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What counts as professional knowledge in the eyes of pre-service and beginning teachers -implications of the encounter for the role of teacher educators in pre-service middle school preparation.

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Abstract

This paper is an account of teacher educator perceptions of the take-up by beginning teachers of the values and practices advocated in pre-service education. Methodologically grounded in a critical ethnographic account, two teacher educator/researchers retell their understanding of the one-month experience as middle school classroom teachers in an allocated school. The paper examines the consequences of what counts as professional knowledge in the eyes of pre-service and beginning teachers and the implications of the encounter for the role of teacher educators in preservice preparation. The purpose of the research is to consider the well-researched issue of the rejection of academic training (to greater or lesser extents) that is experienced by very many preservice and beginning teachers at some stage after experience in schools. As an exemplary colleague teacher said to us as we negotiated our participation in the school: "I do lots of things that the University would not approve of". Our argument is that teacher education needs the kind of participatory inquiry represented by the undertaking and methodology of this project. The paper is the 'primary record' (Carspecken 1996) of the research and works to open the next phase, the dialogical stage of the research process.

Introduction

The paper examines the consequences of what counts as professional knowledge in the eyes of pre-service and beginning teachers and the implications of the encounter for the role of teacher educators in pre-service preparation. Reporting on the take-up by beginning teachers of values and practices advocated in pre-service education the purpose of the research was to consider the well-researched issue of the rejection of academic training (to greater or lesser extents) that is experienced by very many pre-service and beginning teachers at some stage after experience in schools. As an exemplary colleague teacher said to us as we negotiated our participation in the school: "I do lots of things that the University would not approve of". The research was completed as part of the everyday work of two teacher educators alongside their preservice teachers and recent graduates. The access into the school context was provided by the state Department of Education and the generosity of a local high school and their staff, particularly teachers working in the middle years section of the school. We offer this account of the research not as the experts but as the narrators engaged in a critical ethnographic reading of one context over a one-month period of time. Our aim is to open further questions about the content and pedagogical practices of preservice teacher education, particularly preparing teachers for the middle years of schooling.

The paper has three threads. The first is a descriptive account of the research setting. Next, a brief overview of the background to the research problem, the middle years of schooling and the links between teacher education and middle years classroom practice is outlined. The third thread is the methodological account of the research and our interpretations to date. Our experience in this project, while distinct from other projects we have recently undertaken, continues to add to our understanding of the reform of teacher education. The methodological frame originates from the critical ethnographic project, working through a postmodernist sensibility. This project proved to be a significant rupture to our thinking and confronted us with the inertia of teacher education practices. We argue that teacher education is troubled by theory/practice borders, recognises the importance of genuine

Paper Presented at the AARE Annual Conference, Brisbane, 2002
Australian Association for Research in Education

partnerships, yet understands little of the culture that impacts on the identity of preservice teachers and how they interpret their role in the school reform agenda. We offer our method not as 'super heroes' of teacher education but as a way to capture the fallible human perspective that frames an 'epistemology of uncertainty' (Barone 2001), bringing to the fore the 'identity claims' as a form of argument (MacLure 1993), to understand the beginnings of a career as a teacher and the role of the teacher educator in supporting preservice teachers in their entry to the profession during times of shifts and uncertainties for all stakeholders.

The research setting

Demographics

The research was conducted in a Tasmanian state high school in August 2001. The school enrols students from Grades 7 to10 and has a grade seven and eight program loosely configured as a middle school program. The school is situated in an urban area that according to the 2001 census has a population age of 42,518 persons, with 6,657 being aged 65 years and over. Australian born citizens dominate the population, less than 1 percent speaks percent a language other than English. The unemployment rate for the area was approximately 12%. In 1996 the area had a home ownership of 65.5%, with the average family income of $31,000. The predominant category of employment was intermediate clerical, sales and service workers, with skilled vocational qualifications being the predominant form of post-school educational qualifications reported. The school has undergone a significant population decline in recent years. The total enrolment is now less than 250 students from a school that a decade ago enrolled approximately 900 students. Table 1 documents the enrolment decline over the past ten years.

