

Current trends in teacher education: Some implications

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Zeichner and Liston (1990) present four major traditions in teacher education reform: the academic, social efficiency, developmental and social reconstruction. In turn, Cochran-Smith (2002) proposes four key themes reflecting the assumptions which have driven teacher education reforms over the past century: attributes, effectiveness, knowledge and outcomes. She concludes that issues around outcomes are now predominant.

This paper argues that Zeichner's social efficiency perspective is cognate to Cochran-Smith's outcomes question, and that the dominant reform agenda for teacher professionalisation in Queensland teacher education now reflects that perspective. It seems unlikely, however, that this 'unprecedented professional consensus' (Cochran-Smith, 2000) with its underlying assumptions of social efficiency and measurable outcomes can incorporate fully the agendas of the different traditions with their varying theoretical and philosophical differences. This becomes a dilemma for those who wish to interrogate and critique these recent directions and to reconstruct future pathways for teacher education in Queensland.

Teacher education

Education is the key social activity by which society reproduces the traditions and forms of life it considers desirable, and produces new traditions and forms of life it considers preferable to realise its aspirations for humanity (Australian Curriculum Studies Association, 2001).

Many universities in Australia are currently undergoing processes of reconceptualisation (Australian Council of Deans of Education, 2001, p.1; Grieshaber et al., 2000; Ramsey, 2000) and the 'professional' reform agenda is becoming more central in discussions regarding the future of teacher education (Knight, Lingard, & Bartlett, 1993; Sachs, 1997; Sachs & Groundwater-Smith, 1999; Smith, 1999). Scrutiny of this process and its outcomes is crucial to ensure the development of quality teacher education programs.

A considerable body of research has shown that preservice teacher education has a significant impact on early-career teachers' teaching skills and their philosophies of teaching (Carter, Carre, & Bennett, 1993; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Iredale, 1996; Temmerman, 1997). In particular, constructivist teacher education has been shown to have a positive impact on student teachers' perceptions of their own teaching competencies, leading to increased confidence and also improved teaching practice within schools (Byo, 1999; Chen, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Ghaith & Shaaban, 1999). Although some writers maintain that teacher education has relatively little impact on classroom practice (Lampert & Ball, 1999; Stuart & Thurlow, 2000; Su, 1992), where teacher training has been shown to be ineffective, it can arguably be attributed to the *type* and *design* of teacher training being provided (Iredale, 1996; Kennedy, 1999).

This paper aims to provide a conceptual framework to address the dilemma faced by those who wish to interrogate and critique these recent directions and to reconstruct future pathways for teacher education in Queensland. Zeichner and Liston's (1990) analysis of American reforms in teacher education over the last century provides a

useful framework for addressing the current state of teacher education in Queensland and in Australia more generally.

The Four Teacher Education Reforms

Zeichner and Liston (1990) have suggested that throughout the twentieth century there were four clear traditions of American teacher education reforms - academic, social efficiency, developmentalist and social reconstructionist. They are summarised briefly below.

The *Academic Tradition* focuses on the importance of disciplinary knowledge for preservice teachers, gained through a classical liberal arts education combined with an apprenticeship in schools. Here, the “mastery of subject matter is the most important goal in the education of teachers” (Zeichner & Liston, 1990, p. 4). As such, teachers should be educated in their subject matter at university, but should learn *how* to teach in the company of more experienced teachers once they get to the schools (a disciplinary and apprenticeship model). An academic approach to preservice teacher education would attract academically talented students, who would otherwise be turned away by the ‘doubtful intellectual value’ of many education courses.

For exponents of the *Social Efficiency Tradition*, the scientific study of teaching provides the best basis for building a teacher education curriculum. This tradition has tended to examine the nature of teacher work in order to provide a basis for studying teaching, and was largely influential in developing such reforms as Competency/Performance Based Teacher Education (C/PBTE) in the US in the 1960s and 1970s. Here competencies (skills and knowledge) are specified in advance along with the criteria to measure mastery of these competencies. Once the competencies have been demonstrated, the teacher is viewed as ‘effective’. The trend towards C/PBTE became widely popular in teacher education literature both in the US and worldwide, although it attracted criticism regarding its behaviouristic underpinnings (Zeichner & Liston, 1990).

