin is the recognition that teachers are professionals and have the necessary professional expertise that enables them to make the judgements about how best to work within their particular contexts to achieve the priorities of the school community for the benefit of all students. The other side of the coin is the necessity to demonstrate to others what it means to be a professional, to create the standards for professional practice. As Cochran-Smith (2001a: 7) suggests a central part of the professionalization movement has been the development of standards for the profession.

Australia has certainly been following a reform agenda of teacher professionalization that has included both the recognition and reward of teachers as professionals through career path structures (Jasman 1999a) as well as the establishment of professional teaching standards and advancing arguments for the regulation of the profession by the profession. This agenda is now considered in more detail since it is a critical condition with the power to impact on the articulation of initial teacher education and its curricula, pedagogies and assessment practices.

### 2.3 Standards for Initial Teacher Education Programs, Teachers and Teaching.

The standards movement has gained pace within Australia over the last ten years with the development of a large number of professional standards and competency frameworks. These have been devised for initial teacher education programs; entry, competent and highly accomplished levels of teacher professional expertise, and for particular subject areas (Australian Council for Deans of Education 1998; Ingvarson 1999; Jasman 1999b). There appear also to be increasing expectations of regulation of teacher education programs from Boards of Registration, Institutes and Colleges of Education such as the Victorian Institute of Teaching. In such situations competency and professional standards frameworks have the potential to serve a range of functions including the regulation of curricula, pedagogies and assessment in initial teacher education and in-service teacher learning and development. Whilst this is not necessarily a negative development, the legitimacy of the standards depends on the constituencies that these Boards, Institutes and Colleges draw upon.

Much of this development of standards has been on a State by State basis although the short-lived Australian Teaching Council was one attempt to establish a national professional body for teachers by the profession using the Beginning Teachers Competency Framework (Louden 1992). Another national initiative of particular relevance to initial teacher education is the development by the Australian Council of Deans of Education of the National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education. These are intended 'for the external review of initial school teacher education programs for the purposes of approval and accreditation' (Australian Council for Deans of Education, 1998: 7). The Graduate Standards and Guidelines outline 14 graduate attributes, including general professional attributes; duty of care, health and safety; students and their communities; indigenous education; content studies; curriculum; literacy; numeracy; teaching and learning; relationships with learners and behaviour management; technology; assessment and evaluation; working with others, in schools and systems (Australian Council for Deans of Education 1998: 6).

In addition consideration is given to program standards and guidelines. These include nine dimensions as follows: procedures and criteria for program development, implementation and monitoring; physical and other facilities for the program; selection and entry of students; curricula; duration; structure and procedures; teaching and learning approaches and assessment, (Australian Council for Deans of Education, 1998: 6). Finally three organisational standards and guidelines for the institution, the faculty and field experience schools are outlined. Six principles are proposed should shape developments for the implementation of these National Standards and Guidelines (see Australian Council for Deans of Education, 1998: 37), with three options for this suggested as follows:

- *An accreditation body made up of major stakeholders, but independent from any one particular stakeholder. 1998: 49*
- *An accreditation system managed by the Australian Council of Deans of Education. 1998: 50*
- *A devolved procedure with a national reference board. 1998: 52*

Little movement has been made with respect to such implementation principles and options. In its submission to the Australian Senate Public Universities Inquiry 2001 the Australian Council of Deans of Education (2001) concluding paragraph notes

*The ACDE believes that the report (National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education) continues to provide strategically appropriate guidance for the development of teacher education accreditation, and commends the report to the Senate Committee. 2001: 15*

Given the general reluctance of teacher education faculties to be subject to regulation and control, why has this position been taken on a national accreditation and approval mechanism. One possible reason is that within the competitive funding environment that now exists in universities, a relatively high cost professional program such as initial teacher education cannot exercise the same leverage for maintenance (or even improvement) of quality within programs and of graduates without agreed professional standards.

Most States and Territories are currently pursuing the development of standards, as are several professional associations nationally including the Australian College of Education (Australian College of Education 2001), the Mathematics and Science associations (Australian Science Teachers Association 1999). Some standards statements are in generic form; others are subject-based standards. Where employer standards exist there are between and within state variations in relation to the expectations of the beginning teacher; the existence (or not) of registration regimes;

the articulation of knowledge, skills and values for entry into the profession, as well as procedures for selection, appointment and performance appraisal. Such differences are also seen between unions and professional associations that represent teachers at national and state levels. Different agendas are also played out with the emerging issues of professional rights and responsibilities as well as the funding of educational provision for initial and continuing teacher education.