FTE by Grade	1992	2002
Grade 7	189	60
Grade 8	177	59.4
Grade 9	182	64
Grade10	164	54
Total	906	237.4

Table 1 Fulltime equivalent enrolment by grade Glen High School 1992-2001

Within the school community the decreasing enrolment is attributed to a general decline in the school age population, but also the drift to two state government single sex schools easily accessed in the local district. The school is situated in large open green spaces adjacent to a main suburban arterial link. Choosing another school does not place large travelling demands upon students in the area, as other preferred schools are just fifteen minutes away from the zoned school. The school was selected after permission was obtained from the University and Department of Education ethics committees. The preservice teacher who acted as a key informant in the study was not being assessed by either of the teacher educators. The school was one of a number of schools we had considered, but was our first preference as the school had been reported and continues to be reported by our preservice students as being a 'hard to teach' environment due to the

Paper Presented at the AARE Annual Conference, Brisbane, 2002
Australian Association for Research in Education

challenges of student behaviour that impact on the preservice teachers judgement of their university course experience.

Focussing on the middle school years

In 1999, our 2-year graduate preservice program, the Bachelor of Teaching, introduced a middle years program strand. The current research focus on the middle years of schooling was motivated by our interest as teacher educators in the field of middle school, although we were also was concerned with the experience of the preservice teacher as they negotiated their entry into the profession and their understandings of the non-participation of learning that is experienced in school settings. The middle years of schooling normatively encompass the period between Grades 5-9, or the age of early adolescence (years 11-14). Identified over twenty years ago, the educational distinctiveness of this period was seen to be the juncture of adolescence and the transition from the integrative structures of primary schooling to the individualised learning of the secondary school. Some of the more longstanding and unresolved problems of education reform are associated with provision for students in early adolescence (Hill & Russell 1999).

The major institutional responses to the needs of the students in these middle years have been the development of middle schools. As a new sector between the middle primary and upper secondary school, the emphasis in middle schooling is on significant curriculum reform and the development of transformed pedagogical relations. However despite the efforts of the past two decades, the extent of non-participation of students in the curriculum generally and in their middle years, particularly those of Grades 7-8 remains low. The findings of the Victorian Quality Schools Project 1992-1995 (VQSP), a major longitudinal study of 90 schools, were that there was virtually no growth in the middle years in reading, writing, speaking and listening. In relation to reading, progress was revealed to plateau in Years 5 to 8 for most students, whilst for the lowest 25 percent there is an actual decline in achievement, particularly in the first year of the high school (Hill & Rowe 1996).

In the past two decades of Australian educational research, different theoretical traditions and interests within education have fixed on varying emphases in investigating and explaining non-participation. Since the early nineties, the likely contributors to the widening achievement gap between students identified in the literature range from the societal factors of post-industrialism and the demands of the information economy (Kenway 1992, Kenway & Epstein 1996), to teacher performance (Hill et al. 1996), and outcomes-based assessment and standardised benchmark testing of both students and schools (Lingard 1997). Very recently there has been some convergence on institutional factors. Two major Australian systems reviews, the National Middle School Project (Department of Employment Education and Youth Affairs, 1997) and the School Reform Longitudinal Study (Education Queensland, 1999) point to the need for the development of some "strategic intentions" for schools and systems to deal effectively with problems in the middle school years. At the centre of these strategic intentions are three areas:

- *Securing the curriculum essentials:* being explicit about the aims of education in the middle years, identifying core knowledge that all students need to acquire, making provision for in-depth learning, and a curriculum for thinking and autonomous learning.
- *Managing the transition* from the experience of a single classroom teacher in the primary school to that of the multiple, subject-based encounters of the secondary school. This transition includes meeting the challenge of relating a subject-based curriculum to students' interests and situations, failure to do so resulting in the adolescent experience summed up in the comment: 'school is boring'.
- *Changes to current patterns of pre-service training* and systems of support for schools. Tooling up for school reform will require the development of highly trained professionals

Paper Presented at the AARE Annual Conference, Brisbane, 2002
Australian Association for Research in Education

whose particular focus and expertise is the education of young adolescents (Hill and Russell 1996).

