A proposal for building and researching ecologies of professional practice in pre-service visual arts primary teacher education

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Abstract
The paper presents a conceptual framework for structuring curriculum and pedagogy in pre-service visual arts teacher education in the primary school context. Discussion examines antecedent conditions within the field of Visual Arts Education shaping current and changing conceptions of primary teacher art education. The suitability of a conceptual framework in developing capacity for pre-service teachers when designing visual arts content for K-6 students is explored. Additionally, an outline of a research proposal to investigate the viability of the conceptual framework to the development of ecologies of professional practice in the visual arts primary context is introduced.

Discussion begins by identifying and outlining issues related to building pre-service teachers’ capacity in a subject typically regarded as a specialist domain of curriculum and pedagogy grounded in discipline specific knowledge and understanding. The shaping effects of forces operating within curriculum reform, school education and higher education upon the domain of Visual Arts Education and their impact on conceptions of primary pre-service teacher Visual Arts Education are examined. These include the issue of commonsense assumptions informing the identity of pre-service teacher Visual Arts Education. Pre-service teachers, often with little prior discipline-rich experience in Visual Arts Education themselves typically participate in commonsense discourse positioning Visual Arts knowledge as an exclusive specialist practice. The issue of the ever-present fight for discipline identity in Visual Arts Education as articulated in current debates concerning the standardisation of Arts Education in the proposed Australian Curriculum is examined as a concomitant factor highlighting the complexities of Visual Arts pre-service teacher education. Misconceptions of what is Visual Arts Education in curriculum terms also reveal the difficulties teacher educators face in representing the field authentically within the constraints of teacher education programs. Teacher identity in pre-service primary education is also raised as an issue wherein traditional conceptions of artists as teachers prevail and mitigate against pre-service teacher confidence in developing and engaging in ecologies of professional practice in primary teacher art education. On the basis of the analysis of these issues the authors contend that what is needed in primary pre-service teacher education is a suitably designed curriculum framework promoting a means for understanding Visual Arts as a practice and sustaining the development of professional practice in schools.

The development of a strong foundation of a conceptual framework supporting curriculum development and how this can be used to structure authentic professional practices in visual arts education is the central consideration in this paper. Discussion of research on domain specific understanding in art outlines the developmental significance of a conceptual framework within art education. It is apparent that a conceptual framework in art education provides pre-service primary teachers a means for anticipating developmental changes in the structure of children’s development in art and the imperative for them to work
strategically to build knowledge of art practices within the minds of their students. We assert that the adoption of this conceptual framework for understanding the domain of the Visual Arts as the basis for primary pre-service teacher art education has significance for the development of professional practice. How this conceptual framework promotes developing capacity in ensuring curriculum content is structured according to relationships between artworld concepts can be reasonably aligned with the developmental status supported by authentic pedagogical decisions suited to the needs of students is examined.

The paper concludes with a brief outline of a theoretical framework as a possible means for researching the application of the proposed conceptual framework in teacher education and in school education contexts. The initiative, suggested in preliminary terms, is designed to test the viability of this conceptual framework to the development of professional practice in visual arts education. The sayings, doing and relatings occurring in curriculum and pedagogical development in the visual arts classroom will be examined as practices that formulate professional presence within ecologies of practice in the primary school setting. It is envisaged that this research initiative will link various tertiary institutions, pre-service teachers, schools and professional teachers in an action research project.

Key words: art education, primary visual arts education, Visual Arts Education, Higher Education, pre-service teacher education, teaching practice, curriculum and pedagogy, ecologies of practice, professional practice

Introduction

Teacher education programs are mapped with educational, professional and discipline studies within course structures to provide graduate teachers exclusive and inclusive knowledge that impact on teacher practices. In primary education, pre-service teachers are framed within a range of subject disciplines that represent their development of professional practices in the classroom. Learning areas such as, Maths, English, Science, Geography, History and the Creative Arts, to name a few, demand authentic representation. Although specialist knowledge is ideally preferred and desirable, pre-service teachers explore subject knowledge not through discipline specialisation but through understanding curriculum and pedagogical practices, grounded in general subject knowledge and their own varying educational histories. With this in mind Visual Arts Education, which sits within the Creative Arts in the primary education context, is an area of study which is often compromised in the delivery of pre-service teacher education. As such the authors argue that developing pre-service teachers’ professional capacities to work within this area of the curriculum needs to be determined by concise theoretical structures allowing for the mobilisation of authentic curriculum and pedagogy in the visual arts classroom.