Many contemporary teacher education reforms reflect the social efficiency perspective, under the label ‘research-based teacher education’. This perspective is evident in reforms that incorporate new versions of the (behaviouristic) C/PBTE combined with broader (cognitive) reforms. Here Zeichner and Liston conclude that:

teaching demands an approach to teacher preparation that reflects the complex and uncertain nature of the work. The crucial task from this point of view is to foster teachers’ capabilities to exercise judgement about the use of teaching skills (1990, p. 9).

In this framework, the ‘outcomes’ of teacher education should be consistent with the realities of teaching. Since 1990, this approach (which is associated with the terms ‘outcomes’ and ‘professional standards’) has become increasingly evident in teacher education reforms (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001).¹

The *Developmentalist Tradition* asserts that the “natural development of the learner provides the basics for determining what should be taught both to pupils in the public schools and to their teachers” (Zeichner & Liston, 1990, p. 9). Three metaphors can be used to describe its manifestation in the twentieth century. As proposed by Perrone, they are (a) the teacher as naturalist, (b) the teacher as artist, and (c) the teacher as researcher (cited in Zeichner & Liston, 1990). Although this tradition is quite varied, Crook (1974) found that developmentalist teacher education programs have the following in common:

A commitment to involvement in one's own learning, an active approach to learning in terms of direct experience with materials, an encouragement of children's communication and prospective teachers' communication with children using skills of observing, reading, speaking, and writing; early field experiences, offerings in the expressive arts as well as in academic areas, and an understanding of children's development which reflects the writings of Jean Piaget (cited in Zeichner & Liston, 1990, p. 11).

This approach is also associated with 'humanistic teacher education' and the 'personalised teacher education program', grounded in Fullan's studies of teacher concerns. Fullan's assumption is that if a teacher education program is aligned with student teachers' developmental needs, it will guide them towards maturity as a teacher (Zeichner & Liston, 1990).

In the *Social Reconstructionist Tradition*, "schooling and teacher education are crucial elements in a movement towards a more just society" (Zeichner & Liston, 1990, p. 12). This tradition encourages student teachers to take a critical look at the prevailing social and political orders that are associated with education, and aims to break the poverty cycle by preparing teachers to teach in low-income areas.

Teacher education in Australia

In Australia, despite a plethora of policy and green paper recommendation at State and Federal level, there has arguably been little real or substantial change to teacher education programs over the last two decades (Jasman, 2002; Sachs & Groundwater-Smith, 1999). Australian teacher education programs have up until now, in a somewhat eclectic fashion, reflected aspects of all four of Zeichner and Liston's reform traditions. This contention is clearly seen when viewing the nature and form of recent Queensland teacher education programs.

In Queensland, the impact of the academic tradition has been particularly notable in the preparation of secondary teachers. Students studying to become secondary teachers typically study academic subjects in their discipline area along with non-education students. They then spend the second half of their studies concentrating on education units. Most of these units are not related to their specific teaching areas. The only exceptions are the discipline curriculum units, which focus on teaching in the chosen discipline.

The concept of the 'teacher as professional' has emerged from within the social efficiency tradition with terms such as 'outcomes' and 'standards' being used increasingly in mainstream literature. This is perhaps the most influential perspective in Queensland, with outcomes-based education already operating within state schools, and documents such as the Professional Standards for Teachers (Education Queensland, 2002)² influencing the future of teacher education programs.

Teacher education courses in Queensland also reflect the developmentalist tradition to some degree. This is evident in the order of units over the four years (the placement of practicum towards the end of the course, and the development from general to more specific units in education) and particularly in educational psychology units that are incorporated into all education degrees.

The social reconstructionist tradition is also discernible in Queensland teacher education courses, most notably in units where the social, cultural and political contexts of schooling are explored within a sociological framework (Griffith University; Queensland University of Technology).

Despite evidence that there are certain 'commonly held teacher education principles' (Jasman, 2002) in Australian teacher education courses, the theoretical assumptions that lie behind them are often quite disparate - even to the point of tension or apparent contradiction (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001; Zeichner & Liston, 1990). Zeichner and Liston's reforms provide a useful conceptual framework for addressing how such different positions continue to be represented in current teacher education programs.