Systems in Australia are currently responding to these identifications. Major curricular reforms for the middle years such as the New Basics program initiated in Queensland are under development (Education Queensland 2000). In Tasmania the Department of Education has commenced a planned five-year review of curriculum built around the Essential Learnings Framework (Department of Education 2002).

Links between teacher education and middle years classroom practice

Teacher education is being revisited in Australia and internationally at a time when radical changes are occurring in the nature of school and university-based education. The range of reports and new bodies relating to teacher education include the Victorian Institute of Teaching, the Review of Post Compulsory Education and Training (Victoria), the Connors Public Education Inquiry (Victoria), the Ramsay Review of Teacher Education in NSW and internationally the McCrone Report (May 2000) in Scotland.

Reporting from the University of Sydney symposium 'Repositioning Teacher education' (part of the Ramsey review process for teacher education in New South Wales), Sherrington (2000) states that for a variety of reasons teacher education should seriously question the traditional roles and responsibilities of teachers, schools, academics and universities. He reports the symposium consensus that the difficulties of current practice are in part due to the institutional location of teacher education programs, resulting in difficulties that afflict both University-school partnerships and the more recent UK model of predominantly school-based teacher preparation. Where University-school partnerships are concerned, the difficulties concern conflicts between policy and practice, theory and practice and conflicts for teachers and academics in their attempt to meet the demands for their respective institutional contexts. Further, Sherrington (2000) reports the alternative UK experience of eighty percent of preparation time in schools as not successful. Rather, the UK Office for Standards in Education have shown that 'it is those programs which include close authentic collaboration between schools and universities that have been successful, in contrast to those that have been purely school-based' (p.4). In addition, in a review of the literature concerning school-university links, Smedley (2001) notes that the widespread call for partnership innovations was not unproblematic in that there are definite barriers to the development and maintenance of these links, and that although such partnerships are 'desirable, achievable and sustainable' (p.203), they are also threatened by a multitude of factors, including institutional inertia, issues of low status for both teacher education and field work, time pressures on both university and school staff, cultural differences between schools and university, along with various financial and political constraints.

This call for partnership also faces the problem that few examples exist of collaborative academic-teacher investigation of teacher preparation, on the one hand, or, on the other, research-based approaches to school reform that do not derive from the academy. These twin problems are exacerbated in the sector of middle schooling. Few, if any, accounts exist of examples of research that link the multiple dimensions of non-participation in the middle school curriculum and the experience of teacher education lecturers and students. School-based improvement of practice is still broadly understood as the introduction of new programs aimed at enhancing one or more of the school's operation while keeping other aspects constant. The American Institute for Research has undertaken an evaluation of 24 school improvement designs, although none of these 24 programs specifically target the middle years. Hill & Russell (1999) in response to the analysis of these American efforts assert the need for work to be conducted that specifically addresses the issue of a school-wide approach to the reform of the middle years. Jackson & Davis (2000, p. 96) make the

Paper Presented at the AARE Annual Conference, Brisbane, 2002
Australian Association for Research in Education

argument that it is programs that are geared towards specialised preparation of middle grades educators that will produce expert teachers who are best qualified to teach young adolescents. Significantly they note the importance of the transition period from preservice preparation to full-time teaching responsibilities. They comment on the daunting challenge faced in the first teaching appointment, particularly in respect to classroom management and curriculum planning. Left unsupported beginning teachers adopt practices contrary both to their educational philosophy and to the instructional strategies learned in preservice education (Jackson & Davis 2000, p. 105).

