Reforming the Reform of Teacher Education

A Critical Grounded Theory of a Social Approach to Change and Continuity

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ABSTRACT

The reform of teacher education in Australia has been an issue of significant challenge to higher education providers in recent decades. The granting of autonomy to state-based teachers’ colleges in 1972 heralded in a supposed era of autonomous university level teacher education as an exclusive model of teacher preparation. Subsequently, the context of teacher education has been in an almost constant cycle of political review and reform. Across the period of this study, 2010-2015, the pace of these cycles has increased to the point where the the outworking of one review has not been completed before the next wave of actions are rolled out. One notable example being the release of the second iteration of the National Program Standards for initial teacher education courses in December 2015 (AITSL, 2015). Considering the length of an undergraduate initial teacher education course and the time taken in accrediting a course, the review and reform of the first iteration of the program standards, released for commencement in 2012, has come before any evidence of their usefulness could ever be collected. In the climate of review and regulation that has taken hold, the impact of political intervention on the processes and practices of teacher education is significant.

The outworking of political review and reform is experienced by teacher education as change and continuity. While change and continuity are often described as externalised abstract conceptions, the thesis developed from this study has identified change and continuity as subjective, contextualised social processes. From this perspective, it is argued that change and continuity are the key means that individuals, institutions and organisations engage in seeking to improve or develop teacher education and its outcomes towards a preferred future. Given the multiplicity of voices consistently present in the practice of teacher education, the reform of teacher education through the outworking of change and continuity has always been a deeply political activity. As such, the core issue facing teacher educators is finding the space to be both heard and heeded amongst the cacophony of voices that have influence in political review and reform processes.

A critical grounded theory methodology was designed for this study into the political practices surrounding the reform of teacher education. In doing so, it specifically employed two core purposes identified from the integration of critical theory with grounded theory. These were to; critically analyse the knowledge and power relations at work in the political practices of reform, and to consider emancipatory possibilities for teacher educators. With this in mind, the methods employed gave purposeful voice to teacher educators through historical texts written by and contemporary interviews conducted with teacher educators. Two substantive theoretical models emerged from the critical analysis of the data. These models highlighted the; nature of the social process of change and continuity evident in the historical context of teacher preparation in Australia, and importance of the local social context of change and continuity across contemporary international teacher education.

The conclusions drawn from this study have used a comparative analytical process to theorise a social approach to change and continuity. The thesis presented is that the outworking of reform towards educationally justifiable outcomes is predicated upon the employment of educational voices in socially mediated decision-making processes. For social engagement in the political practices of reform to be successful, teacher educators need to foster carefully nuanced relationships, provide clear and purposeful communication, and maintain a positive psychological disposition. It is argued that the future of teacher education and its potential to impact the professionalisation of teachers is entirely dependent upon the capacity of teacher educators learning to productively occupy the space available for their voice in the political context of reform.
DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint award of this degree.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University’s digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

Signed: Date: 31 May 2016
A task, such as the completion of a thesis of this nature, is never the work of just one person. While I have actually written everything that is included herein, there are many others who have made significant contributions and deserve honourable mention. I know I run the risk of missing someone important off the list, nevertheless I would like to thank...

Professor Tania Aspland, my principal supervisor, you have been a never-ending source of encouragement and perspective. You have given me space to explore and make mistakes and sound advice when it is needed. Your belief in my capacity to complete this task has been a rock across the many trying circumstances that come with a study of this nature. I am honoured to have been able to complete this journey with you.

Dr Robert Herschell, my co-supervisor, my professional and academic journey with you has been a long and illustrious one. You have been a constant source of encouragement and support. I consider it a blessing to have been your student, your colleague and your friend.

Mum and Dad, who have tirelessly contributed meals, ironing, gardening, housework, household repairs, lifts, ... all in the name of giving me time to finish that thesis! I trust that you know that even when I had my ‘grumpy face’ on I really did appreciate everything that you did to make the load easier. I count it an absolute joy and blessing to have shared my life with you – you are both an inspiration to me. I hope that when you finally read this thesis you’ll be proud of yourselves... you helped make this happen?!

Professor Brian Millis and Christian Heritage College, who gave me a start in teaching and teacher education and contributed both time and finances to the completion of this study. Also, my colleagues (especially you Sadie Praeger) who had to put up with my constant need to talk through the things I was thinking and learning. Your patience and encouragement were really important; first as colleagues but most importantly as friends. I trust that you appreciate that there are too many others of you to name without forgetting someone important – but that you also all know that you are included.

Alison Stanton, who has read this entire thesis and provided editorial suggestions. For a long time you were both a colleague and a mentor in my professional life, yet most importantly I consider you ‘family’ (you too, Barry). Thank you for your support through thick and thin.

Elisha Keating, who has managed to remain my friend despite this thesis. Thanks for listening intently, and repeatedly, to my ramblings that made no sense. Thanks for turning up to cheer me up and feed me when you knew I was going to be all tired and grumpy. Thanks for putting up with text-books and computers and thesis writing even on holiday. Thanks for getting me out of the house (and my pyjamas) when I’d been in them too long. And for all the other things that kept me on the straight and narrow.

Finally, to my church family at Networx. Your encouragement and prayers have been appreciated. (and Taylor and Zac – here is your special mention, as promised;).
# LIST OF ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AARE</td>
<td>Australian Association for Research in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACDE</td>
<td>Australian Council of Deans of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACER</td>
<td>Australian Council for Educational Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACP</td>
<td>Australian Council of Professions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEEYSOC</td>
<td>Australian Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs Senior Officials Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AITSL</td>
<td>Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APJTE</td>
<td><em>Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APST</td>
<td>Australian Professional Standards for Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>AQF</td>
<td>Australian Qualifications Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>AQFC</td>
<td>Australian Qualifications Framework Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARC</td>
<td>Australian Research Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATEA</td>
<td>Australian Teacher Education Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>AUQA</td>
<td>Australian Universities Quality Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>BTE</td>
<td>Board of Teacher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTR</td>
<td>Board of Teacher Registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEST</td>
<td>Department of Education, Science and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DET(Austl.)</td>
<td>Department of Education and Training (Australian Government)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DET(Qld)</td>
<td>Department of Education and Training (Queensland Government)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERA</td>
<td>Excellence in Research for Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERP</td>
<td>Education Research and Perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HESF</td>
<td>Higher Education Standards Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISI</td>
<td>Institute for Scientific Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCEECDYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCEETYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAPLAN</td>
<td>National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>NHMRC</td>
<td>National Health and Medical Research Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPQTL</td>
<td>National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ofsted</td>
<td>Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PISA</td>
<td>Programme for International Student Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSQT</td>
<td>Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>QCAA</td>
<td>Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QCT</td>
<td>Queensland College of Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>QOHE</td>
<td>Queensland Office of Higher Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCEVT</td>
<td>Standing Committee in Education and Vocational Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCSEEC</td>
<td>Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEMAG</td>
<td>Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEQSA</td>
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