A NEW STORY FOR QUALITY TEACHING AND TEACHER LEARNING: TALKING ACROSS CONCEPTUAL AND CONTEXTUAL BOUNDARIES

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Abstract
Quality teaching and teacher learning are centre stage on the current Australian schooling agenda. In the mix is a preoccupation with issues of professional standards and accountability, although there is some recognition of new times ushered in by rapidly changing economic, social and cultural conditions. Conversations in policy documents that champion these matters are informed by various discourses of human, social and cultural capital. However proposals to address these issues require that attention also be paid to the twin realities of power/knowledge positions and stances that enable practitioners to address future challenges. In short, boundary crossing approaches that link conceptual and contextual fields are required to assist learners to ask questions of themselves and others in order to build capacities to deal with new futures. Learners positioned in this way build capacities to shape new narratives that promote the development of new citizens and new social fields.

Introduction
In this paper some recent developments and proposals for quality teaching learning and leadership are discussed and an interruptive reading of key discourses informing conversations in new times is undertaken. The intention is to explicate the twin reality of power/knowledge and its underlying stances for innovation and equity by developing a new language that makes it possible for people to work together across conceptual and contextual knowledge boundaries.

A preliminary reading of ‘quality learning and teaching’
Issues of quality learning and teaching have been on the education agenda for some considerable time as indicated by ‘twenty previous reviews of teacher education of national significance over the same number of years’ (Ramsey, 2000, p.1). Recently, Dyson conducted ‘a review of these reviews’ and came to the conclusion that ‘teacher education has been reported on and examined almost beyond belief or reason’ (2003a, p.1).

Quality learning and teaching issues are related to both demonstrable needs and felt needs. Some are of longstanding concern while others have become more acute in recent times. Beliefs about quality teaching and learning are encapsulated in four key assertions that permit us to characterise the best and worst aspects of argument about these issues. The first suggests that ‘teacher professional development is not addressing current and future issues of teaching and learning’. At best such claims support calls for professional development to be done with, for and by teachers (i.e. it is collaborative, generative, and cognisant of broader agendas). At worst they reinforce beliefs that professional development is something that should be done to and on teachers. A second assertion is concerned that ‘some student outcomes are not as good as we would like’. At best such a claim rests on beliefs that the very best teachers are vital, in interaction with social, material and cultural contexts. At worst, good teachers are seen as ‘the answer’ or the one best way to approach to issues of quality (i.e. a single issue solution). The third assertion is that ‘we have a workforce problem: it’s likely we’ll run out of teachers’. At best such claims are concerned with reconceptualising teaching and repositioning teachers as knowledge producers not just knowledge recipients. At worst, they promote the rebadging of teaching to make it a high status job. The fourth key assertion is that ‘what we are teaching students might not be what they need for the future’. At worst, ‘solutions’ emphasise material trappings of the future (i.e. technology as the sole solution to human challenges). At best, such claims are concerned with confronting real world problems through creative/innovative relationships (i.e. social, conceptual, material etc).

Some developments and proposals for innovation in quality teacher learning
The formulation and realisation of innovative proposals and developments in quality teacher learning and leadership as a profession to meet new challenges in new times are now underway. Questions are being asked and varying proposals put forward in response. International perspectives on quality teacher learning have been proposed by Delors (1996) and various scenarios concerning the nature of schooling for the future have been examined by Istance (2001). In New Zealand a nation-wide review of education has been undertaken (Harrison, 2003). In Australia, a national review of innovative teacher learning has recently been completed (Kwong Lee Dow, 2003). This followed two Senate Committee Reports by Crowley (1998 and 1999). There are also many innovative proposals and initiatives being developed in Australian states in regard to quality. Education Queensland conducted a system-wide review that led to a futures strategy to
address quality teacher learning that has been translated across the system as a whole (1999). A state review into quality matters has occurred in New South Wales (Ramsey, 2000) and an Inquiry into Public Education (Vinson, 2003) and they have both recommended that a New South Wales Teachers Institute be established to improve the standing of the profession. In South Australia a new framework for education focussing on quality issues has been developed (Department of Education and Training, 2000). Foster (2002) describes an innovative project in South Australia that is called Learning to Learn. Victoria is one state that has already established an Institute of Teachers (VIT) to develop professional standards and is currently conducting an Inquiry into Pre-service Education (2004). A seminar focussing on economics and school quality was organised at Melbourne University in late August 2004. Victoria has also developed a Blueprint for Education to address quality teacher learning that originated from the work of four groups who addressed issues of Excellence and Innovation, School Improvement, Curriculum in Government Schools and Teacher Learning (Department of Education, 2003). Out of this review a program of Essential Learnings has been developed for consultation (Russell, 2004, pp.6-7). Tasmania (Forrest, 2004) and the Northern Territory are also in the process of developing initiatives to address quality learning.