The Beginning Teacher and Teacher Educators

The transition to the workforce from pre-service teaching is fraught with difficulties. Research indicates that beginning teachers are generally not prepared for the workload encountered in the school, nor the complexities of the interpersonal relationships they must navigate (Board of Teacher Registration, 1991, in Dowding, 1998; Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Moon, 1998). At the classroom level, beginning teachers often struggle with classroom management, with meeting the individual needs of students, and with the management of curriculum and resources. In a review of the research on learning to teach by Wideen, Mayer-Smith and Moon in 1998, the authors report studies that indicate that beginning teachers often feel they are poorly prepared for their work in schools, and suggest that the notion that practicum serves to provide a bridge across the theory-practice divide must be questioned. The authors point to the tensions between the aims of pre-service teachers and teacher educators in their attempts to bridge the gulf between school and university, suggesting that these tensions are heightened by failed expectations on both sides. Teacher educators' expectations of the practicum as an opportunity for experimentation, risk taking and reflection are often not realised, while the pre-service teachers often view their practicum as a time for gaining experience and practice, and a time that will form the basis of future hiring decisions, a view which emphasises the need for a good grade. In relation to the role of research to further our understandings, they suggest an ecological approach to research, using a 'more eclectic methodology where efforts were made to bridge programs of research; linking research to, and ferreting out, meaning as it relates to the social and cultural conditions where beginning teachers teach' (p.168)

Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) acknowledged the tension between university based learning and school-based learning suggesting that the effects of university-based teacher education was 'washed out' by the process of socialisation of pre-service or beginning teachers into the teaching profession. Consistent with this theory, Kane (1994), who used a longitudinal study of 2 beginning teachers to investigate survival at the expense of intelligent action, suggested that the evolution of a pre-service teacher's propositional knowledge into procedural knowledge was hampered by a teacher education system that allows such knowledge to be 'encountered independent of it's system of use'. She goes on to ask the question 'why do people who have successfully completed a teacher education program 'apparently by-pass their pedagogical knowledge for less valid and less effective alternatives'? Kane concludes that the beginning teachers remain reliant on modelling the practices of those they regard as more knowledgeable, which suggests that if pre-service teachers experience difficulties implementing the theory based strategies advocated at the university, they return to or adopt the strategies that they have seen successfully used by those they regard as more able.

In the Australian literature, Loughran (1994, 1996) argues that the effect is rather one of the repression of ideas from teacher education during the initial demands of teaching. He suggests that in later years there is a subconscious assimilation of university learning such

Paper Presented at the AARE Annual Conference, Brisbane, 2002
Australian Association for Research in Education

that it underpins their practice, but is perhaps not easily recognisable as originating from their pre-service training. Loughran, Brown and Doecke (2001) explored the transition from pre-service teaching to 1st year teaching, and suggest that the 1st year teachers' memories of their preparatory course were not integrated, but rather were snapshots of the highs or lows. Over time, these snapshots may become the dominant view of the course, becoming consistent with the view often held by experienced teachers of the preparatory course as being a waste of time. Because of the structure of teacher education programs, learning to teach sometimes requires an understanding of experience prior to the experience itself, a situation that compels Loughran, Brown and Doecke to remind teacher educators that:

An ever-present realisation for teacher educators needs to be that 'telling does not lead to learning', therefore teacher preparation programs (and their teacher educators) need to create episodes whereby the theory being espoused can be portrayed in realistic and memorable ways (pp.19-20).

Such memorable, or snapshot, episodes would provide the groundwork for both future understanding, and for changes in understanding as a result of extended teaching experience.

Sumison (1998) suggests that the intensity of the emotional experience of learning to teach, at least initially, contributes to the attrition from pre-service programs. Teacher educators can alleviate some of the distress experienced by pre-service teachers by developing an understanding of their emotional frames of reference and their epistemological perspectives.

The Research

Our research located in a critical ethnographic methodology sought to identify issues significant for the development of teacher education programs. We were working to reengage with the classroom experientially as well as to confront our understanding and deficits in our own work and course development. Our program commenced in 1997 and as one of the early two-year postgraduate programs developed in Australia we knew first hand the limitations of our program and elsewhere have written an account of the difficulties of implementing other ways of working when resourcing is small and the operational demands privileged. Our data production derived from an authentic and rich perspective is informed by a longstanding knowledge of Tasmanian government education. One of the investigators had taught in neighbouring schools a decade earlier and had prior knowledge of the demographic and social issues that confronted teachers in this context. Our focus was around the questions *what* to teach, and *how* to teach a pre-service teacher education program broadly, but in particular we were wanting to make reference to the middle years of schooling and the Tasmanian context where the local Department of Education was in the first year of a community based curriculum consultation process.

