



Archived at the Flinders Academic Commons:

<http://dspace.flinders.edu.au/dspace/>

This is the published version of this article.

The original article is available at:

<http://www.worlds.co.uk/pdf/validate.asp?j=ciec&vol=11&issue=2&year=2010&article=3> Krieg CIEC 11 2 web

Please cite this as: Krieg, S., 2010. The professional knowledge that counts in Australian contemporary early childhood teacher education. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 11(2), 144-155.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2010.11.2.144>

© 2010 *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*. Published version of the article reproduced here in accordance with the publisher's policy.

---

---

## The Professional Knowledge that Counts in Australian Contemporary Early Childhood Teacher Education

SUSAN KRIEG

*Flinders University, South Australia, Australia*

**ABSTRACT** Australia is typical of many western countries where the provision of quality early childhood services has become a government priority. The government initiatives in Australia include repeated demands for 'well-qualified' early childhood educators. As a result of these demands the pre-service preparation of early childhood educators is under intense scrutiny. This scrutiny raises many questions regarding the knowledge base considered to be essential for early childhood educators and leads to further questions about who has the authority to produce this knowledge. This article explores these questions by firstly examining some of the ways Australian early childhood teacher education is situated within the current knowledge environment. This is followed by a discussion regarding the debates about what early childhood educators 'need to know'. The third section of the article traces some of the historical features of Australian early childhood teacher education, for the author argues that contemporary questions about 'which' knowledge is to be included in early childhood teacher education are best understood alongside their historical precedents. The article concludes by considering the implications of the debates for contemporary early childhood teacher education and suggests that a way forward involves reconsidering the traditional binary between theory and practical knowledge.

### Introduction

The care and education of young children has become a government priority in many western countries. Australia is typical of many of these countries with its repeated demands for 'well-qualified' early childhood educators (Press & Hayes, 2000, p. 62). As a result of these demands, the pre-service preparation of early childhood educators is under scrutiny in unprecedented ways. This scrutiny raises many questions regarding the knowledge considered to be essential for early childhood policy and practice. In the contemporary context, the debates about 'which' knowledge is essential for the early childhood educators intensify as not only the quantity of knowledge expands exponentially but also the depth of knowledge increases in specialist fields such as neuroscience, child development, curriculum and the sociology of childhood. Alongside the question about 'which' knowledge is most important there is an associated question about who has the authority to produce this knowledge. This article considers these questions and poses some possibilities for contemporary early childhood teacher education.

I contend that contemporary early childhood teacher education is situated within a changing knowledge environment and therefore begin the article by addressing some of the challenges and changes that are occurring within a global context. Following this introduction I discuss the contemporary debates about the knowledge that has come to be valued in Australian early childhood teacher education and suggest that current debates are best understood alongside their historical precedents. The third section of the article therefore provides a brief history of Australian early childhood education. I subsequently argue that debates about 'what' knowledge is most



important in early childhood teacher education are best informed by reconsidering the theory and practical knowledge binary.

### **The Contemporary Knowledge Environment**

Early childhood teacher education is situated within a knowledge environment that is characterised by massive change (Foray, 2003). The changes are presenting challenges to the university as an institution (Barnett, 2003). These challenges sit alongside many debates and tensions within the early childhood field itself. In the contemporary context, the amount, type and degree of specialisation considered necessary for those preparing to work with young children continue to be the subject of intense debate. These debates have a long genealogy. From the beginning of the twentieth century, the theories of progressive education that were traditionally considered 'specialist' for early childhood education were subsumed by the rapidly expanding field of 'developmental' psychology (Silin, 1987). During the 1990s the dominance of developmental psychology was challenged by socio-cultural scholars who argued that there needed to be a 'newly configured relationship between childhood development and early childhood teacher preparation' (Cullen, 1999, p. 14). Poststructuralist researchers have also challenged the dominance of developmental psychology in early childhood policy and practice. MacNaughton (2003) states: 'Re-conceptualist scholars are calling for a major epistemological rethink about the role and place of developmental knowledge of the child in early childhood practice' (p. 29). These debates are occurring in an environment where universities, as social institutions, are facing both sociological and epistemological challenge (Barnett, 2003, p. 2). The epistemological challenges are related to ideas about what counts as knowledge, how it is formed and communicated and lead to debates about who is entitled to produce this knowledge. The sociological challenges relate to a situation where the autonomy of the traditional university is being reduced by the demand for social accountability and increasing interconnectedness with wider society. Universities are required to 'see themselves as part of a global economy, and as part of an international society' (Barnett, 2003, p. 2).