The paper questions assumptions deeply embedded in primary teacher education in the Visual Arts. Our aim is to outline an alternative way of theorising pre-service teacher education curriculum and for considering factors constituting ecologies of professional practice in art education. The intention is to bring to the forefront theoretical considerations about the role of curriculum and pedagogy in pre-service teacher education in Visual Arts Education which link coherently with models of artistic practice from the field of the Visual Arts. Discussion begins with an outline of preliminary factors emerging during the
planning, implementation and ongoing evaluation of a Visual Arts pre-service primary teacher course. This course is delivered by the authors in New South Wales and Victoria within a national Faculty of Education at the Australian Catholic University. Contemporary forces shaping the design and delivery of pre-service teacher education courses are considered. These are the impetus for proposing a model for structuring curriculum and teaching in pre-service Visual Arts Education for the primary school context. This paper concludes with a theoretical framework focusing on ecologies of practice which is to inform a research initiative to test the propositions outlined in this paper.

The following discussion will sketch out the issues that will be addressed as the key factors for investigating the formation of professional practice in visual arts education for pre-service teachers in the primary context. These include; Commonsense assumptions informing the identity of pre-service teacher Visual Arts Education; The ever-present fight for discipline identity in Visual Arts Education; Misconceptions of what is Visual Arts Education in curriculum terms; Forces shaping teacher identity in pre-service primary education; and ensuring ecologies of professional practice are attained in primary art education.

**Antecedent factors shaping primary pre-service teacher visual arts education**

Pre-service teachers enter Visual Arts Education in primary teacher education programs with pre-conceived assumptions that are the result of non-specific art education in their own schooling. Such views reflect commonsense or ‘folk’ theories of art (Freeman, 1991). Commonsense assumptions about art manifest in modernist beliefs about meaning and value in art and can be seen to operate in discourses about the good, the true and the beautiful, the primacy of mastery, skilful realistic representation and inspired expression (Erikson & Villeneuve, 2009). Commonsense art discourse is usually played out in the artworld in relation to art practices that disrupt normalised assumptions and controversially challenge prevailing tastes and traditions (Freeman, 1991). Such assumptions relegate knowing in art to some kind of innate skill, special insight, creativity or genius. Under such terms meaning and value in art is assumed to be immediately accessible to all viewers of art. When this accessibility is compromised normalised views over more specialised accounts are held up as elite and exclusive. Indeed, very few primary pre-service teachers have specific and well developed art knowledge (Alter, Hays, & O’Hara, 2009). This poses a conundrum when they are asked to adopt the disposition of an art educator in the classroom who is assumed to have a repertoire of specialist knowledge and practice (Garvis, 2009; Hennessy, Rolfe & Chedzoy, 2001).

Commonsense theories of art directly impact perceptions of knowledge and in turn the formation of practice in Visual Arts Education. In developmental terms commonsense assumptions of art consolidate at about 12 years of age (Freeman & Sanger, 1995). Typically, this is the age when most people cease formal art education in school and the theories of art developed to that stage coalesce. If such assumptions are not challenged or reconfigured with more appropriate frameworks to understand content significantly, the risk of formulating a commonsense approach to art education is a reality. Designers of pre-service art education courses acknowledge how commonsense beliefs about art and art education normalise the stance many of their pre-service teachers adopt when entering art education courses. Responsibility must be taken to ensure that content is suitably structured and can match pre-service teachers’ framework theories of art to ensure optimal learning.
Unless pre-service teachers have theoretical resources upon which to demonstrate a more autonomous stance as an art educator, they may be limited to teaching art on the basis of the same kind of theories of art as those held by year 6 students. In turn, teachers would be unlikely to renovate their own students’ theories and be unable to emancipate themselves from the normalised view of what is knowledge and how this can be structured.