New times: why quality teacher learning matters
The future is already with us in education (Luke, Luke and Mayer, 2000, pp.5-11), while many of our systems, schools and meritocratic teaching practices retain the forms that were created in and for different social conditions. New constraints upon education and teaching in diverse local contexts have emerged, comprised of the following:

- ‘Technologies and economies that have put up for grabs questions about the consequences of education and about emergent forms of capital
- Hybrid cultures, blended populations and constructed geographies that fall outside traditional and normative definitions of ‘community’, ‘the student’, ‘family’, ‘home background’ and so forth
- A general crisis around what might count as educational knowledge that is as profound as any since Sputnik
- Powerful and variable neo-liberal redefinitions of state interventions, accountabilities and responsibilities that are leading to privatisation and marketisation of all forms of education including teacher education’ (Luke et al, 2000, p.7).

Anxiety about teacher learning abounds and there is concern about issues that are phrased in terms of binary logic such as ‘teacher supply versus demand, theory versus practice, profession versus craft, teacher education versus teacher training’ (Dyson, 2003a, p.1). Teachers are faced with ‘institutional threats and intergenerational transition’ and new resources are required to assist them to become ‘knowledge workers’ (Luke et al, 2000, p.10) in information-based economies. Increasingly there is a focus on singular solutions to problems caused by complex societal changes. Most proposals for innovation are primarily concerned with issues relating to the development of professional standards. They endorse solutions that are minimalist, atomised and reductive involving the development of performance standards and competency scales for individual teachers. Questions of risk mount in place of the building of trust and reciprocity.

A national proposal to address issues of quality teacher learning
The recent National Review of Teaching and Teacher Education (2003, p.65) for the Australian Government’s Backing Australia’s Ability program was concerned with advancing innovation, science, technology and mathematics in the 21st century. Some current initiatives across Australia and a number of factors that needed to be addressed in relation to quality teacher learning and leadership were outlined. Examples of some of the data tables from the report concerning issues of supply and demand related to characteristics of the teacher workforce such as age and gender, gender, initial qualifications and salaries are included below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 25 years</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34 years</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44 years</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54 years</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 years or older</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Two: Percentage distributions showing gender of teachers for 1963, 1979, 1989 and 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1963</th>
<th>1979</th>
<th>1989</th>
<th>1999</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table Three: Percentage distributions showing initial qualifications of teachers for 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Early childhood</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Special education</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>79.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma or three year degree</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree (four year)</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree and diploma</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double degree</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table Four: Estimated full-time average weekly ordinary time earnings ($) for educational professionals for 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary school teachers</td>
<td>969</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school teachers</td>
<td>1,038</td>
<td>878</td>
<td>956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education teachers</td>
<td>971</td>
<td>816</td>
<td>850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University lecturers and tutors</td>
<td>1,179</td>
<td>717</td>
<td>1,059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational education teachers</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>798</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001


Some of the issues of quality teacher learning in the reports above were canvassed by the Australian Association for Educational Research (2003). In AARE’s response, concerns were expressed about the limited research basis of suggestions for reform, conceptual clarity (and thus practical effectiveness), the nature of the teaching profession and its work, and teacher education proposals being developed at the national level. A view was put forward that there appeared to be a conflation of the idea of ‘teacher quality’ with the idea of ‘quality of teaching’ (AARE, 2003, p.5) in current suggestions for innovation and that emphasis was being placed on ‘a set of standards concerned with the characteristics of individual teachers [that] does not represent the nature or scope of the work of the teaching profession as such’(AARE, 2003, p.5).

