Transforming teacher quality: Dilemmas, contradictions and possibilities for teacher education

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Transformative work involves a state of perplexity in which thinking originates, and an act of searching, hunting, inquiring, to find material that will resolve the doubt, settle and dispose of the perplexity (Dewey, 1933, p.12)

- The framing of today’s discussion – dilemmas and contradictions
- The changing nature of teachers’ work
- The changing nature of the work of teacher educators
- The dilemmas for us to face: QA; Selection; WIL
- Moving forward
Fay 1987: Transforming

We must seek to "explain the (our) social (political, cultural, historical) world, criticize it, and empower its audience to overthrow it."
Brian Fay 1987: Transformation....

- an activist conception of human beings;
- persons create themselves through their own self-interpretations.
- characterizes persons (us) as intelligent, curious, reflective, and wilful, even though the social arrangements and consciousness of a particular society/context may obscure these characteristics.
Fay’s work: Our world and the process of Transformation

1. Identify any sense of false consciousness
2. Identify the crisis defined a social, political, economic and historical crisis
3. Identify a theory of education/social change which accounts for conditions that will bring the enlightenment
4. Generate a theory of transformative action which isolates the aspects of our world that must be changed to resolve the social, economic, cultural and historical crisis and which outlines a plan of action to achieve this transformation.
The myths that plague our world are not everywhere but its tough down under

- There is plentiful discussion from government and independent sectors globally that teacher education is in crisis. These ambit claims are based on hypotheses about the intellectual calibre of students entering teaching, the need to be passionate about teaching and the literacy and numeracy standards of teacher education graduates.

- This popular theorising about the quality of teaching graduates generally lacks empirical evidence despite strong political support for such positioning.
The university sector is also under question

- University governance has recently moved away from a historical conception of the university as “a republic of scholars” to become more closely aligned to a portrayal of the university as a “stakeholder organization” (Bleiklie, 2009).

- Further, the original 12th-century purpose of universities as the “emancipatory saviors” of societies (Staub, 2009) has been challenged by market regulation (Sheehy, 2010).

- This shift in focus raises serious questions about the quality of teaching and learning, the place of the university academics in contributing to social and public good, and the type of leadership that is emerging within the university in neo-liberal contexts that shape the regulation of universities in Australia (Meek, 2000).
What is emerging is the coexistence of a number of binaries that lead to contestations, tensions, and dilemmas within leadership initiatives in the higher education sector. Examples of these dualities include the

- The university professes to uphold the academic freedom of intellectuals to generate knowledge for the betterment of society while government regulators allocate funding to a limited number of fields politically motivated national priorities.

- Universities profess to develop a desire for learning across a diverse community of students, but insufficient funding constrains innovative and pedagogically advanced engagement in learning.

- Universities are considered hubs of intellectual creativity and forums for the production of new and significant knowledge though mandated national regulatory discourses imposed upon universities have resulted in an ethos of compliance across the sector and dictates performance orientation to ensure ongoing funding.
Contradictions abound...

- Winter (1982, p. 168) uses the term *contradiction* to encompass a series of all-embracing postulates:

- . . . that social organisations at all levels (from the classroom to the State) are constellations of (actual or potential) conflicts of interest; that personality structures are split and convoluted; that the individual's conceptualisation is systematically ambivalent or dislocated; that motives are mixed, purposes are contradictory and relationships are ambiguous; and that the formulation of practical action is unendingly beset by dilemmas.
Dilemmas of three types: 'ambiguities', 'judgements' and 'problems'. (Winter 1982)

- Ambiguities are tensions which are tolerated. They constitute background awareness of inevitable complexities of a situation;

- Judgements are dilemmas relating to the perceptions of those actions which are not seen as wrong but complex and interesting and which require a requisite skilfulness to be resolved.

- Problems are those dilemmas arising out of a course of action which are of such a nature that they can undermine its validity and rationality.
A quick revision from yesterday to set the scene
Now if learning of the future is to look like this
And students of the future are to achieve this

Students who are best prepared for the future are change agents.