Current debates about the curriculum framework for ‘The Arts’ in the proposals for an Australian Curriculum have highlighted another issue shaping the perception of the value of Visual Arts Education as a discrete discipline within pre-service teacher education. The configuration of The Arts in the Australian Curriculum, representing: Visual Arts, Music, Drama, Dance and Media come with it the assumption that sameness is reflected in these five disciplines that have within them distinctive traditions and knowledges (Barbousas, in press; Francini, in press; Thomas, in press). Specifically this attempt for standardisation has brought to the frontline debates about discipline knowledge, formation of ‘practices’ and normalised assumptions about ‘The Arts’ in educational terms. These debates are neither new nor innovative; rather they repeat the same discourse practices as were evident in previous attempts to standardise the Arts as a learning area within national curriculum reforms (Boughton, 1995; Brown, 1994).

Although advocates of The Australian Curriculum would suggest that distinctive discipline knowledge is important in any area of the curriculum, the representation of ‘The Arts’ as title and term implies knowledge formations that are similar and thus warrant single curriculum representation. For example, The Arts: Initial Advice Paper heralds the notion of ‘creative fusion’, implying integration within and across the artforms rather than specified study of discipline (ACARA, 2010, p.3). Representation of ‘The Arts’ as a single knowledge source is fundamentally a configuration of power constructs and economic rationality under the guise of curriculum design rather than discipline similarities (Barbousas, 2009; Brown, 1994). Potential impacts of this agenda upon pre-service teacher education include further marginalising the teaching of not only Visual Arts Education, but all of the arts as educative practices within resource poor universities.

Should these proposals be adopted time dedicated to Visual Arts Education in primary teacher education programs will be reduced through the adoption of an integrated approach as arts education. Under these conditions pre-service teachers will be even less likely to engage autonomous art educational practices emulating authentic curriculum and pedagogical knowledge. That beginning teachers with little or no subject area expertise can operate within an integrated arts scenario tempered by creativity as aesthetic knowledge, further impedes their sense of efficacy and development of professional practice in Visual Art Education (Garvis, 2009).

National agendas in education forfeiting the notion of Visual Arts as a ‘specialism’ further compound the issues for pre-service teacher education. The Arts: Initial Advice Paper is an example of the reduction to the mean; where general statements, universal truths and commonsense attitudes about ‘The Arts’ are repeated rather than dismantled (Australian Curriculum Assessment Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2010). Scope to develop authentic practices and deep learning in Visual Arts Education is eclipsed by participatory rhetoric (Maras, in press 3). Normalised intentions are inclusive of standards simultaneously reductive in the approaches used to represent knowledge formations, leaving aside the specificities and particularities that allow for discipline content to mobilise authentic and
significant curriculum developments (Barbousas, in press). The ‘art as experience’ or art as the enhancement of ‘creativity’ model appears to provide equitable access and democratic participation, affirming commonsense attitudes to what is Visual Arts Education, yet fuels pre-service teachers’ anxieties about what is identifiable content and pedagogy in this learning area (Boughton, 1986; Maras, in press 3;). It would seem that the political discourses of equity and inclusion in the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008) matter far more than seeing the groundings of the subject in academic intellectual terms. In relation to pre-service teacher education for the primary school context it is clear that if adopted, these proposals represent a threat to the viability of Visual Arts Education, an area already compromised in terms of curriculum time. Competition within the space of program time and imperatives for ‘core’ areas such as literacy and numeracy ensure that ecologies of practice in art education are compromised or traded away.

In pre-service teacher education practice dictates that discipline content should be logically regulated and ordered as pedagogy (Addison, Burgess, Steers & Trowell, 2010). Through the enduring legacy of the idealist philosophies of Dewey (1934) and Read (1945, 1960) promoting art as creativity and imagination. Visual Arts Education continues to be described as an affective rather than academic domain, despite efforts that render it otherwise in contemporary outcomes and standards-based curriculum structures (Board of Studies, 1999). This description means that Visual Arts Education fails to present as a reliable trustworthy discipline as other subjects do (Brown, 1989). Attempts to anchor Visual Arts knowledge in some kind of ordered structure have been made using Piagetian constructivism as a basis (Karmiloff-Smith, 1992; Jardine, 2006; Pass, 2004). This position favours ideas such as knowing based on sensory, physical and affective grounds – the return to which is evident in the proposals for The Arts in the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2010). Under such conditions ‘to know’ is then articulated as some kind of subjective, emotional disposition complimented by the acquisition of technical skills manifest in a learning process. Bloomian taxonomies have been recruited to order knowledge and understanding hierarchically with a view to supporting the linear development of higher order thinking (Bloom 1984). In theoretical terms this represents a version of knowing as a form of modularity, which supports predictable curriculum inputs and outputs. When adopted in Visual Arts Bloomian structures invoke process-based inquiry resulting in a distortion of what is Visual Arts and fails to allow for the serendipitous and risk-taking aspects manifest in its practices. Learning is assumed to be linear as process and rather than honouring the relational of practice (Brown, 2005; Edwards-Groves, Kemmis, Hardy & Ponte, 2010). For pre-service teacher education process-based curriculum and pedagogy fails to enable students to bridge the gaps between art, art education and sustainable ecologies of practice that secure meaningful outcomes for both teachers and students in the Visual Arts classroom (Gradle, 2007).