In order to do this, we entered the school as one of our preservice teachers would join a school for the practicum, each of us taking responsibility for teaching a Grade 7 class in a school that was beginning to implement a middle school program. We wanted to explore how their training as pre-service teachers might be reinforcing or perpetuating practices that served to alienate the very students the pre-service teachers were trying to engage. The teaching time was restricted to the 'core' periods of English, SOSE and Maths, due to the pressure of our university commitments. Our teaching load was however that of a practicum period of a .8 teaching load. We had wanted a nine-week period in the school as our internship, but instead we had to opt for a shorter four-week period as the research funds granted were cut in half. Interestingly it was the teaching relief that was reduced from our budget. It may seem trivial to refer to the funding allocation, but is one that we will return to in the discussion of the research and future projects.

Paper Presented at the AARE Annual Conference, Brisbane, 2002
Australian Association for Research in Education

At the end of each teaching session at the school, a research assistant debriefed us and our narratives were recorded and transcribed. This interview data formed the first layer of the research narrative describing our experiences in the culture of an emerging middle school. As teacher/researchers we also had our field notes, lesson planning documentation and samples of student work. Each of us developed a portfolio of work with our Grade 7 students. The portfolios were developed around the rich task we developed as classroom teachers with our two classes of Grade 7 students. One class also developed a visual narrative of school life as understood by them. The 39 digitised images were entered into a PowerPoint presentation. Other narrative accounts obtained through recorded semi-structured interviews, were transcribed and entered into Nvivo. These were contributed by a preservice intern, a recent graduate of our program, a teacher with nine years experience, (a graduate of our institution) a support teacher and the school principal. Transcribed interviews were offered to the key informants for verification. One participant elected not to have the interview recorded, but instead gave permission for the research assistant to record field notes.

The transcript narratives were then bound into a single volume for each teacher/researcher to analyse whilst the research assistant produced the Nvivo conceptual mapping of the data. The Nvivo program is highly suitable for small scale projects such as ours which produced data from semi structured interviews, school documents, newsletters, policy statements, student work samples and visual imagery. The research assistant coded segments of text, recalled these segments later to analyse specific instances of situations, as well as to cross reference data from one coded segment to another. Data was left in single node form, leaving the data readily available for further questions. These nodes are reflected back not as categories for reduction but as ways to interrogate how each of us makes sense of our situation, our views and actions and our particular stance. This method matched the phased nature of our encounters with the data. Times for carrying out the project are defined through our institutional contexts. Research waits until teaching is finished and school personnel also are subject to organisational demands and cycles (e.g. the school principal has been on long service leave during the first school term of 2002).

The two teacher/researchers then examined the research assistants coding and interpretation and re read this against their interpretations. The analysis to date is our first analysis of the transcribed narratives of the two teacher educators, the preservice intern, the recent graduate, the experienced teacher, the support teacher, the school principal and the visual imagery produced by one grade seven class. At the time of writing we have not yet included the dimensions from the student work samples. These data we believe will be particularly useful in exemplifying the pedagogical dimension of the research. This paper is the first formal exchange between the researchers and the research participants and is illustrative of a methodological pathway that is required in the habit of collaborative research practice that is committed to change processes.

Our research adopts a 'biographical attitude... [that borrows] from feminist praxis and other critical /emancipatory approaches...as oppositional strategies for combating the punitive abstractions and reductions of dominant discourses' (MacLure 1993, p. 312). Narrative, be it visual, auditory or textual reveals the particular experiences of those in social situations, experiences that cannot be shared by those situated differently, but which they must understand in order to do justice to others ... 'Narratives thus exhibits the situated knowledges available of the collective from each perspective, and the combination of narratives from different perspectives produces the collective social wisdom not available from any one position' (Young 1995, pp.147-8). Our efforts, despite the limitations of a compromised time frame are intended to live out and signal the importance of the research tensions acknowledged and urged by Widen, Smith & Moon (1998). In their review and critique of 93 empirical studies on learning to teach they urge research in teacher education

Paper Presented at the AARE Annual Conference, Brisbane, 2002
Australian Association for Research in Education

to be characterised by researchers who 'reflect on their research and openly comment on the implications and possible conflicts created by instructors and researchers...[and] applaud these researchers for explicitly acknowledging the dilemmas that face those who do research with the subjects they teach ' (p.163). Each of us would concur that this was probably the most professionally rich experience of our ten years in teacher education.