- Disciplinary knowledge and boundary crossing
- Epistemic knowledge,
- Procedural knowledge
- Practical problem-solving, such as through design thinking and systems thinking.
- A broad range of skills, including cognitive and meta-cognitive skills (e.g. critical thinking, creative thinking, learning to learn and self-regulation); social and emotional skills (e.g. empathy, self-efficacy and collaboration); and practical and physical skills (e.g. using new information and communication technology devices).
Building on the OECD Key Competencies (the DeSeCo project: Definition and Selection of Competencies), the OECD Education 2030 project has identified three further categories of competencies, the "Transformative Competencies", that together address the growing need for young people to be innovative, responsible and aware:

- Creating new value
- Reconciling tensions and dilemmas
- Taking responsibility AND
- the mobilisation of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values through a process of reflection, anticipation and action, in order to develop the inter-related competencies needed to engage with the world.
What about teachers of the future?
Normative conception of teaching

Knowledge: finite, fixed, transmissive, monocultural

Learning: acquisition and demonstration

Teaching: didactic and information processing

The teacher: one unit, one space, one curriculum

Purpose: to prepare the learner for work
Alternative conceptions of knowledge workers for new times

- Knowledge: Fractured, global, multidimensional, accessible to all – transportable general knowledge AND in-depth specialist knowledge

- Learning: collaborative reconstruction of knowledge

- Teaching: Learning communities

- The teacher in new times: Social network of knowledge workers, new patterns of collaboration & partnership, multidisciplinary skills upgrades

- Purpose: Prepare students to recreate a better society, locally and globally

- DO KNOW WHAT WORKS? (See Hattie 2011)
If this is the case then what are the dilemmas for teacher educators?

On the one hand:

1. Fixedness
2. Datafication (top down/impact)
3. Platform control & big brother
4. Compliance
5. Add on
6. Regulation and effectiveness

But on the other:

1. Uncertainties
2. Human endeavor
3. Individual engagement and rights
4. Scholarship
5. Reconceptualisation
6. Professionalism and richness
If this is the case then what are the dilemmas for teacher educators? Example 1

Ambiguities are tensions which are tolerated. They constitute background awareness of inevitable complexities of a situation;

- **On the one hand university funding by governments can require quality auditing;**
- **On the other hand QA bodies can reconstitute the purposes of learning and teaching.**
What are the dilemmas for teacher educators? Example 2

Judgements are dilemmas relating to the perceptions of those actions which are not seen as wrong but complex and interesting and which require a requisite skilfulness to be resolved.

- On the one hand governments are having a great say in who enters a teaching education program;
- On the other hand universities may negotiate with government to ensure the best students are gaining entry into programs based on evidence and rational approached to selection.
Example three: What are the problems for teacher educators?

Problems are those dilemmas arising out of a course of action which are of such a nature that they can undermine its validity and rationality

- On the one hand the educational community has called for professional standards for teachers and accreditation of programs in the interests of quality and public accountability;

- On the other hand the standards may not reflect the knowledge construction/knowledge base, values, attitudes and capacities required of graduates for the future.
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EXAMPLE 2 SELECTION

Entrants to initial teacher education programs selected through sophisticated approaches that consider both academic skills and desirable personal attributes for teaching. Approaches to selection published by all providers.

ITE providers argue: A school score (e.g. ATAR) is not deemed a good indicator of academic and non-academic qualities for entrants to teacher education.

GOVT: ATAR of 70 represents the top 30% of broader community so appropriate for ITE entry.

What are the options to this process of reproduction.
What attributes are implicit in the standards and are they the right ones?

- There is little convincing research and plenty of contestation over the qualities that a candidate should demonstrate on entering teaching in order to become an effective teacher.

- For instance, Lewis et al note that “teacher quality is a complex phenomenon, and there is little consensus on what it is or how to measure it”..
Despite this lack of clarity around all characteristics that contribute to a quality teacher, there are some particular teaching qualities which research has shown to hold a strong correlation with student learning; and these can be nurtured and developed throughout ITE programmes.

- **Strong affective skills** - this is considered to be a critical quality evident in effective teachers. Teachers who demonstrate that they care about students have “higher levels of student achievement than teachers perceived by students as uncaring.” Top-quartile teachers also score higher in “fairness and respect as well as in having positive relationships with students.”........
What the research says:

- **Commitment to life-long learning**, and are passionate and knowledgeable about the subjects they teach - and they use this passion to inspire a thirst for knowledge and love of learning in their students.

- **Ethical dispositions**.

- Capacity to be **responsive** to changing contexts.

- Strong high-order **interpersonal skills**.
A counter narrative suggests:

- Ultimately, suitability to enter the teaching profession is determined at the **point of exit from university** (output) rather than at the point of entry into university (input).

- There is a myriad of evidence that suggests that it is more important to develop the desirable qualities of teachers **throughout a teacher preparation programme** rather than identify them at the outset.

- **Focussing on exit** is a strategic process that guarantees preferred outcomes

- Focussing on entry is an ad hoc process that has no empirical or rational basis for its viability.