Modular approaches to curriculum have been disputed by specific work on children’s cognition in art wherein relational reasoning denotes how learning articulates and can be qualitatively differentiated according to age (Bloom, 2005; Freeman, 1991; Karmiloff-Smith, 1988 & 1992). For example, the ‘what’ of knowledge in art criticism is necessarily reduced to declarations of elements and principles of design that are analysed to provide a certain, unambiguous outcome (E.B. Feldman, 1987). This aesthetic disposition, alongside process-
based formulations describing how an artist produces artwork, for example; ‘perceiving, responding, manipulating, organising and evaluation’ (Board of Studies, 1987); and ‘generating, realising and responding’ (ACARA, 2010) denies consideration of concepts of knowledge as practice. Rather than articulate viable knowledge in Visual Arts in terms of conceptual and practical autonomy, terms that represent teachable and assessable concepts and practices (Addison, Burgess, Steers & Trowell, 2010; La Porte, Spiers & Young, 2008), this universalising and inherently modernist view reduces knowing to ‘soft’, indeterminate instrumentalities difficult to pin down as assessment and curriculum.

Another factor shaping orientations to pre-service teacher education in the primary context is the belief that visual arts educators need to be artists first and teacher second (Daischendt, 2009; Day, 1986). When the identity of primary art educators is framed on the same bases as that of the identity of secondary art teachers, that is, ‘artist teacher or teaching artist’ (Addison, Burgess, Steers & Trowell, 2010), tensions arise for designers of pre-service teacher education programs. Again time provisions within courses orientated to core curriculum imperatives competing for time with other areas including special education, child protection, indigenous perspectives made explicit in graduate teacher standards mitigates against this as a viable proposition for art education in the primary teaching context (New South Wales Institute of Teachers (NSWIT), 2009; Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), 2010). However, although most primary pre-service teaching degrees include discipline units for mathematics for example, Visual Arts is not afforded the same provision. Art education remains a discipline-based endeavour within which curriculum and pedagogy are assumed embedded. As curriculum design the promotion and development of ecologies of professional practice is doubtful in so far as it can foster ‘the prospective teacher’s understanding of the goals of the field and the way these goals might be achieved’ (Garvis & Pendergast, 2010; Grauer, 1999).

Teacher education programs in higher education are challenged with the task to ensure that their graduates are prepared to engage and explore ‘professional practice’ as they move into the school and classroom contexts. Bill Green (2009) proposes that:

“Professional practice” is itself, of course, a construct linking two concepts. On the one hand, what might simply be seen as an adjective, a qualifying term (“professional”) contains with it the notion of “profession”, and also that of “the professional”, or of being or becoming “a professional”…The other term (“practice”) is of course similarly fraught with difficulty, and is equally and perhaps inescapably contested, if not essentially contestable” (1).

The duality of the terms, ‘professional’ and ‘practice’ for pre-service teachers are fundamentally linked to; the things we know, the things we do and the ways we communicate and engage as evidence of ‘professional practice’. With this in mind, authentic practices in Visual Arts Education for pre-service teachers should be framed around developing opportunities for the mobilisation of autonomous practices — ‘professional practices’ — in curriculum development for the primary visual arts classroom.

With the issues addressed above the authors argue that pre-service teachers need to be provided with appropriate curriculum and pedagogical theories to explore authentic Visual
Arts content for the primary classroom. Without the emphasis on a conceptual framework mobilising pre-service teachers to explore authentic learning activities in Visual Arts curriculum and pedagogy will be reduced to commonsense assumptions about the value of art.