#### *The University Environment: responding to sociological and epistemological challenges*

Many of the changes evident in contemporary Australian universities can be attributed to global forces. These forces include the 'increasing economic and cultural global integration' that has led to significant social change, informed by 'neo-liberal discourses' (Seddon, 2000, p. 4). Neo-liberal discourses are enacted through processes of deregulation which are framed by the ideology of the market with a trend for nation states to reframe their work in terms of the choices individual actors make, rather than focusing responsibility at societal level. This focus on the individual and choice is reflected in political change and creates new modes of government that are reliant on 'market mechanisms and other deregulatory procedures which increasingly individualise and decentralise social action' (Seddon, 2000, p. 4). Within the complex picture of contemporary social, economic and political conditions outlined here, knowledge is seen as a commodity, 'a key resource that makes the difference in profitability' (Seddon, 2000, p. 8). Contemporary information capitalism conceives knowledge as creating a 'competitive advantage' and, as Foray (2003) argues, 'national economies are more dependent than ever on the capacity to produce and use knowledge' (p. 7). This brief summary of the social, political and economic conditions of which universities are a part, alerts us to the macro-level of societal change that has occurred since the 1980s (Young, 1998). Early childhood teacher education is situated within the university and is part of a knowledge environment that has been described above and therefore subject to both sociological and epistemological challenge.

#### *A Closer Look at the Epistemological Challenges*

One of the differences between the contemporary situation and previous eras is that there is now a complex mix of individuals, services and organisations that make up the field of contemporary

knowledge production. For example, knowledge about early childhood teaching and learning is produced in early childhood centres, schools, universities, government departments, and curriculum authorities. This change has redefined the purposes of the university in that academics are now part of a 'web' of knowledge producers (Singh et al, 2006), often responding to market demands and opportunities. One of the implications of the change that has been described here is that the epistemological challenges regarding what 'counts' as knowledge have gained impetus and intensity.

The contemporary field of knowledge production is characterised by a diversity of approaches and perspectives about what counts as knowledge and how it is produced. Gibbons and his associates (1994) articulate the changes that are occurring by naming two different types of knowledge production as Modes 1 and 2. From Gibbons et al's perspective, Mode 1 is the traditional disciplinary process in which scholars within disciplinary frameworks work with increasingly specialised knowledge in particular epistemic communities. For example, since the late nineteenth century, the knowledge base of early childhood education has relied primarily on scholars working in the discipline of developmental psychology (Beatty et al, 2006). Mode 2 knowledge production exists alongside the traditional mode and is characterised by much looser groups of people working as part of heterogeneous teams to generate knowledge that has immediate application to problems identified by a broad range of stakeholders. A recent example of this type of knowledge production in early childhood is evident in the development of the Australian Early Years Learning Framework (2009) which brought together early childhood experts from government education departments and early childhood academics.

What are the implications of these changes in the broad field of knowledge production for early childhood teacher education? Contemporary early childhood teacher education is now situated alongside other institutions, organisations and individuals with vested interests in the production of new educational knowledge and is also positioned within a field that uses and generates different types of knowledge. Bernstein's (1996) theoretical framework provides a useful backdrop for considering the ways early childhood teacher education is currently being repositioned within the field of knowledge production. Bernstein used the word 'arena' to identify the communities and organisations involved with producing and using educational knowledge in the 1990s. He named these arenas '*production, recontextualisation, and reproduction*' (p. 191). Bernstein argued that the *production* of new educational knowledge at that time took place in universities, within research communities, in a process whereby 'new' ideas were selectively created, modified and changed and where specialised discourses were developed, modified or changed (p. 191). Bernstein contended that *recontextualisation* took place mainly in 'state departments of education and training, curriculum authorities, specialist education journals and teacher education institutions' and that *reproduction* (i.e. the pedagogic inculcation of knowledge) took place 'in primary, secondary and tertiary schooling institutions' (p. 191). In Bernstein's framework, early childhood teacher education was not included as part of the university; it was located as a separate institution and he argued that it was not involved in producing new knowledge. This point will be elaborated later in the article in the historical analysis of Australian early childhood teacher education. According to Bernstein the main function of teacher education within the field of knowledge production was recontextualising knowledge produced by others, which meant that teacher education 'selectively appropriates, relocates, refocuses, and relates other discourses to constitute its own order and orderings' (p. 184). This aspect of Bernstein's theoretical framework becomes increasingly significant in any discussion of contemporary early childhood teacher education for it positions teacher education as a recipient and user of knowledge produced by others, rather than as a creator.

In Bernstein's (1996) description of the traditional field of knowledge production, universities were seen as sites for developing new ideas, concepts and ways of investigating particular problems. University scholars determined the new directions for their research. However, in the contemporary field of educational knowledge production, it is evident that the university is positioned differently and is often *responding* to policy initiatives driven by societal change and political imperatives. In Australia, universities' educational research is now often funded from both federal and state government departments to investigate the effects of policy implementation. The

traditional autonomy of university scholars is challenged in contemporary times as dependency for survival is increasingly related to sources of research funding (Blackmore et al, 2006, p. 3).