- With the Standards now in place, **the framework for developing certain teacher characteristics** is defined and accepted by government and the profession.
Teacher selection processes in Finland, where teaching is one of the most admired professions requires:

- a written exam on assigned books on pedagogy,
- a mock clinical activity replicating school situations and testing social interaction and communication skills, and
- interviewing only the top academic performers shortlisted by the above processes to ascertain the rationale behind choosing teaching as a profession, following which the potential teacher candidates enrol in a rigorous government-funded teacher education program.
The question for us in terms of the selection perplexity

- Who determines who should come into teaching?
- Who should we select as the next generation of teachers? (false consciousness)
- What sort of work are we selecting them for? (crisis)
- Where is the evidence? (enlightenment)
- Should students self select in a continuing fashion?
- Is there a better way? (transformation)
Example three:

Problems are those dilemmas arising out of a course of action which are of such a nature that they can undermine its validity and rationality.

- On the one hand the educational community has called for professional standards for teachers and accreditation of programs in the interests of quality and public accountability;

- On the other hand the standards may not reflect the knowledge construction/knowledge base, values, attitudes and capacities required of graduates for the future.
The AITSL standards - key questions

- Are the Standards a tool that mandate outcomes and core competencies or should they serve as the foundation and guiding framework – or ‘conversation piece’ – from the outset across all aspects of ITE, including design, implementation and evaluation;

- Is it the joint responsibility of ITE providers, mentor teachers, and industry partners, together with students, to provide evidence that the Standards have been met on graduation and in transitioning into the profession or must this be demonstrated at the level of design – a form of regulating the number of programs, the type of programs and the content of programs?
Let’s dig down and challenge current models of professional experience and the place of the standards

- WHAT LEVEL OF INTEGRATION SHOULD THERE BE BETWEEN INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION PROVIDERS AND EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS?

- SHOULD THIS BE REGULATED AS A RELATIONSHIP

- OR SHOULD WE BE MOVING TOWARDS THE DIASPOR OF TEACHER EDUCATORS ACROSS A RANGE OF CONTEXTS?
Traditionally we advocate a tripartite approach

- Universities and HEIs are best placed to enable the pre-service teacher to develop the necessary discipline and pedagogical-didactic knowledge, and theoretical framework that will support them in their ongoing professional learning. Universities cannot prepare teachers for all contexts. Employers in other professions provide on-the-job training and teaching is no different. Employers need to be involved in providing a coherent and systemic induction and mentoring process which forms part of the framework for ongoing professional learning.
Industry partners are best placed to demonstrate the implementation of ideas and strategies introduced at university, support pre-service teachers in their teaching and provide feedback and mentoring in learning to teach. It is via the school, through professional experience or workplace learning that the pre-service teacher can learn how different schools operate to address the needs of, and interact with, the local community.
a tripartite approach

- Teachers in educational centres are best placed to assess whether the pre-service teacher has the appropriate personal, interpersonal and communication skills to be an effective teacher and can achieve the standards articulated by AITSL.

- The place of the academic advisor is important and with the new teacher performance assessments in Australia, central in leading secondary to consistent teacher judgements and moderation across sites.
The role of the standards and requirements to sustain traditional models professional experience

- Providers and partners must ensure there are appropriate governance and administrative structures in the delivery of professional experience.
- Providers develop and implement highly integrated programs.
- Providers, systems and education centres ensure opportunities for supervising teachers to develop their skills and knowledge to perform the role effectively.
- Systems, schools, centres and providers demonstrate commitment to ensuring that school leaders support professional experience placement through their structural, staffing and program priorities.
- Providers and partners demonstrate a rigorous approach to the assessment of pre-service teacher achievements against APST.
Some propositions based on research evidence:

- **Professional experience is celebrated as the key to teacher formation** as graduates prepare to enter the profession, however the exact nature of what makes a quality experience the impact of the quality experience on learning is difficult to define.

- **Professional experience provides an inextricable link between theory and practice.** Universities build graduate knowledge of educational theory while industry providers provide opportunities to shape their professional practices in the field.
Some propositions based on research evidence

- Studies reveal that there is a positive impact on graduate student learning and development as a result of their engagement in a professional experience component of their teacher education programs but the impact is diffuse, at times contradictory, and variable across contexts.

- Current studies are small in scale but these works highlight the importance of professional experience in providing graduates access to quality teachers who model good pedagogy that impacts positively on student learning outcomes.
Some propositions based on research evidence

- Research evidence strongly supports the importance of clinical teaching approaches, with sustained periods of professional experience and ongoing professional mentoring.