**Proposals for a strategy sustaining the development of professional practice in primary art education**

Tertiary art educators are responsible for developing pre-service teachers’ capacity to deliver quality art education. What is needed is a description of art education in pre-service teacher education programs which honours domain-specific knowledge and practice enabling pre-service teachers in art education to be conceived in logical terms as a discipline in its own right. A model derived from research on conceptual development focussing on domain specific frameworks for understanding art provides an objective structure for reasoning about and explaining artworld practices. This framework of foundational concepts becomes a powerful tool used to structure curriculum and pedagogy in pre-service teacher art education and directly informs developing curriculum and pedagogy in the primary classroom suited to the terms on which students conceive of art (Barbousas & Maras, 2009).

**Conceptual structures within the domain of Visual Arts education**

The Visual Arts is a specific domain of knowledge. Domains have their own structure determining how knowledge is organised, ordered and named. In domains, whether they demarcate agriculture, history or art, there are fundamental concepts forming the basis of explaining a domain (Carey & Spelke, 1994; Cosmide & Tooby, 1994). By mapping how we think about art and by utilising a conceptual framework, we are no longer tied to thinking that art knowledge is invested solely in artworks. The conceptual framework is made up of interrelated agencies that work together; artwork, world, artist and audience. Instead artworks are nested within a set of relations, or practices enabling their meaning to be understood and explained as a function of these intentional relationships (Freeman, 1995, 1996). In this sense knowledge and understanding is part of the logical descriptions of what each of these agencies do in relation to one another (Brown, 2005). As C. F. Feldman (1987) argues, what we represent in reasoned speech reflect what we have in our theories about domains. In turn, speech is the means for building theories through recursions to beliefs (Maras, 2009). Thus the conceptual framework represents a means for arguing that representing art in conceptual and practical terms is a cognitive enterprise associated with theoretical advance and means of theory acquisition. What is mobilised in this model for representing visual arts as a domain is a commitment to inferential reasoning which forms part of art making practices as well as art critical practices (Brown, 2005).

Children and adults develop framework theories of art as a domain. These theories are structured conceptually. Freeman (1990, 1991) has mapped how children navigate their way through logical relations between the key concepts of artist, artwork, world and audience. These four commonplaces of the artworld are located within a network of functional relations to describe the domain of visual arts. By asking young children to reason through conundrums related to how things relate in the artworld, Freeman has established a rationale for describing the artworld as a domain of knowledge anchored according to particular concepts and their relationships that can be sequenced developmentally during middle childhood (Brown & Freeman, 1993; Freeman, 1995). Every student of any age
bases their descriptions of art using these four commonplaces in increasingly relational configurations (Maras, 2008, in press 1)

The domain-specific network of artworld relations, function according to their intentional transactions. The following example illustrates how this system structures an explanation of an example of visual arts practice. When we talk about what artists do we necessarily talk about the artworks they make. For example, Vincent Van Gogh’s role in making the painting *Starry Night*, 1889. The same applies in reverse. What an artwork means is related to what the artist was doing to make the work and intending to represent in it. That is, the painting *Starry Night* has meaning because Van Gogh made the work and represented intentional meaning in it. The notion of representation calls into play the concept of world. The world is essentially the source of content, meaning or subject matter in the work. To continue the example, Van Gogh drew upon his world, some would argue it is the psychological world which informed how he perceived the real world of the starry sky over France. This form of the world is re-presented to us, the viewer or audience, in the form of the painting as a marked surface (Wollheim, 1987).

The ways in which the properties of the paint and the imagery are integrated as intentional properties cause thoughts in our minds (Maras, 2008). Invested with intentional meaning by the artist and we experience them and engage in a kind of second-hand reconstruction of what we believe them to be about as we recognise properties of the work (Baxandall, 1987). What we are caused to recognise is also identified, or classified as a kind of property which has a certain function or meaning in the work (Wollheim, 1987). In other words, what we perceive in the work as meaningful is tempered, or framed, by our own knowledge of or beliefs about the world, skies at night, painting practice, Van Gogh, psychological disturbance, colours, and much more. What we recognise and identify as meaningful in the work causes us to think and these thoughts framed according to our beliefs and represented in the judgements we make about what Van Gogh was trying to represent in his painting *Starry Night*. The function of the audience then is to ascribe kinds of meaning to artworks which is arbitrated by their beliefs about the artist’s intentions in representing a world in the artwork (Keil, 1989).

