

**Authentic Assessment and Productive Pedagogies in Pre-service
Teacher Education.**

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Teachers who are critically reflective, professional, democratic, highly skilled and passionate about their work, all credible goals for teacher education program, still need to keep their eye on the ball. The ball is student learning (Gore, 2001).

The Context

Many universities around our countries are in the middle of a crisis and they are fighting the battle on a number of fronts. The struggle involves academic freedom, faculty morale and inefficient use (and abuse of) time, money and resources. This crisis is related to the 'pandemic of globalisation and the juggernaut of privatisation that has spread exponentially, and mutated more rapidly than the SARS virus, in the *Enronization* of corporate life' (McLaren et al, 2004:26). This crisis the likes of which has never been seen in education circles, now engulfs public schools, universities and colleges across most of the western world.

McLaren et al, (2004:27) goes on to say 'Most universities now openly favour faculty who produce knowledge rather than teach knowledge. What is clear is that downsizing, outsourcing and flexible methods of labour practices reminiscent of production lines in factories have engulfed Universities across the country'. Teaching appears to be seriously undervalued, not only in tertiary circles but, would appear, also in the eyes of the wider community.

In addition, education has become a multi -million dollar industry profiteering under government sanction and with government blessing. In NSW every child in Grades 3 and 5, undertakes the Basic Skill Test, involving English, Mathematics and now Computing, in Grade 7 and 8, an English and a Maths Skill test, and in Grades 10 and 12, the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate, all developed at a cost of millions of dollars annually. That is just one state of Australia. Based on these results, and a number of other measures, funding is determined for schools. As a result, greater populations in poor communities, already struggling with poor schooling, health care and living conditions that often run parallel to third-world levels of poverty, face this new litany of measures.

Peter McLaren and Ramin Faramandpur's work, in the wake of the renewed wave of testing in US, reveal huge social injustices, particularly in California. Fattah, (2002) revealed that in 1999, a record 47% of those students entering California State University were required to take remedial English and 54% were required to take remedial maths. Just as an aside, they reveal there are currently 47,000 uncertified teachers in California. The old adage of 'anybody can teach because we've all been to school' is alive and well. What does that mean for future teachers and even more importantly for future learners?

This crisis has, according to Barrington (2003) also emerged because of 'a seemingly innocuous but valuable goal- that of trying to assess how much our students learn'. Traditional method of instruction are seen as 'serving policy makers and facilitating comparisons to norms whereas assessment serves students and teachers first' (Barrington, 2003). This once again highlights how pervasive are the of power-brokers, who enforce the accounting as well as the accountability

When I read this information I become extremely pessimistic. I read that the United State's Pentagon defence budget for 2003/2004 was \$399.1 billion dollars and was specifically designed to keep the US on a permanent war footing in its battle against 'evil' (Hellman, 2003). I then try to imagine how many teachers and schools that would fund.

The Background

We are a small group of teacher educators at the University of Western Sydney in NSW Australia. It is a young university (as opposed to a *sandstone* university) and has in the past been noted for its substantive and effective contribution to the field. With the new 'user-pay' approach, where we have clients and consumers, where budget is more powerful than pedagogy, there has been evident enormous change in the delivery of our teacher education programs. Enormous fiscal changes have occurred in the name of accountability and these have served to increase dramatically the bureaucratisation of education. They have served to dis-empower students, while delivering to them, a bland, mediocre program.

Within these increasingly complex and often-times draining contexts, we continued to asked the vexed question 'where does teacher education fit into

this scenario?' We began by focusing on what we considered to be our primary intention. The first part involved the learning for our pre-service students, and the second involved producing high quality outcomes for the school-age students they will teach.

The course that I coordinate is a post graduate course, called the Graduate Entry Bachelor of Teaching (Primary and Secondary) and is offered in one calendar year but over three semesters. The students come with a wide variety of undergraduate degrees ranging across nursing, social work, psychology, law, medicine, engineering, criminology, health science, physical science, performing and visual arts, literature, vet science to name a few. The average age for the last 3 years is 34 years. The ratio of female to male is a little less than 3 to 1, a much higher percentage of males than our straight undergraduate degree. About a third come straight from their undergraduate degree – the others have made a conscious career change and have a strong commitment to teaching.