- There is tremendous potential of integrating mobile technology in the pre-service teacher practicum in terms of minimising the ‘disconnect’ between theory and the school classroom and improve the experience for all parties involved.
Some propositions based on research evidence

- In order to ensure a good quality professional experience research confirms the importance of quality feedback from expert teachers, opportunities to critique and reconstitute practices with mentor teachers and a graduated development from clinical context to full classroom professional contexts over the time of the preparation program.
What we know: The problematic nature of the traditional practicum

- A range of practical issues act as barriers to high quality practicum programs, including: a **chronic shortage of placements**;
- Host schools having to deal with the **differing expectations and systems** of multiple teacher education institutions;
- **Lack of time for mentor teachers** to meet and work with pre-service teachers and other school and university-based colleagues;
- And **inadequate time** for this element of their work being allocated to **teacher educators** by their home institutions;
- **Bifurcation** of the domains in not helpful.
If we are thinking about the future:

Have we got the right model – is there a taken for granted assumption or false consciousness that we have?

Are we in crisis?

Is it timely for new models of professional experience or work integrated learning to be generated so as to enhance the quality of graduates?

Do the standards constrain or enable our thinking about future models?
What does teacher formation for the future look like? Who do I become as teacher?

- Firstly – what about our language?
- Secondly connect this language and cognitive, social, affective and spiritual development and what sort of teacher do I become?
- Can we/should we move from *prac* to learning in the workplace? (do the standards allow this?)
- Do we need to reconceptualize this work as a matter of urgency?
An alternative model: Reproducing superior performance (Smith 1991; Ericson 2006)

- Identification of capacities and dispositions required to perform in the domain
- Learning to perform in controlled conditions (Ericson & Smith 1991) in a reproducible manner – practice and preparation
- Adapting reproducible performances in controlled conditions across contexts - need prior experience, knowledge and extensive experience for growth and development
- Specific extended domain related experience is shown to attain expert performance
- 10 year rule (but up to 20 or 30 years in some domains)
Becoming the expert teacher

Phase 1: Observation of experts on the domain
Phase 2: Skill development – automaticity
Phase 3: Experience (with critique)
Phase 4: Experience with deliberate practice – mentor/master teacher
Phase 5: Experience and critique
Phase 6: Experience with deliberate practice – autonomous professional
WIL Model for the future

- Professional Experience with Mentor teacher juxtaposed with deliberate practice
- Clinical Practice and Paraprofessional work
- Observation Learning Walks Educational Communities
- Volunteer work in schools
Exchange of Commodities as partners: money, time & work

The proposed differentiated payments model could be developed on taxonomy such as the following:

- **Group Observation** Payment on invoice to the School.
- **Small Group Experience** (groups of 4 in classroom of clinical settings) Payments to schools for the release of teacher facilitators.
- **Supervised Practicum**: Payment to individual teacher mentors.
- **Internships**: Payment for 50% of supervision as mentor and exchange of work for 50%.
Possibilities for the future: Differentiate or die as a profession

- What future do we have if we do not transform our practices to be aligned to the future and the formation of teachers for the future? - Normative v Alternative (OECD)

- Are we able to see things the way they really are or do we let government jurisdictions oppress us with their rhetoric for quality (Take a good look at the accreditation standards and the teachers standards) – Are we in a state of false consciousness?
How have we come to understand and maintain what could be described as “mis-understandings” about the complexities of teacher formation (knowledge conception, attributes, work integrated learning, assessment of teacher capability for graduates)?

Are we in a state of crisis as teacher educators with little control over our profession? How did we get to be this way? Can we reclaim our profession?

What conditions do we require for enlightenment and how do we work with or without stakeholders to achieve new ways of working?
Finally

- Do we want transformation both globally and locally so that we may sustain our profession as a diaspora of teacher educations?

- How do we address the crisis, overcome false consciousness and and what is our plan of transformative action?

- Transformative work involves a state of perplexity in which thinking originates, and an act of searching, hunting, inquiring, to find material that will resolve the doubt, settle and dispose of the perplexity (Dewey, 1933, p.12)
Moving forward

- Can we do this together as a World FATE Community through:
  - Articulating evidence based key principles for ITE that shape the preparation of teachers for the future across the globe
  - Longitudinal comparative research concerning key components of teacher formation for the future
  - Internationally accredited units across our programs
  - Core units in work integrated learning that uphold international recognition
In short and as a matter of urgency:

We need to reconceptualise the positioning of ourselves as teachers and teacher educators if we are to address the challenges of the present and the future.

To do nothing is a risk that may make us obsolete.

Let's act now before it is too late.

Thank you