The acquisition of artworld concepts articulates developmentally as stages in students’ learning. During middle childhood, children acquire increasingly more complex theories of the domain of visual arts involving explanations of the functional relations within the artworld. With age they become more reflexive in their reasoning and explanations begin to take into account intentional relationships within artworld practices according to different epistemological positions and thus represent higher order thinking (Freeman, 1995, 1996, 2001; Maras, in press 2). Incremental shifts in ways children utilise the concepts within conceptual reasoning, for example, demonstrate how they come to know and acquire explanatory theories they consult to explain artworld encounters (Callaghan & Rochat, 2008; Maras, 2008 & 2009). If the conceptual framework were to inform pre-service teachers as an organising structure for positioning and selecting curriculum content, it would also reinforce the very theoretical structures children use when they are reasoning about what artists do, why and how their artworld reflect interests and are taken up by audiences. The adoption of this framework as a foundation for curriculum content therefore supports visual arts pre-service primary teachers in knowing how the selection of content appropriate for different age groups can be made in primary school settings (Barbousas & Maras, 2009). Therefore, examining assumptions and allowing pre-service teachers to develop a theory of practice in
visual arts education enables the pre-service teacher to scaffold authentic learning and be ahead of the game without being a specialist artist. We assert that this strategy pertains to the opportunity to begin developing and consolidating ecologies of professional practice as art educators.

Proposal for research: Testing the application of the conceptual framework in developing professional practice for pre-service teachers in visual arts education

To enable the authors to examine the application of the conceptual framework to the formation of professional practice, a research proposal focusing on how pre-service teachers develop authentic curriculum and pedagogical practices will be developed. The research aims to investigate professional practice through an application of action research and participant observation methodologies. Furthermore the research will also take a comparative focus to examine various undergraduate primary teacher art education programs from a range of Higher Education institutions in Australia. The purpose of the research is to examine discourse documents through unit representations in teacher education programs and construct detailed case studies to unveil the ‘sayings’, ‘doings’ and ‘relatings’ that assist pre-service teachers to develop autonomous professional practices (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2007). The aim of the project sits within the agenda of this paper - to dismantle and unveil the commonsense belief about the practice of visual arts education for the primary classroom. The theoretical frameworks guiding this investigation are theories of practice and ecologies of practice. Furthermore the development of ecologies of practice in visual arts education is the aim of this research initiative.

The formation of ecologies of practice

For curriculum to be understood, designed and applied the function of ‘practice’ has to be articulated and contextualised for the pre-service teacher to be aware of the possibilities and limitations of theoretical domains as ‘praxis’ (Green, 2009, Kemmis, 2010). When theoretical domains are used to structure knowledge of a discipline, the formation of ‘practices’ can be thought of as the ‘sayings’, ‘doings’ and ‘relatings’ to support the discourses of the field (Kemmis, 2010, Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2007). Pre-service teachers engage in visual arts practices in the tertiary environment and within classroom contexts — during professional experience placements — that may follow a trajectory that is complementary or more commonly, at odds with intended practices set out in a unit specifically addressing visual arts education as practice in the classroom. (Barbousas & Maras, 2009).

To ensure that practices which take up the use of the powerful explanatory scope of the conceptual framework new teachers need greater depth and time to develop their own intellectual autonomy in understanding visual arts practices. It is only through consolidated engagement that they will acquire the theoretical dexterity themselves to know how practices can be modelled, adapted, amended and explained for different age groups in the classroom contexts.

Therefore, as Kemmis and Grootenboer (2007) state: ‘Practice and praxis are not dependent solely on the experience, intentions and actions of individuals, but rather to show that they are also shaped and conditioned by arrangements, circumstances and conditions beyond each person as an individual agent or actor’ (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2007: 1). With this in mind the role of pre-service teacher education in Visual Arts Education should mobilise the applicable nature of the conceptual framework to provide pre-service teachers with a sense of curriculum autonomy in linking content from one context to another, in authentic and
significant ways — keeping a close link to discourse representation in the visual arts. This impacts on the scope and sequence of visual arts curriculum and the way it is understood and applied.