In addition, we were very mindful that our students have had at least 12 years of institutionalised primary and secondary schooling. In our graduate program, they have at least another 3 to 5 years of university study before they enter the teacher education program. We had to accept that these pre-service teachers have well entrenched beliefs and assumptions about learning and learners. They have subjectivities that influence what could be accomplished in teacher education and beyond (Klein, 2001).

With such an eclectic group, we were very aware of the struggle our students have when grappling with opposing ideas of teaching and learning. We were very cognisant that they must reflect and analyse not only which theoretical frameworks were right for them as teachers, but whether these frameworks (and theirs) could accomplish the desired teaching and learning outcomes set forth for their future students (Johnson-Crowley, 2004). This 'pay-it-forward' approach is I believe, unique to teacher education and it is my own personal observation that this multi-layered approach to teaching and learning does not occur elsewhere in universities. Christine McAuliffe, the American teacher invited into space on the ill-fated Challenger recognised it. She entered that competition and had written to win first place that 'To teach, is to touch the future!' What an astute observation from one teacher so tragically lost!

In our highly multi-cultural population, we also needed to maintain the humanization of the classroom environment and continue to create pedagogical spaces where learning was the centre-piece for all. We deliberately incorporated the premise that strength comes from adversity and difference, where our students, and their students, represent such an array of cultural, ethnic, indigenous, religious and social communities of learners.

Studies by Kluth & Straut (2003), Lipsky & Gartner (1996) and Snell & Janney, (2000) all assert that to be effective, teachers need opportunities to practice and learn collaboratively about shared decision –making, communication and planning. For this reason and countless others, our teacher-preparation program has included a model of collaboration in productive pedagogy which focuses directly on what happens in classrooms.

One last tenet we considered to be critical was the durability of the learning, the *value added* after the course or lesson was concluded, the life-long learning aspect of the experience that had ‘value beyond school’ (Newmann et al, 2001), the robustness of the learning. We wanted the depth and breadth of knowledge to be such that it remained in later life. We were concerned about the intentional and unintentional (hidden) curriculum they would retain.

The Research and the Model

Thus when the NSW State Department of Education embraced this critical model of pedagogy and released their discussion paper in May 2003, we were well placed to support its implementation. The DET had themselves tendered for and received a model of pedagogy which was based on what teachers do best, what teachers already know and value but that which gave greater attention to some aspects of pedagogy than may have typically been the case in the past.

In her earlier work, Gore (2001) put it this way. Within the topology of modern teacher education there are four main thrusts to the programs. One such emphasis, the discipline tradition, is on the teacher’s role as a scholar where the primary concern is with intellectual quality and acknowledging the social construction of knowledge. A second she labels the scientific, which privileges a research-informed base for classroom practice, drawn

mainly from the cognitive and developmental psychology literature. Gore (2001) postulates that here the 'learning processes take precedence over what is taught and why'(p131) with strong emphasis on the learning environment.

A third is the experiential, apprenticeship tradition with its emphasis on site-based experiences, student biographies and reflective diaries clearly aimed at the inter-connectedness of learning. While this can incorporate intellectual quality, critics claim it can be too introspective and narrow. The fourth, the critical consciousness tradition, is particularly aligned with 'concern for hearing previously marginalised voices and empowering all students' (p132). While this aligns well with the supportive environment and awareness of difference, it has been known to encourage a 'warm fuzzy' approach with much sympathy and less academic emphasis. She also purports that the primary purpose of teacher-education programs is to achieve high-quality learning outcomes for all the learners. Hence her endorsement along with Lindgard, Ladwig and Newmann of the Quality Teaching Model. Their model specifically highlighted the need to recognise intellectual quality as central to pedagogy. The term 'productive pedagogy' was introduced into our vernacular.

Gore (2001:124) states 'this framework places pedagogy (used broadly here to refer to what takes place in classrooms and other teaching sites) at the core of the teacher education enterprise and has implications for 'the what' (the curricula) and 'the how' (the pedagogy)'. This framework is known in NSW as the Quality Teaching in NSW Public Schools. I quote from the document: 'The core business of the profession of teaching is pedagogy. Pedagogy focuses attention on the processes through which knowledge is constructed, produced and critiqued. The term pedagogy recognises that how one teaches is inseparable from what one teaches, from what and how one assesses and from how one learns'(p4). In my own teaching I constantly use the phrase 'you the person are you are the teacher!' We can no more separate the teacher from the person, as we can separate the dancer from the dance or the musician from the music!.