Teacher learning discourses

While there is agreement that innovation is key to quality teacher learning, there appear to be parallel discourses of ‘human capital’ and ‘social and cultural capital’ informing current conversations. ‘Human capital’ discourses of quality teaching are characterised by a language of efficiency and effectiveness such as ‘best-practice’, ‘value added’, ‘just in time’, ‘continuous improvement’, ‘performance’, ‘competence’, ‘core and periphery’, ‘client’, ‘consumer’ and ‘manager’. Such terminology is drawn from and marshalled in the interest of the marketisation of education in a fast-paced, technological, capitalist economy and globalised society. Those who use this discourse seek to improve the quality of teacher learning through developments and proposals that are informed by behaviorist and other instrumentalist forms of psychology, functionalist sociology and business and management theory. Their primary concern is with notions that focus on developing the ability of competitive individuals (i.e. teachers, principals and leaders) and the procurement of what is called the ‘private’ good. It is a view that implies a direct and singular connection between quality teaching learning, student achievement and labour market outcomes. This is clearly evident in the Ramsey Report:

Quality teachers must be an absolute priority for governments, employers and universities. The research of Darling-Hammond and others referred to earlier in this Report, directly linking teacher
quality to student outcomes, heightens the responsibility which each shares in this regard. (Ramsey, 2000, p.189).

Discourses of ‘social and cultural capital’ are characterised by issues of ‘difference’, ‘equity’ and ‘social justice’ and have as their main purpose the preparation of teachers to meet the intellectual challenges of changes that are emerging in no-borders, knowledge-based, globalised societies. Those taking such stances seek to improve the quality of teacher learning through developments and proposals that are informed by inclusiveness. Ideas are expressed in the language of ‘engagement’. Their primary concern is with notions of co-operation and shared learning involving both rights and responsibilities and what is called the ‘public’ good. It is a view that implies a complex, indirect relationship between quality teacher learning, student achievement and labour market outcomes but within which the teacher is prominently located.

Proposals to address contemporary problems in quality teacher learning identified in the reports appear to take stances that lead them to focus on only one side of the issue while others accept that there are twin realities involved. This leads to differentiated stances of power/knowledge underlying initiatives to address emerging and future needs in quality teacher learning that have been identified as disabling and enabling (Gale & Densmore, 2003, pp. 64-68).

Stances taken on quality teacher learning that are limited to ‘human capital’ discourses have serious consequences that ‘reduce’, ‘homogenise’ and ‘divide’. Those taking such stances undermine their own intentions and this has the effect of separating conceptual and contextual fields of knowledge so that teacher educators, teachers, students and their communities are positioned in ways that lessen their participation in the changes sought and reduce creativity and lower morale.

On another level, enabling stances on quality teacher learning informed by ‘human capital’ discourse as well as ‘social and cultural capital’ discourse are also concerned with ‘negotiation’, ‘bridging’ and ‘engagement’. In contrast to those who are reliant solely on a ‘human capital’ stance, those with an enabling stance position teachers, students and their communities as central to the process of change and innovation and are concerned with approaches involving synchronicity.

Proposals concerned with innovation that are solely informed by ‘human capital’ discourses of quality teacher learning are reliant on the development of the capacity and performance of individual teachers to meet new and complex global challenges now facing them. Luke, Luke and Mayer (2000, pp.5-11) consider that over reliance on ‘human capital’ discourse leads to a focus that emphasises the individualistic ideal of a ‘good’ teacher like that put forward by Rowe (2003). Such views prevent society from developing and resourcing new and creative processes that are required. Instead, enabling stances that support boundary crossing approaches to knowledge and knowledge production are needed. These seek to link relationships within and between elements, forms and fields of knowledge in new ways to assist learners to ask questions of themselves and others in order to develop new narratives.

Some Australian quality teacher learning initiatives in government school systems are developing enabling stances that allow them to translate innovations across their systems as a whole in ways that demonstrate their concern not only with quality but also with inequality. Innovation processes in Queensland, for example, have developed boundary crossing approaches to elements, forms and fields of knowledge (Luke, 1999, p.7-8).