Data Analysis

How then did our preservice and recent teachers represent their recent training and experience of beginning teaching? From their account and the intermingling of how have we made sense of the experience from the intersection with everyday practice, what is our reading of *what* to teach, and *how* to teach a pre-service teacher education program in the context of developing a middle years of schooling strand and local curriculum reform. In unfolding our analysis the juxtaposition of the voices of our informants and ourselves are threaded together laying open the practical and theoretical, the oppositional justifications and unheroic voice of our teaching and learning constructions. We found general trends, the majority echoing our worst held fears, that is how readily the teacher educator is disregarded and how assimilationist notions of becoming a teacher are subsumed by technicist and conformist commands. The actions of our beginning teacher and pre-service teacher are embedded in survival and we as teacher educators are attempting to defend a curriculum view that was counter to the view of the school. The complexities of the concepts are indicated in the threads of the 'data stories' (Lather & Smithies 1997, p.34) that we have entered below. What also emerges is the unfolding of career trajectories that delineate the characters of the emerging and experienced professionals and those of the beginning teachers as not surprisingly being located in very different spaces. Those of us with more than twenty years of teaching offer professional identities that are reflective, self-actualising and work as extended professionals. Our novice teachers and the teacher of eight years experience are consumed in occupational unease, still attempting to make sense of themselves and aspiring for an essential view of being and becoming a teacher, despite the emphasis we know they have had in their preservice program on a view that invites them to be reflective, risk takers and inquirers into their practice.

The complexities of a career trajectory

Beginning and preservice teachers

For Kelsie, the preservice teacher, her university training fell short of her expectations. " And I think as a beginning teacher, that we haven't been taught enough about strategies for making students accountable for their learning...like when we come back from prac, people have said I haven't been sure how to deal with this situation, or what do you do if a kid is coming straight for you, and the lecturers have kind of piped up and said "Oh, that's easy, you just do this", or "you do that", or "Oh yes that's happened to me and I did this and it was very successful." But I think that each situation is completely different and there's a lot of variables in play. Like for me, how do you, what do you do when you've got Grade 8 boys, big Grade 8 boys, that are really physical in the classroom, that can be quite threatening, and you're a short female teacher" [ref 33]

Sue, who finished her graduate preservice preparation in 1998, recounts her desire for more behaviour management in the course. " I finished in '98, so I haven't been out that long at all, and I started at Berry High School, and just thought 'Oh my God', this was tough. I mean I am a pretty strong person. I've got two brothers, I've been brought up very early to be outspoken and strong and that whole thing. I know a lot of student teachers out there who've ended up in tears and all that kind of thing, and I've thought 'No, not going to ...'Behaviour management is something I feel quite comfortable with; and I'm not threatened by kids at all,

Paper Presented at the AARE Annual Conference, Brisbane, 2002
Australian Association for Research in Education

but I think it does need a lot more looking at in the course. I don't think I was prepared through the course to go out and deal with some of those issues."

Teacher educators

For Mary as a teacher educator who had not previously taught a Grade 7 class the assault in relationship to classroom and the dictum of the technical curriculum she found herself working against brought a sense of helplessness, but resolve to still maintain her approach to the teaching of the Studies of Society and Environment that is based around critical action. Musing on the divide between the content she aspired to and the classroom reality in which she was embedded where the grade 7 students were very resistive to the program she devised, she said " ...but the alternatives are not very viable, I mean I am hardly going to change what I teach my preservice teachers" [ref237]

In my account (Julianne) I was reminded of the existential issues of classroom management. This is one of the areas that I had taught in the preservice program. It is one of the areas that I staked my reputation as a practitioner on before entering the academy. "The big issue that I think we've run into [is] being unable to work out the school culture in terms of the response to the high level kinds of behaviours, and the lack of structures within the Grade 7 [area]. It's not clear, it's not transparent...as we have started to get hold of some of the implicit understandings, which is exactly what one of our students would be faced [with], there's been a bit more clarity from the point of view of the kids get to know you better, to start to trust you more.' [ref324, 325]