The Productive Pedagogy partnership for the Quality Teaching Project borrows from and builds upon several large longitudinal studies of schooling reform. One was the Newmann Study (1996) undertaken in Wisconsin in USA in the early 1990's. In terms of statistical significance, Newmann argues that Authentic Achievement is dependent on two key ideas: 1)

advancing the intellectual quality of learning through various pedagogies and 2) the nurturing of a professional community of learners. Both correlate highly with incidences of high student achievement. His evidence is compelling and both our Queensland and NSW's governments have embraced his findings. Newmann's research emerged from the accountability agenda which is very familiar now in both Australia and in England and the strong egalitarian and social justice context ever-present in the minds of educators. Arising from 'the crisis discourse surrounding poor schooling' (McConaghy 2002) the research considered how all students could participate in quality learning. This research was premised on the assumption that it was possible for every student to achieve quality learning despite social or ethnic or cultural background. (Another tenet that I constantly promote is 'I believe in you as a learner and nothing you can say or do can change that.')

They have also incorporated other dignified researchers such as John Dewey (1938): optimal learning and human development occurs when people are confronted with substantive real problems to solve; Lev Vygotsky (1987): the teacher is the expert. Cognitive development does not proceed through innate age based developmental thresholds. It is a product of social and cultural interaction around the development of tools of cognitive, linguistic, physical and now electronic nature (ZPD Zone of Proximal Development); Paulo Freire (1970): the most authentic and powerful pedagogy is one that focuses on the identification, analysis and resolution of immediate problems in the learners' world and Theodore (Ted)Sizer (1973): Instead of enforced accountability agendas and measures that both teachers and students feel are forced upon them, embody new kinds of relationships between people, groups and institutions all grounded in an ongoing dialogue. He involves integration and interrelatedness, views knowledge holistically, and celebrates authenticity.

Therefore. this model of pedagogy is based on both nationally and internationally renowned research that clearly demonstrates that it is the quality of pedagogy that most directly and powerfully affects the quality of learning outcomes that students demonstrate (Gore, 2004; Ladwig, 2004); Newmann, 1996). The Gore, Ladwig and Newmann model clearly explains. 'The features of classroom practice that have been linked to student outcomes can be characterised by three dimensions of pedagogy:

- Pedagogy that is fundamentally based on promoting high levels of *intellectual quality*

- Pedagogy that is soundly based on promoting a *quality learning environment*
- Pedagogy that develops and make explicit to students *the significance of their work*' (p5).

The NSW Model of Pedagogy

E L E M E N T S	Intellectual quality	Quality learning environment	Significance
	Deep knowledge	Explicit quality criteria	Background knowledge
	Deep understanding	Engagement	Cultural knowledge
	Problematic knowledge	High expectations	Knowledge integration
	Higher-order thinking	Social support	Inclusivity
	Metalanguage	Student direction	Narrative
	Substantive conversation	Students' self-regulation	Connectedness

Gore (2001) claims that the NSW Quality Teaching Model and the Queensland Productive Pedagogy Model incorporate all the four traditions and she challenges teacher educators to 'go beyond the discursive argument to these dimensions of classroom approach and to examine the extent to which that commitment is translated into, and realized, in their own practices'.

To take up her challenge I personally undertook two tasks to fully explore the 'deep knowledge' element within the Intellectual Quality dimension. First I made explicit my own 'deep knowledge' and shared with my students some of my own key pedagogical beliefs. These were the tenets of my core pedagogy subject I taught.

Intellectual Quality- Deep Knowledge

The role of the teacher is critical- teachers make a difference

Teaching is fundamentally about relationships

Teaching requires passion and commitment

Teaching requires me to be a lifelong learner

Teachers always have high expectations

Teachers have positive relevant values

Teachers use a vast variety of strategies, instruction, frameworks and management techniques

I need to know that my learners are learning

(Hall 2004)

Second, I changed my lecture topics from statements to questions. There were two strong arguments for me to do so. First I found I could really embrace this model of pedagogy. So many recent ones I believed were unsound, unfair, or un-workable. Time and space do not permit expansion of that discussion. The second was to cater for the unique graduate entry student group I was teaching. These pre-service teachers already had one, two or three degrees. Many had Masters, Honours and several had a doctorate. All had made a deliberate choice to be teachers and despite their hugely diverse background they were united in a common purpose – to complete a teacher education degree.