**Authoring new narratives of ‘quality teacher learning’**

New approaches to quality teacher learning are based on views of knowledge that transgress traditional contextual and conceptual boundaries. In the main, traditional views have reinforced reductive skills-based approaches and approaches that promote the development of bodies of content knowledge and discrete subject disciplines that position many students as ‘other’ and preclude them from realms of meaning necessary for access and success. Attempts to address issues of higher order intellectual development at the beginning of the 21st century in a time of ‘social, political and aesthetic upheaval’ (Merrill, 2004, p.1) are based on the view that learners need to learn to think more broadly than ever before and that teachers need to have more than expertise in a single skill, subject or year level. Boundary crossing approaches to knowledge are creative but they are also tied to concerns about social inequality. They involve ‘a never ending process of jumping over’ that is more than simply ‘a two dimensional construction that divides areas’ but is ‘the fuel for the social system’ (Merrill, 2004, p.1). Approaches that disrupt boundaries enable the world to be rearranged ‘in new, non-linear and unimaginable ways’ and view knowledge as constantly needing to be ‘updated, recontextualised, reconsidered and reproduced’ thus producing new citizens who are able to ‘change, morph, communicate and collaborate’ (Merrill, 2004, pp.1-2).
Care must be taken in considering questions related to knowledge boundaries and inequality as we have seen their re-drawing in society many times. For example, in the race and the civil rights struggle in America in spite of ‘every boundary crossed towards equity,’ people saw ‘new barriers circled around [them]’ (Merrill, 2001, p.1). We have now seen a similar situation develop in relation to Indigenous people in Australian society. However, boundary crossing approaches to knowledge of the type that are being discussed here are not concerned with erasure but with permeability like that exhibited by the intertextual approaches to knowledge of Foucault (1976) (1984) Derrida (1986) Cixous (1981) Spivak (1976) Deleuze and Guittari (1988) Moi (1985) and Barthes (1977). Intertextuality, derived from the Latin intertextus, means to intermingle while weaving and is a term first introduced by French semiotician Julia Kristeva (1980). In Deriddean thought and logic, concern with intertextuality allows for ‘a multitude of viewpoints simultaneously existing often in direct conflict with one another’ and the central move involves showing how ‘two opposing terms are actually fluid and impossible to fully separate’ because ‘categories do not exist in any rigid and absolute sense’ (WordIQ, 2004, p.1). Such an approach to boundary deconstruction requires ‘a high level of comfort with suspended, deferred decision’ and ‘quintessential provisionality that never denies the possibility of rereading’ (WordIQ, 2004, p.3). Innovative approaches such as these permit an opening to the other where ‘innumerable threads of causality fall together, coincide, begin to cross and reconfigure’ (Derrida in Ulmer, 1994, p.201.

Permeability encourages the possibility of interconnection and recognition of difference through the opening of knowledge texts to the social and cultural capital of learners (Bourdieu, 1997) or to ‘opening the play of words to the play of the world’ (Clark, 2003, pp.29). In such settings contributions can come from ‘the outside, from those left out, and from the bottom up’ within ‘the context of community’ encouraging those involved to ‘think and collaborate’ (Merrill, 2004 p.1). Attempts to disrupt and open existing knowledge boundaries have led to the development of critical thought and writing across the curriculum. Such innovative approaches to the development of critical social and cultural literacy positions learners to develop reflexivity (Lankshear, 1994; Shacklock and Smythe, 1998) where they are ‘entangled in the goings-on or happenings that concern [them] in relation to thought or action in the world’ (Clark, 2003, p.33). When learners are reflexively engaged not only do they ‘comprehend what is happening but at the same time they ... open themselves to the transformative effects of these happenings’ (Clark, 2003, p.34).

Arens, speaking of intra-disciplinary boundaries like those between linguistic and cultural knowledge in the learning of German, claims that the development of critical literacy requires that learners ‘negotiate the conceptual gap as much as the language gap’ in order to think about ‘how language functions in cultural contexts and according to the needs of particular disciplines and how ‘facts’ and ‘meaning’ are dependent on these two contexts’ (Arens, 1996, pp.1-2). Content, skills and subjects written narrowly in the curriculum prevent learners from developing abilities about ‘how to think and articulate themselves’ according to ‘the discourse norms of particular disciplines, as each discipline prefers to formulate problems, construct arguments and formulate essays’ (Arens, 1996, p.2).