As the debates regarding what constitutes 'pure' research intensify (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2006), early childhood teacher educators experience increasing tension regarding what knowledge is most important for pre-service teachers. Amid debates regarding what constitutes knowledge and who is entitled to produce it, early childhood educators are compelled to reconsider what is essential 'specialist' early childhood knowledge.

### *An Early Childhood Knowledge Base: the debates*

The progressive theoretical knowledge that was historically considered 'specialist' for early childhood education was heavily influenced by Rousseau's and Froebel's vision of the innocent child (Rose, 1989, p. 179). Although 'science had become influential in many areas of life since the 17th century, it did not have a major direct influence on the early programs established for young children' (Hill et al, 1998, p. 39). However, during the latter part of the nineteenth century, 'romanticism and spirituality joined with science and the child was transformed into an object of scientific study' (Hill et al, 1998, p. 43). This 'legitimation by science of Rousseau's innocent child' (Walkerdine, 1984, p. 170) led to an increasing emphasis on psychologised knowledge drawn from 'developmental' psychology (Silin, 1987). Beatty et al (2006) describe the current situation as one where: 'Teachers, parents, child-care providers, and legislators routinely turn to developmental psychology to help guide them through the complex and sometime perplexing details of dealing with children in a highly complex society' (p. 16). However, as noted previously, this dominance of developmental psychology has been challenged by scholars working within socio-cultural and poststructuralist paradigms.

Contemporary debates regarding what might be the most important knowledge for early childhood professionals are often related to the place and importance of child development theory. When using the term 'child development theory' I refer to the range of theories that attempt to explain the 'systematic, age related change in physical, social, emotional and psychological functioning' (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2004, p. 5). Child development theory is a form of knowledge produced by scientific methods such as observation, measuring, testing and experimentation. These theories are underpinned by assumptions of 'normality' with clearly defined characteristics that describe 'normal' development.

Child development theories are decidedly 'modernist' in that they share an assumption that there are essentialised, pre-existing stages of development that are 'out there' regardless of particulars of individuals, times and spaces (Matusov et al, 2007). The pedagogical practices based on concepts of universal cognitive structures and developmentalism have been critiqued by researchers wanting to 'reconceptualise' early childhood education (Silin, 1987; Kessler & Swadener, 1992; Meredyth & Tyler, 1993; Burman, 1994; Flear, 1995; Cannella, 1997; Baker, 1999; Dahlberg et al, 1999; Rhedding-Jones, 2002). For example, Meredyth & Tyler (1993) examine how the non-coercive 'technologies' of the traditional kindergarten, the architecture and space for 'surveillance', the observation booths, the furniture and the toileting arrangements are part of programs and strategies designed to develop 'particular types of children' who were determined by child psychologists according to 'universal paths' of development (p. 53).

Researchers working within diverse cultural communities and from postmodern, postcolonial or neo-colonial perspectives have contested the dominance of western ways of thinking about young children (Delpit, 1995; Cannella, 1997; Ellsworth, 1997; Rhedding-Jones, 2002; Soto & Swadener, 2002). These researchers argue that child development theory, with its focus on the individual 'ahistorical, asocial and apolitical child' (Griehaber & Cannella, 2001, p. 12), has contributed to the construction of 'deficit' children. Soto & Swadener's (2002) research challenges the 'colonisation' of a 'single official early childhood pedagogy' and they argue that 'only when we work in solidarity and as allies with multiple voices will diverse children, families and communities experience social justice and equity' (p. 58).

Despite these challenges, child development theory continues to be the basis on which many educational programs are constructed. In this article, I argue that if we are to improve our ability to work effectively with diverse children, families and communities, we need to reconceptualise the

ways we position this theoretical knowledge. I share Ryan & Grieshaber's (2005) position that rather than taking an 'additive' approach to child development theory, where new knowledges and perspectives are 'tacked on' to existing theory, teacher education needs to provide student teachers with 'theoretical toolboxes' that they can use to analyse the ways knowledge limits and constrains practice and use these tools to reconsider their work with young children from different perspectives and create alternate possibilities (p. 3). I argue that the theoretical tools provided by poststructuralist perspectives enable teacher educators to work alongside student teachers to support inquiry into how they are being positioned within the contemporary knowledge environment and to contest knowledge rather than simply applying knowledge that has been discovered by others. Taking such a position means 'transgressing the modernist theory-practice binary' that has dominated early childhood policy and practice in the past (Lenz Taguchi, 2007, p. 275). The contemporary binary is best understood by considering its history. Tracing the history of Australian early childhood teacher education enables a closer examination of how the binary came to be 'taken for granted' and illustrates how tensions about who is entitled to produce knowledge about teaching and learning in the early years (as with other levels of education) have many historical precedents. Foucault's ideas are helpful in this discussion regarding the knowledge base that has come to be valued in early childhood teacher education. He emphasises that a study of the past (history of early childhood teacher education) offers a framework for assessing, shaping and reshaping the present (Marshall, 1990, p. 22; Hultqvist, 1996, p. 406).