Rather than lecture topics such as ‘the reflective teacher, classroom management, individual differences,’ my lectures became ‘How can I become a reflective teacher?, How do I understand learner’s behaviour?, How can I utilise the strengths of my learners to ensure learning?’ This simple adjustment opens up a discussion where learners feel acknowledged for what they bring and who they are. With the life experience and expertise of this group of students, the quality of discussion is meritoriously high. This strategy also disallows that frightening ‘guess what is in the teacher’s head’ game which serves to disempower learners even further.

Another very simple strategy, which I have used for many years, is while recommending a text for them to purchase, I never take my lectures from that text but from supplementary texts. The expectation is that they will read the set text and I will supplement, add and expand from other sources. While I believe this to be commonplace, I have since discovered that often this is

peculiar to education. This is purely anecdotal; and I am happy to be corrected.

Killen (2003) another Australian researcher, strongly supports this model as he argues like many others, that modern approaches to teaching emphasise that 'knowledge is constructed rather than discovered and that teaching/learning should focus on learner understanding rather than memorisation' (p3). So to encourage learner teachers to understand and make sense of their emerging world and working with the model in schools in the Newcastle area, Killen simplified the model into specifics for pre-service student- teachers by reminding them that 'having content knowledge is simply not enough' (p5). Engaging children in learning and organising the learning process are also critical to student achievement. He poses a series of questions for them when planning their lessons within the framework of the model.

- What do I want my learners to be able to do at the end of the learning experience? (outcome)
- What knowledge and skills must they understand in order to achieve the outcomes? (content)
- How do my learners come to develop the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that I am trying to teach? (process)
- What evidence do I have that my learners achieved their outcomes (assessment)

(Adapted from Killen 2003).

In conclusion, we are reminded by Mueller & Skamp (2003) that 'If we are to change the pedagogy of teacher education to better prepare future teachers, we must reflect on learning to teach with future teachers (p439).' Listening to their voices gives powerful feedback and this type of research asks the right questions. Returning to the broader picture, I quote Darling-Hammond who sums up our position succinctly: 'If universities are to continue to make the important contribution to the education of teachers that they can make, they need to pursue these ideas of knowledge building and truth finding by creating praxis between ideas and experiences, by honouring practice in conjunction with reflection and research and by helping teachers reach beyond their personal boundaries to appreciate the perspectives of others' (2000: 171). By expanding, researching and evaluating the NSW pedagogy model I am committed to doing just that.

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Element	What does it look like in classrooms?
Intellectual Quality	
Deep knowledge	The knowledge being addressed is focussed on a small number of key concepts or ideas within topics/subjects. The relationship between and among them is made clear.
Deep understanding	Students demonstrate a profound and meaningful understanding of central ideas between and among those central ideas
Problematic knowledge	Students are encouraged to address multiple perspectives and/or solutions. Knowledge is constructed and therefore open to question.
Higher order thinking	Students regularly engage in thinking that requires them to organise, apply, analyse, synthesise, evaluate knowledge and information.
Metalanguage	Learning explicitly names and analyses knowledge as a specialist language and provides frequent commentary on language use and the varying contexts of language.
Substantive communication	Students regularly engage in sustained conversations about pertinent concepts and ideas in an oral, written or artistic form.
Quality Learning Environment	
Explicit quality criteria	Students are provided with explicit criteria for the quality of work they are required to produce. These criteria are regular reference points for development and assessment.
Engagement	Most students, most of the time are seriously engaged in the learning. They display sustained interest and attention.
High expectations	High expectations are made explicit and communicated to learners. Conceptual risk-taking is rewarded.
Social support	There is strong positive support, and mutual respect for learning and learners. No put-downs!
Students' self regulation	Students demonstrate autonomy and initiative which leads to minimal attention to disciplining and regulating of behaviour.
Student	Students exercise some direction over, and negotiation of,

direction	their learning experiences and their outcomes
Significance	
Background knowledge	Learning explicitly builds from students' background knowledge, including prior school and personal knowledge.
Cultural knowledge	Learning regularly incorporates cultural knowledge – economic class, gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality, disability, language and religion.
Knowledge integration	Learning regularly demonstrates links between and integration of, interdisciplinary knowledge and domains, subjects and/or key learning areas
Inclusivity	All learning experiences include, and publicly value, the participation of all students across the social and cultural composition of the classroom
Connectedness	All learning relies on the application of school knowledge to real-life contexts and problems and provides opportunities for students to share their achievements beyond the classroom
Narrative	All learning incorporates and values narrative accounts as both process and product to enrich student learning