Trends in teacher education reform

Zeichner and Liston's traditions can be seen as alternative responses to certain key questions regarding teacher education reforms. Cochran-Smith (2002) argues that addressing these questions reveals the theoretical assumptions underlying such reforms. The questions that she identifies as having driven reform in the US over the past century are (in chronological order)

a) the attributes question:

- what are the attributes and qualities of good teachers, prospective teachers, and/or teacher education programs?

b) the effectiveness questions:

- what are the teaching strategies and processes used by effective teachers?
- what teacher education processes ensure that prospective teacher learn these strategies?

c) the knowledge question

- what should teachers know and be able to do?

d) the outcomes question.³

- What should the outcomes of teacher education be for teacher learning, professional practice, and student learning?
- How, by whom, and for what purposes should these outcomes be documented, demonstrated, and/or measured?

Cochran-Smith(2000) argues that the outcomes questions are currently at the forefront of teacher education reform.

Table 1 indicates the responses to Cochran-Smith's key questions in teacher education reform over the past century within each of Zeichner and Liston's four traditions.⁴

Table 1 – A conceptualisation of teacher education reforms

Zeichner and Liston (1990)

Cochran-Smith (2002)

	Academic tradition	Social efficiency tradition	Developmentalist tradition	Social reconstructionist tradition
<p>Attributes question What are the attributes and qualities of good teachers, prospective teachers, and/or teacher education programs?</p>	<p>Teachers: are foremost scholars and subject matter specialists.</p> <p>T.E. Programs: provide a sound liberal arts education, combined with an apprenticeship in a school.</p>	<p>Teachers: have the ability to demonstrate required competencies. This is the best determinant of teaching ability.</p> <p>T.E. Programs: have clear guidelines/objectives for teachers to achieve, based on research into teacher work.</p>	<p>Teachers: can understand and respond to the developmental stages of their students.</p> <p>T.E. Programs: are designed to work with the learning stages and needs of preservice teachers. Promote the understanding of learning development in students.</p>	<p>Teachers: are able to view the education process critically, in order to promote a more just society.</p> <p>T.E. Programs: promote critique of the cultural and political assertions that lie behind education programs. Awaken social consciousness in teachers and teacher educators.</p>
<p>Effectiveness questions. What are the teaching strategies and processes used by effective teachers?</p> <p>What teacher education processes ensure that prospective teachers learn these strategies?</p>	<p>Effective teachers have good skills and knowledge in their discipline areas. They should use the teaching strategies and processes that prove most effective from their apprenticeship experience.</p> <p>Teacher education courses should educate preservice teachers in their discipline areas. Teaching skills and knowledge should be gained through an 'apprenticeship' approach once in the schools, and also through subject specific curriculum studies.</p>	<p>The strategies and processes of effective teachers can best be determined through the scientific study of the nature of teacher work.</p> <p>Teacher education courses should be designed to ensure that preservice teachers develop the competencies required by effective teachers. A way of addressing the development of teaching competencies is through the use of microteaching in preservice courses.</p>	<p>The teaching strategies and processes used by effective teachers are developed across their preservice experiences. Effective teachers are acutely aware of the developmental stages of their students and can utilise this knowledge to facilitate meaningful student learning.</p> <p>Effective teacher education courses encourage the understanding of child developmental psychology, as well as utilising the developmental stages of preservice students to enhance their own learning. Teachers should be educated in the same kind of supportive and stimulating environment that they are expected to provide for their students.</p>	<p>Effective teachers use strategies and processes designed to encourage critique of society's cultural/social/political 'norm's.</p> <p>Teacher education courses should focus on developing social consciousness and reform capabilities among prospective teachers through inquiry-oriented student teaching programs.</p>