With no national body of and for the education profession and the wider community, there seems little possibility of transcending these divides. It would appear we are stuck at the crossroads and have made little progress in moving beyond such divides as those between States/Territories and the Commonwealth's responsibilities for education policy and funding, teachers and employers, externally imposed accountability and professional responsibilities. However, there may be a change on the horizon or just around the corner!

In the December the Australian College of Education released a Statement including three areas for action to support the development of a Nationally Agreed Framework on Teacher Standards, Quality and Professionalism (Australian College of Education 2001). This was coincidental with the release of the terms of reference for the MCEETYA Teacher Quality and Educational Leadership Taskforce (MCEETYA 2001). In this statement, the Taskforce is expected to report on approaches to enhancing teacher quality, in particular by providing advice on

- Teacher preparation and ongoing development aimed at improving the quality and standard of teaching and learning
- The establishment of a fully integrated professional development regime involving pre-service education and training, skill maintenance and upgrading, in service professional upgrading
- Professional standards for teachers and principals, both for entry to the profession and to meet the ongoing needs of students over time
- Issues around the supply and demand of teachers
- Encouraging professional leadership in schooling

The statement indicates that the Taskforce will develop professional standards for teachers for consideration by the end of 2002.

### **3 So which way now ....**

It has been argued that initial teacher educators have been invisible, lacked influence and have been negotiating changes to their professional identities during the last decade. At the same time the articulation of professional teaching standards has gained momentum as part of the professionalization reform agenda. It is suggested that these conditions have helped create a space for initial teacher education to develop in ways that are more consistent with changing the nature of teachers' work to support social justice within education. This is evident in both the literature for the (re)visioning of initial teacher education and reports on innovative practices that are emerging following development in the 1990's.

#### **3.1 Ways of Thinking about Initial Teacher Education**

During the 1990's many authors have argued for a socially critical approach to initial teacher education. For example, Meyenn and Parker (1999) present examples from Grundy and Hatton (1995) who argue that 'teacher education should be part of a wider political project ... directed towards social critique and transformation' (1999: 9) and Smyth (1996) who suggests 'we should problematise our work ... which predispose us to describe, inform, confront and reconstruct.' (1996: 160). Meyenn and Parker conclude with their vision for initial primary teacher education as follows.

*Teacher education has to engage in ways which challenge and interrupt the taken for granted practices and policies which perpetuate inequality and injustice. A reconceptualization based on cultural studies would appear to have sufficient potential to make trialing this conceptualization worthwhile. 1999: 180*

Further visions for initial teacher education were explored in the July 1997 edition of Unicorn, the journal of the Australian College of Education. Bates (1997) suggested that

*Teacher education for the year 2007 will therefore need to develop in prospective teachers:*

- ❑ *An underlying understanding of education and schooling within the context of global social as well as epistemological change*
- ❑ *An understanding of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment as socially constructed and contested on a continuous basis*
- ❑ *A commitment to engagement not only with classroom practice but also with the various agents and interests that shape the context of that practice, not least in terms of the pursuit of equity, justice and opportunity 1997: 44*

However, even though there appears to be a common language, commitment to and some consensus around what 'teacher education is really all about' (Gore, 2001: 124), Gore argues that this is not evident within teacher education programs. Gore (2001) suggests that the actual curricula, pedagogies and assessment practices arise from different traditions. These may vary across university teacher education programs or even between different courses and/or units within a particular university program. She suggests that even when there appears to be a common discourse, a different theoretical and political perspective can give rise to different articulations of commonly held teacher education principles such as reflective teaching and teacher empowerment.

She suggests the productive pedagogies framework based on the work of Newmann and Associates (1996) be used as a basis for changing practices within initial teacher education. This framework would support the development of a teacher who can provide a learning environment that is characterised by intellectual quality, relevance, supportive classroom environment and recognition of difference. This is a worthwhile goal since it is based on evidence that such characteristics will show enhanced learning outcomes for school students. The means of achieving such outcomes is to ensure that teacher educators demonstrate and model such qualities within teacher education programs. As Gore states

*We can use the four dimensions to focus attention on the extent to which our work with students is intellectually challenging and rigorous, is connected with their past experiences and their future plans as teachers, set up processes that are supportive of learning, and attend to cultural difference. 2001: 133*

In this way she argues it is possible to move beyond the traditions, ideologies and differences to focus on the way we, as teacher educators, teach and provide for the learning of our students.