Practice theory and more specifically ‘practice architectures’ set up a framework to think about discourses that present and represent individual and collective traditions through what is said, done and shared; in this case, the visual arts classroom (Green, 2010, Kemmis et al, 2009, Schatzki, 2006). Inducting pre-service teachers in authentic sayings, doings and relatings in Visual Arts Education practices is directly linked to authentic curriculum design (Kemmis, 2010). Fundamentally, the work of Stephen Kemmis is used to theoretically structure an applied model of ‘professional practice’ to set up the agenda for developing pre-service teachers to intrinsically understand the characteristics that are primarily constructed through cultural discourses that inform what one does and how one thinks. The imbrications of the conceptual framework in pre-service teacher education is an example of how professional practice can be tested.

Discourses in the visual arts are used to mobilise the ‘sayings’ of a practice and to link processes of ‘sayings’ to curriculum development. In other words, when pre-service teachers are introduced to artworld factors, these are realised through language acquisitions that order authentic practices. It is through the characteristic of developing language through thinking processes that visual arts knowledge is understood authentically, when developing art making and art appreciation activities. As Searle (1995 & 1999) argues, the artworld is realised through a nexus of beliefs and theories (mind), speech acts (language) as a means of exchanging and consolidating practices and discourse based on consensual beliefs and artworks (artefacts). Artefacts represent a point in the nexus of relations whereby the intentional and representational focus of what is art and how it functions is brought to bear. This is essentially the theory underpinning the conceptual framework and goes some way to explaining how classroom practices are concerned with theoretical and philosophical investigation as a means for forming up what teachers choose as practice and subsequently how students learn to say, do and relate as beginning artists in their own artworld. It is not until they reach consensus about what is art that visual arts knowledge and practice will be represented (Danto 1981). Therefore, a theory of practice and an examination of how these ‘sayings’, ‘doings’ and ‘relatings’ mobilised through an application of the conceptual framework gives the authors a way to inspect the development of professional practice.

Similarly, the material economy of an activity, for example, the visual art classroom, the visual arts materials and objects, the space of the physical activity and the ‘set-up’ of the audience space and ‘site’, is formulated around the ‘doings’ of visual arts practice (Kemmis 2010, 2009). Pre-service teachers should be able to link the ordering and arrangements of what one does in the visual art classroom to authentic visual arts content that is understood for its educational values — education in terms of authentic and significant to the field, and the discourses that support it.

In support of social networks that inform and order visual arts education practice, pre-service teachers need to be aware and simultaneously examine the power formations that come out of changes made to how people relate to one another. To understand the construction of curriculum is directly linked to the opportunities taken to expand on the social elements that come from structuring art making activities in particular ways. Developing curriculum that
enhances conversations, relations and interactions with the application of the conceptual framework in Visual Arts Education will allow for an examination of best practice.

Therefore, a theory of practice will allow the authors to develop a research initiative that examines the conceptual framework as a functional tool-kit for developing authentic curriculum and significant visual arts content for the primary classroom. By linking ‘practice architectures’ to the ‘saying’, ‘doings’ and ‘relatings’ that inform pre-service teachers about visual arts practices allows for a greater understanding of the development of autonomous practices that are framed within professional domains. The role of discourse knowledge and discipline representation in developing authentic curriculum for the visual arts is fundamentally linked to developing professional practices in real terms.

**Conclusion**

This paper represents some initial thinking about how and what terms primary pre-service art teacher education can be positioned and evaluated with a view developing empirical support for understanding how and on what bases beginning teachers’ can develop sustainable ecologies of professional practice in Visual Arts. It is apparent that the shaping effect of contemporary realities in the tertiary and school education contexts of art education will continue mitigating against effective and quality provision for visual arts primary teacher education if the sedimented orthodoxies embedded in current approaches prevail. We have argued that the means to providing quality pre-service teacher education can be found in research focussing on conceptual structures within Visual Arts education accounting for the nature of practice. Discussion has addressed a proposal for a conceptual framework as an appropriate organiser of practice in primary pre-service teacher Visual Arts education. A rationale for promoting professional autonomy in the practices and identities of primary pre-service teachers underlies this proposal in so far as it offers a sustainable structure that will assist them conceptualise curriculum and pedagogy in relation of the field of the visual arts as a social practice. We have then set out an outline for researching the viability of the implementation of this framework for primary teacher pre-service art education. Happily, the complexity of these relational fields, may also serve to illustrate how visual arts education practices are not reducible to commonsense assumptions as they arise from practices of research, curriculum and the broader political imperatives which overtly or surreptitiously erode what can be conceived as quality education in Visual Arts, not to mention the Arts in total.
Bibliography