The propositions of Dyson (2003a; 2003b) are instructive here. He suggests that we need to link Bauman’s (2001) ideas about knowledge and society to Arendt’s (1958, 1990) actor and spectator theory. Bauman draws on the work of Bateson to outline three forms of learning that he calls ‘proto learning’, ‘deutero learning’ and ‘third degree or tertiary learning’ (2001). Bauman believes that tertiary learning is the form of learning most applicable in an uncertain postmodern age because, ‘the endpoint is not known, cannot ever be fixed and remains an open-ended formative process which is more important than any specific end product’ (Dyson, 2003b, p.6). This type of tertiary learning leads to the development of ‘thinking and judging’ as suggested by Arendt (1958) that is free from the habitual and is the hallmark of moral development, questioning and independence (Dyson, 2003b).

In boundary crossing approaches to knowledge, learners are required to ask questions of themselves and others (Cochran-Smith, 2001; Segall, 2001; Hoover et al, 2000; Britzman, 2001) in order to develop new narratives to shape new citizens and new social fields which are of paramount importance in teacher learning (Luke et al 2000, pp.5-11). How the relationship between teacher learning and student learning is constructed is important in this regard. Emphasis has shifted from what teachers do ‘to the knowledge teachers hold’. While there are some who frame learning in ways ‘that require minimal translation or interpretation’ (Cochran-Smith, 2001, p.17), there are others whose goal for teachers is ‘to question their own assumptions and practices, to make all knowledge problematic but also generative’ (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999a). Some think that the boundaries between theory and practice should be reconfigured using the ‘lenses of critical pedagogy and cultural studies’ (Segall, 2001, p.226). An approach like that of Giroux (1996), which distinguishes between ‘pedagogy of theory’ and ‘a pedagogy of theorising’ (in Segall, 2001, p.232), opens the possibility of contexts of teacher learning to become spaces ‘fundamentally committed to asking questions’ (Greene, 1986, p.190, in Segall, 2001, p235). They also make provision for ‘learning from one’s own reading of one’s own educational experience’ (Britzmann and Pitt, 1996, p.19, in
Segall, 2001, p.236). Teacher learning, then, takes place in ‘sites in which pedagogy as a process is itself textualised’ (Ulmer, 1985, p.52, in Segall, 2001, p.238) where teachers learn ‘to read and write against the grain’ (Segall, 2001, p.238) and where ‘teacher education [is seen] as a text’ (Segall, 2001, p.238).

New narratives that address the changing nature of the relationship between school and society, teaching and learning and curriculum, pedagogy and assessment are needed. In Queensland, narratives based on a language drawn from the work of teachers such as ‘new basics’, ‘productive pedagogies’ and ‘rich tasks,’ have emerged to form the basis of an innovative approach to teacher learning that take account of inequality as well as quality. Such an approach foregrounds pedagogy that takes account of the need to ‘understand our communities and how they have been affected by new social arithmetic’ accounting for ‘new forms of poverty and disadvantage’ and ‘new media, new technology, new cultures’ (Luke, 2001, pp.1999, pp.1-14). These innovative approaches are primarily concerned with the development of ‘teacher judgment’ where knowledge ‘is drawn from (emergent and residual) forms of life rather than ‘fields of knowledge’ and ‘where the fields of knowledge are used to service tasks rather than vice versa’ (Luke, 1999, pp.1-14).

Conclusion
In summary, innovative proposals for quality teacher learning need to develop stances on power/knowledge that enable practitioners to address future challenges. Enabling stances involve border-crossing to link conceptual and contextual fields to assist practitioners to ask questions of themselves and others. The outcome for those involved include the creation of new narratives concerned with the shaping of ‘new citizens and new social fields’ (Luke et al, 2000, pp.5-11) and ‘new concepts of the school as a community and in the community’ and ‘the school as a different place to teach’ Johnson (2002).

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