<p>Knowledge question What should teachers know and be able to do?</p>	<p>Teachers should be able to confidently teach in their discipline area, using teaching approaches that are appropriate to the discipline area and the abilities of the students.</p>	<p>Teachers should be prepared for the realities of the teaching world. This can be clearly stated through outcomes or objectives of a teacher education program.</p>	<p>Teachers should be familiar with the developmental learning stages of their students, and be able to utilise this knowledge to provide appropriate and relevant learning tasks.</p>	<p>Teachers should be "critically oriented, compassionate, and impassioned, reflective and socially engaged practitioners who can aid in the process of education improvement and social change" (Beyer in Zeichner & Liston, 1990p. 14-15).</p>
<p>Outcomes questions What should the outcomes of teacher education be for teacher learning, professional practice, and student learning?</p>	<p>Teacher learning: strong foundations in discipline areas Professional practice: ability to utilise these skills and knowledge in a useful way. Student learning: sound grounding in content knowledge and skills</p>	<p>Teacher learning: skills to be an effective teacher Professional practice: can achieve the outcomes deemed necessary. Student learning: improved, evidenced through test scores.</p>	<p>Teacher learning: understanding of the developmental stages of students Professional practice: ability to use this understanding in practice Student learning: for what purpose? learning appropriate to developmental stages</p>	<p>Teacher learning: social critical skills Professional practice: reflective and socially engaged Student learning: development of social conscience</p>
<p>How, by whom, and for what purposes should these outcomes be documented, demonstrated, and/or measured?</p>	<p>How documented? In teacher education programs, outcomes should be documented in teacher education curriculum documents. It is expected that these outcomes would be synchronised with the outcomes expressed in other documents relating to teacher education, such as school curriculum documents, professional association curriculum documents and government policy documents, reflecting the wishes of all stakeholders.</p> <p>How demonstrated? This has not been consistently answered across the field, although in Queensland, evidence of competency is collected throughout the preservice program. This evidence can be direct, indirect or supplementary.</p> <p>How measured? Measured through demonstrable performance in the outcome area</p> <p>Documented by whom? This has not been consistently answered across the field, although in Queensland, this is determined by each tertiary institution.</p> <p>Demonstrated by whom? Preservice and practising teachers</p> <p>Measured by whom? This has not been consistently answered across the field, although in Queensland, competence is measured predominantly by teacher educators, supervising teachers, in conjunction with preservice teachers.</p> <p>For what purposes? Outcomes have been developed to standardise and professionalise the area of teacher education</p>			

Discussion

Table 1 demonstrates that the answers/solutions to the questions being asked in teacher education have not been consistent. Rather, the philosophical and political positions underlying the different traditions have determined their various answers/solutions. As shown by the shading in Table 1, both the social efficiency tradition and the outcomes questions assume that teacher education should produce effective teachers, who can achieve the outcomes deemed necessary for 'effective' teaching. In this way, the 'outcomes questions' seem most appropriately answered by the social efficiency tradition. Accordingly, the centrality of the 'outcomes questions' in the current climate of teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 2002) has arguably resulted in the social efficiency tradition becoming the dominant reform tradition.

Nevertheless, the move towards a unified outcomes-based teacher education may be problematic, particularly because it is unlikely that these conflicting perceptions of teacher education can easily be addressed in one model. Cochran-Smith has well observed:

Notwithstanding the growing – and many say unprecedented – consensus about standards for teaching and teacher education within the profession itself (Darling-Hammond, 1996, 2000; Darling-Hammond, Wise & Klein, 1999), it is important to acknowledge that there is considerable variation both within and outside the profession in terms of how the outcomes question is being constructed and upon what grounds it will be decided (Cochran-Smith, 2002, p. 3).

It would seem unlikely, then that this 'unprecedented consensus' will result in the development of integrated teacher education programs. The shift appears more generic than specific in nature. On the other hand, the underlying assumptions of social efficiency and measurable outcomes make it difficult to incorporate or reconcile fully with the agendas of the other traditions with their varying theoretical and philosophical differences.

Teacher professionalisation

Reflecting the trend towards a social efficiency model of teacher education indicated in Table 1, the concept of teacher professionalisation is increasingly prominent in recent Australian teacher education literature (Jasman, 2002). Professionalisation can be defined as the drive towards creating teachers as professionals. A professional is a person who has the ability to "continue learning throughout [their] career, deepening knowledge, skill judgment, staying abreast of important developments in the field and experimenting with innovations that promise improvements in practice" (Sachs, 1997, p. 266). Teacher professionalism in Australia reflects the idea that "in a society where the continuous creation, acquisition and communication of knowledge are central, teacher education needs to be understood as a lifelong learning process" (Ramsey, 2000, p. 26).