Early career expert teacher

Jean the teacher, (a graduate of our institution nine years ago elected not to be audio taped and asked that the research assistant transcribe her notes), saw the non-participation in the middle years as being embedded in "the level of work expected by the teacher in some cases it is too high for the student's current skill level. Those unrealistic expectations come from teacher training. Also class sizes are too big to permit quick response times. With lessons only 40 minutes long, and class sizes of 30 plus, students may have to wait a whole lesson for a response from the teacher - too slow". [ref 8]

Experienced and expert teachers

Hilda, an experienced school and education administrator, in her first year at the research site as principal, commented on the difficulties the students faced in engagement with learning. "...it is very difficult to engage them, and keep them engaged on any particularly task. No matter how interesting you might think the task is, their attention span is really really low, so their time on task is really, really low and if I could change anything it would be to increase the work ethic of those people, because if they want to go out into the workforce, they don't know what it's like to work for an hour... And you can't make them either." [ref HG 95]

Janita, a teacher of twenty five years experience in a number of settings, the support teacher who assisted with literacy and numeracy through a pull out model, reflected back on the organisational structure of the middle school setting developed for this school year. "I think one thing that concerned me was that while we were aiming for continuity with our students in Grade 7 area, that in fact there ended up being much more disruption for them during the year than we actually felt desirable, and I think that if at all possible some of that could be avoided next year...and here again I'm just talking about the Grade 7s." [ref 104]

Conclusion

Australian Association for Research in Education
Paper Presented at the AARE Annual Conference, Brisbane, 2002

As our first interpretation of the data produced in this project, our account is available for further interrogation and analysis with our informants. Our critical ethnographic project designed through a method reported by Carspecken (1996) will be reread again. The method invites the researcher to move from monological to dialogical understandings. The writing of this paper has sought to unfold the first phases of the method heading towards our reconstructive analysis that will be exchanged with our informants. Popkewitz and Brennan (1997, p.293) remind us that '...statements and words are not signs or signifiers that refer to fixed things but social practices that generate action and participation'.

At this point in the analysis we have reflected back to the framework of our graduate preservice program. Since the mid 1990s like most teacher education programs in Australia we assessed and aligned our teaching against the National Competency Framework for Beginning Teachers (NCFBT 1996). By framing preservice learning in this way we have technicised our view of beginning to teach, asking our students to work deductively rather than inductively. What we are conveying to our preservice teachers is a smoothed over narrative of beginning teaching. The flawless narrative without pedagogical variability sees what I have not been 'told' as a deficit in the teacher education program, rather than an aspiration to monitor the development of one's teacherhood. We have presented learning to teach as a logical project that is read by a tick a box, rather than ensuring we have embedded competence in the words of Hill and Russell (1996) in reference to the middle years of schooling, 'in core knowledge that all students need to acquire, making provision for in-depth learning, and a curriculum for thinking and autonomous learning'. Yes, we had introduced a portfolio as a significant assessment task over the two years of the program, but had this document fully lived its presence with our students, over time, supported by all elements of the program including our school based assessors?

Given the technicised construction of learning to teach has persisted over the past decade perhaps it is not surprising that we continue to have reported early conceptions of beginning to teach as dogged by survival at the expense of intelligent action (Kane, 1994). Further we acknowledge how significant it is for teacher educators to simultaneously map the culture of our own, our preservice teachers' and beginning teachers' identities - the simultaneous exploration and exposition of the values that guide our action and deeds. The kind of participatory inquiry proposed in our study works to foster understanding of the link between identity, agency and practice elaborating the 'culturally available iconographies of teacherhood' (MacLure 1993, p. 320). Locating the cultural and occupational values in this project suggests that *what* to teach and *how* to teach a preservice program, aiming to target the middle years of schooling needs more of what we have unfolded. The project is rendered more difficult if our research granters continually reduce the time for our release from face to face teaching and administrative demands.

Paper Presented at the AARE Annual Conference, Brisbane, 2002
Australian Association for Research in Education

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