Whilst this framework provides a template to think about classroom practice in schools and teacher education it is clear that being an educator in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century goes beyond work within the classroom. Whilst initial teacher education within the university has its focus on preparation to teach, the acquisition of such professional knowledge must be situated (Lave and Wenger 1991) in other contexts where teacher educators are increasingly invisible and lack credibility and influence. In order to counter this Sachs (2001) suggests that teacher educators develop forms of action that recast their political, academic and professional roles in quite fundamentally different ways. Sachs

describes this re-invention of teacher educators along the lines of social-reconstructivism as presented by Liston and Zeichner (1992) where they are

- *Directly involved in a teacher education program in some capacity*
- *Engaged in political work within colleges and universities*
- *Actively supportive of efforts within public schools to create more democratic work and learning environments*
- *Engaged within professional associations and in relation to state education agencies.*
- *Working for democratic changes aimed at achieving greater social justice in other societal and political arenas. 1992: 188*

Anthony Giddens's notions of 'active trust' and 'generative politics' are used by Sachs (2000) to provide a conceptual and political base for rethinking the activities of teachers and others working in the collective education enterprise. Suggestions of how this type of professionalism can be achieved individually and collectively include key principles such as:

- *inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness i.e. of teachers, academics, union officials, systems people, and employers as well as parents and other community groups;*
- *collective and collaborative action;*
- *effective communication of aims, expectations etc;*
- *recognition of the expertise of all parties involved;*
- *creating an environment of trust and mutual respect;*
- *being responsive and responsible;*
- *acting with passion;*
- *experiencing pleasure and fun. 2000: 87*
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Thus as Sachs (1997b) articulates the challenge for education faculties, in the context of the knowledge society, is that socially critical approaches are not only the province of initial teacher education but also that of schools and teachers within them.

*At the core of a reconceptualised teacher education is the need to change the relational and pedagogical aspects of program design and delivery. There needs to be a shared desire between academics and school-based personnel to develop socially critical practitioners who can make a contribution to the practice and theory of teaching. 1997: 55*

In this model not only is there a reconceptualisation of initial teacher education but this is part of larger project where practitioners contribute to the development of professional knowledge, both practical and theoretical. These ideas are further elaborated in Sachs (2000) where she argues for activist teacher (and teacher educator) professionalism that

*requires that whole school and individual capacities have to be incorporated into discussions with university teacher educators, union officials and systems and employing officials about strategy, processes and outcomes for improving teacher professionalism ..*

*Networks are a second way for partners involved in education to direct the agenda of teacher professionalism. They derive great power and energy from offering members a voice in creating and sustaining a group in which their professional identity and interests are valued. ... Networks of activist professionals sidestep the limitations of*

*institutional roles, hierarchies and histories; and promote opportunities for diverse groups to work together. 2000: 88*

Given the current work practices within universities this may seem an unrealistic and unrealisable vision of teacher education. However, even though teacher educators feel they are suffering from an inundation of restructuring reforms over that last fifteen years, they still appear to have been working towards significant program changes and a more activist role.

### 3.2 New Ways of Doing Initial Teacher Education

Papers presented at several conferences last year<sup>2</sup> and planned in 2002 provide examples of innovations that are currently in progress and some evidence of successful, as well as less successful, practices. For example, the use of information and communication technologies to enhance the teaching and learning processes, and improve access and equity within teacher education programs have been discussed by Ballantyne and Mylonas (2001); Nielson and Alagumalai (2001); Yarrow, Millwater and Albert (2001).

There has also been extensive research into partnerships and the redefinition of the work of university and school-based teacher educators, and in their relationships with, in and for schools, (Jasman, Cooper, and Klemm 2001; Sachs 2000). Various attempts to resolve the eternal dilemma of overcoming the binary divide between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ have been tried through the development of site-, problem- and enquiry-based approaches to teacher education (Grenfell 1999; Macdonald and Isaacs 2001; Reid and O'Donoghue 2001). Other institutions have been engaged in processes of review, revision and reculturing in teacher education through consideration of the curriculum (Aspland and Macpherson 2001), pedagogies (Reed et al. 2001), and epistemological and ontological frameworks (Hanrahan et al. 2001; Teacher Practitioner Attributes Project Website 2000).