The push for a social efficiency model of teacher professionalisation has been largely driven by economic and political agendas (Knight et al., 1993; Sachs, 1997; Sachs & Groundwater-Smith, 1999; Smith, 1999). The government's "market orientation towards the provision of services and a managerialist approach to their delivery" (Sachs & Groundwater-Smith, 1999, p. 217) has driven school reforms throughout the 1980's and 1990's. At a tertiary level, this has begun to be expressed through 'standards' and 'accountability' demands of teachers and therefore teacher education courses. The dominance of the social efficiency tradition can clearly be seen in Queensland, where the *Professional Standards for Teachers: Guidelines for Professional Practice*, has been developed specifically to:

?? provide a platform for teachers to identify and then drive their continuing professional development;

- ?? *inform program development for preservice education; and*
- ?? *represent the aspirations of the teaching profession* (Education Queensland, 2002, p. 2).

Indeed, the Board of Teacher Registration (the organisation which controls the accreditation of all teacher education courses in Queensland), has already adopted the Professional Standards for teachers, as stated in the recent *Guidelines on the acceptability of teacher education programs for teacher registration purposes* (Queensland Board of Teacher Registration, 2002). The document describes:

- ?? *professional standards for graduates of teacher education programs, defining attributes considered necessary for effective beginning teaching;*
- ?? *mandatory program components, to enable programs to be approved by the Board; [and]*
- ?? *guidelines on program consultation and acceptance* (Queensland Board of Teacher Registration, 2002, p. 1).

These Professional Standards, which are now compulsory in teacher education courses, have been developed to reflect the 'real' needs of teachers (Education Queensland, 2002) and appear to incorporate the agendas of all of the four traditions. The *skills* and *knowledge* required of effective teachers are represented by twelve standards. Each of these standards is extrapolated on through a number of statements outlining its key demonstrable components, which are linked to indicators detailing actions that relate to the statement. Each standard includes a list of 'underpinning knowledge and skills' that are needed to perform the professional practice described.

This document reflects the current trend towards professionalising teacher education in Australia, and as previously argued, despite drawing on elements from all four traditions, the underlying assumptions associated with standards and demonstrable outcomes indicate that the Professional Standards have substantially emerged from within the social efficiency tradition (see Table 1). That said, the overwhelming acceptance of the Professional Standards (and therefore social efficiency tradition) presents a dilemma for those who wish to interrogate and critique these recent directions and to reconstruct alternative future pathways for teacher education in Queensland.

If such critique does not occur, then despite a common language being used to describe 'what teacher education is really all about', the reality may become confused (Jasman, 2002).

Many of the discussions that pertain to the outcomes question depend on the claim that there is an unprecedented professional consensus about how to reform education by developing closer and closer alignment of standards for teaching and learning, assessments of students and teachers, and new models of teacher education, licensing, and certification. There is, however, a fair amount of evidence that just below the surface of common language and agreement at the abstract level, there are deep differences (Cochran-Smith, 2002, p. 11).

A way forward

In Australia, reflecting an 'unprecedented professional consensus' regarding the ideal future of teacher education, current constructions of the professionalisation of teaching have largely gone unchallenged. This generates a dilemma, because the underlying assumptions reflected in the different reform traditions are often contradictory, and it seems unlikely that

the outcomes model, with its underlying assumptions, can fully incorporate or reconcile the agendas of the different traditions with their varying theoretical and philosophical differences.

To ensure that teacher education courses are providing the best possible preparation for preservice teachers, it is desirable to review the reconceptualisation and reform agendas which appear in both teacher education literature and reform documents. Whereas the outcomes questions seem to have emerged from within the social efficiency tradition, there are arguably questions that are equally worth asking from within the other traditions. As such, it has been argued that the current teacher education programs in Australia, and particularly in Queensland, be examined critically to ensure that they are an improvement on previous courses. This paper has sought to provide a conceptual framework to address the dilemma faced by those who wish to interrogate and critique these recent directions and to reconstruct future pathways for teacher education in Queensland.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Dr John Knight and Dr Ian Macpherson who provided advice and comments on drafts of this paper.

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¹ The movement towards the creation of teacher professionalism is also known as professionalisation.

² This is explored further in the *Discussion*.

³ As Cochran-Smith points out, these questions are broad, and are continuing to be answered to this day. She also concedes that these questions may leave out a lot (Cochran-Smith, 2002).

⁴ It is acknowledged that this may be viewed as a reductionist way to view reforms, but in the context of this study, an historical overview of the reforms and how they relate to research questions over time is useful.