It would seem that the benign neglect of the last decade has provided some space for teacher educators to develop initial teacher education programs that are more appropriate for the preparation of teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These approaches are trying to take account of information and communications technologies, the changed nature of teachers’ work and the professionalization of teachers’ reform agenda, and core principles for initial teacher education such as critical reflection, social justice and the use of professional judgement. Thus some teacher educators have been able to determine the reform agenda within local situations to take into account the particular needs of their communities and students as well as being responsive to wider contextual factors. However, many of these initiatives involve local efforts with little cross-fertilisation of ideas or impact at the national level. We need to get serious about creating communities of discourse and practice (Burroughs, Roe, and Hendricks Lee 1998; Jenlink and Kinnucan-Welsch 1999; Palinscar et al. 1998) if we wish to contribute to the development of curriculum, pedagogies and assessment of initial teacher education at the national level.

## 4 A bridge between professional standards and teacher professional learning.

Whilst Gore (2001) and others such as Zeichner (1993) caution that ‘there can never be a grand synthesis that washes away ideological differences’ (1993: 8), it is still critical for teacher educators and other stakeholders to communicate and transcend these differences. In particular we need to be part of the development of appropriate professional standards so that they do not lead to standardization. If we do not, it is likely that our efforts to provide quality teacher education

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<sup>2</sup> Practicum Experience in Professional Education Conference (February), the Australian Teacher Education Association Conference (September) and the Australian Association for Research in Education Conference (December) and the Challenging futures (February, 2002).

programs that prepare our graduates to become teachers who can help their students achieve high quality learning outcomes will be curtailed.

As noted earlier there are already National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education incorporating a social justice perspective (Australian Council for Deans of Education 1998). We may be able to agree that these provide a suitable basis to underpin review processes in initial teacher education. If we cannot agree then we may have to accept alternative conceptions about initial teacher education where such a socially critical perspective is not a feature. For example, recent policy and discussion papers such as the Ramsey Review have a different vision for teacher education.

*A new framework is needed in order for teacher educators to affect deeply the quality of teaching. Within this framework two reform agendas must be central:*

- *sustained professional experience in the workplace, in which the teacher educator, a leader within their profession on the basis of professional knowledge and demonstrated practical expertise, works closely with other professional practitioners to make those in training ready for entry into the profession of teaching.*
- *a significant number of conjoint appointments, shared jointly by universities and employers, which enable:*
  - *teacher educators to work actively in schools and other educational settings, sharing in the preparation of aspiring teachers and in the professional growth of those who are already members of the profession;*
  - *experienced teachers to work in universities, engaged in significant research and teaching arising from the needs of the profession to which they belong (Ramsey, Mowbray and Moore 2001: 102)*

Hargreaves (2000) comments that such emphases on ‘school-based initial teacher education, school-based research, evidence-based professional practice and a renewed focus on teacher effectiveness’ are consistent with:

*deeper social changes by which many kinds of knowledge production are moving from what (Gibbons et al. 1994) call Mode 1 - pure, disciplinary, homogenous, expert-led, supply-driven, hierarchical, peer-reviewed, university-based - towards Mode 2- applied, problem-focussed, trans-disciplinary, heterogenous, hybrid, demand-driven, entrepreneurial, accountability-tested, embedded in networks.*

There does not however seem to be as much interest in the research or evidence-based approaches and performance assessment in initial teacher education in Australia when compared with the United Kingdom (Hargreaves 1997). Whether this is due to the embedding of such theoretical perspectives in teacher education practices or a fundamentally different underpinning rationale to our work is unclear and needs further exploration.

Some useful directions are emerging from evidence-based approaches, although these are only one source of information that teacher educators used in making decisions about curricula, pedagogies and assessment. In a recent report into teacher preparation conducted in the United States (Wilson, Floden, and Ferrini-Mundy 2001), evidence is offered that might provide a basis for decisions about the curriculum, pedagogies and assessment of initial teacher education programs. For example, in considering the subject matter, pedagogical practices and types of clinical training which are most effective in the preparation of pre-service teachers the research suggests that

*... changes in teachers' subject matter preparation may be needed, and that the solution is more complicated than simply requiring a major or more subject matter courses.*

*... Pedagogical aspects of teacher preparation matter, both for their effects on teaching practice and for their ultimate impact on student achievement. ... results give little insight into which aspects of pedagogical preparation are most critical.*

*... Experienced and newly certified teachers alike see clinical experiences as a powerful—sometimes the single most powerful—element of teacher preparation. Research documents significant shifts of attitude among teacher candidates who work under close supervision in real classrooms with children. (Wilson, Floden, and Ferrini-Mundy 2001: ii)*

However, this evidence-based approach to initial teacher education takes no account of either the professional judgement of teacher educators about curriculum, pedagogy and assessment nor the political and transformational agenda that is central to current visions of initial teacher education. Instead the emphasis is on the 'scientific' legitimacy of the knowledge that is taught and learnt within initial teacher education programs, who does the teaching, where it is learnt, how this can be done most effectively and how this might be assessed. Whilst these concerns are central to an effective teacher education program, we must also include dimensions that enable students to engage with values and their commitment to a variety of goals for schooling if we are to achieve a democratic and socially just society. Whilst such goals are always contested and contestable, we must keep them in mind when considering new ways of actually doing initial teacher education.

How then might we proceed? I suggest that before we can create communities of practice we need to have ways of talking about practice, a discourse community, that takes account of our understandings of what underpins our own practices – what makes up our practical knowledge that is evidenced in the exercise of our professional expertise. In the current research I am undertaking the following tentative articulation of professional expertise for educators, both teachers and teacher educators, is proposed where professional expertise is understood to encompass:

- the knowledge and skills that educators have and demonstrate
- with regard to their attributes, dispositions, values and commitment to the profession
- through the judgements and decisions they make and enact
- taking account of the particular context
- through research and reflection on their knowledge and professional practices
- working with others
- in order to make appropriate changes aimed at improving the quality of student learning opportunities and outcomes.

These various elements of professional expertise are informed by a variety of disciplines and research traditions. They have their roots in an extensive literature on effective teaching articulated through studies of the personal characteristics of 'effective' teachers and process-product research where pedagogical practices are documented and correlated to student outcomes of varying types. This literature has been extended considerably by considerations of how people learn to teach and strategies that have been used to promote teacher development, such as restructuring of teachers' work, reflective practice, teacher as researcher and more recently teacher as leader, collaborator and team member. Thus this conceptualisation of educators' professional expertise draws upon multiple traditions such as

- Teacher knowledge – knowing what and knowing how; theoretical and practical; content and pedagogical. (Elbaz 1983; Eraut 1994; Fenstermacher 1994; Popkewitz 1997; Shulman 1986; Yeatman 1996)

- Personality/character traits and affective teacher attributes, including their dispositions, values and commitment to the profession. The research evidence in this area draws heavily on the learning to teach literature (Beattie et al. 2000; Carter 1990)
- Teacher thinking, judgement and decision-making, that is, pedagogical reasoning (Beckett and Hager 2000; Tripp 1993).
- Situational or contextual understanding (Chaiklin and Lave 1993)
- Teacher as researcher (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1990); reflective practitioner (Schön 1987; Zeichner and Liston 1987); leader (Jasman 2001) and team member (Johnson 1999).

I suggest we can begin to construct new knowledge and understandings arising from our own professional practices and our practical knowledge about teacher education. In the same way as we urge teachers to become researchers we can research our own practices in similar ways. We can then engage as teacher educators within a community of practice and create connections beyond our immediate networks. We should no longer think of ourselves as only border crossers or boundary spanners with a foot in both camps of 'school' and 'university'. We need to stop thinking there is no place we can call 'home'. We must begin to reconstruct our understanding of what is 'home'. It is our community of practice created through the co-construction of the knowledge that make up the expertise of teacher educators.

This does not mean that our 'home' is not open to others. Professional organisations that are associated with initial teacher education should broaden their scope to include those working in schools, within systems and other constituencies, not only in initial teacher education but also inclusive of all who support the professional learning of other educators. Student teachers as well as those working with them in schools, the wider educational community, unions, professional associations, employers, parents, politicians and others must be welcomed into this community of practice. We need to share our practices and model these as a basis for the professional learning of other educators. We would then be embarking on a professional learning journey as we have suggested others should do.

Professional learning journeys such as these are not equivalent to travelling across the Nullabor Plain by road or train. These journeys are full of dog legs, backtracks, twist and turns where the path ahead is not clear, moving through forests and plains, with flat and easy sections and then hills to climb, places to stop and take stock, and even to enjoy the view. However, we can stand at the crossroads waiting for someone else to decide the direction we might take, or we can individually and collectively begin the journey to support the professional learning of all educators including ourselves.

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