### **Studying the Past as a Way of Assessing the Present: an Australian historical perspective**

Many of the contemporary debates and tensions regarding the knowledge base of early childhood teacher education have long genealogies and considering the trajectories, fractures and disjunctions in some of the history of early childhood teacher education enables a better understanding of the present. In Australia, prior to the 1960s, early childhood educators were trained in Kindergarten Training Colleges (KTCs) which were established in each state and were an integral part of the Kindergarten Unions, organisations set up to disseminate kindergarten 'principles' in those states. In contrast to the Teacher Training Colleges for primary teachers, the KTCs were not under the jurisdiction of state departments of education and received minimal government funding (Brennan, 1994, p. 13). In this situation, the Kindergarten Training Colleges were able to claim uniqueness in terms of four interrelated factors. Firstly, they claimed unique and specialised professional knowledge. The knowledge that underpinned the preparation of kindergarten teachers in the early KTCs drew from progressive philosophies of Rousseau and Froebel for example, and positioned 'young children as innocents who should be allowed to mature naturally in their own time' (Gahan, 2007, p. 3). Over time, these progressive educational ideas became psychologised to the extent that they are now referred to as 'Developmentally Appropriate Practice' (Bredekamp, 1986).

Secondly, the KTCs catered for the 'all round development' of the prospective early childhood teacher, aiming to 'give her the true balance of head, heart and hand' (de Lissa, 1910, quoted in Whitehead, 2008, p. 35). Froebelian philosophy focused similarly on children's mental, physical and spiritual development. Furthermore, prominent early childhood teacher educators such as Frances Newton and Lillian de Lissa deployed Froebelian pedagogies in their classrooms. Thus in 1903

Miss Newton – with the instinct of the true kindergartner – drew from her pupils the suggestive thoughts contained in the lesson, with the best methods of application. In no case was the desired information given by the teacher, unless the pupils proved incapable of developing the hidden meaning. However, in most cases the students grasped the thought indicated and worked out for themselves the correct solution. (Russell, 1903, quoted in Whitehead, 2008, p. 36)

Thirdly, this dialogic relationship between the teacher education experience and student teachers' understandings of teaching practice enabled the KTCs to lay claim to a unique nexus between theory and practice. In 1910 de Lissa articulated her stance:

I think our training is on sound principles, because theory is not divorced from action, but runs along hand in hand with it. It is possible to practice what we preach because we are tied down by

nothing, but perfectly free to work out our ideals in the best possible manner. Teachers Colleges and schools of all places should be places of freedom and growth.  
(De Lissa, 1910, quoted in Whitehead, 2010, p. 92)

This statement not only highlights the relationship between theory and practice but also illustrates the fourth feature of the KTCs: their independence. De Lissa perceived progressive philosophies and government control as inimical. Indeed, she portrayed the separateness of the KTCs from government funding and jurisdiction as enabling the melding of progressive theory and practice.

During the 1960s however, the Australian federal government became increasingly involved in higher education and funded the establishment of Colleges of Advanced Education (CAEs) alongside the universities in each state. As a result, the KTCs became 'embedded within a wider system of Advanced Education' (Dyson, 2005, p. 42). Although they were no longer self-regulating, the former KTCs continued to offer separate and distinct courses within the CAEs. This meant that the unique knowledge base and nexus between theory and practice identified previously was sustained in the new institutional arrangements.

The increased federal involvement established a binary system of higher education with a 'formalised distinction between those who were "intellectually trained" (in universities) and the "manually trained workers" in the CAEs' (Dyson, 2005, p. 42). Primary and early childhood teachers still trained in CAEs whilst most secondary teacher training took place in universities. This binary created a situation where early and primary teacher education was viewed as 'hands on' and practical and secondary teacher education was perceived to be more theoretical and intellectually demanding (p. 43). Within this system, the knowledge base that came to be valued in early childhood teacher preparation was child development knowledge and that knowledge provided the basis for how to 'act appropriately, correctly and understand children' using 'Developmentally Appropriate Practice' (MacNaughton, 2003, p. 30).

The tensions between perceptions of teaching concerned with 'practical' skills and teaching as intellectual work are prevalent in current debates regarding early childhood teacher education. They are manifest in debates about whether early childhood teacher education is primarily a 'technical' process of developing a set of skills and competencies using processes that 'apply' knowledge developed by others or is a process designed to support teacher educators and pre-service teachers to inquire into, contest and contribute to knowledge about teaching.

### *A 'Unified' National System*

In the early 1990s early childhood and primary teacher education was situated within universities in all Australian states. This was the result of the Dawkins (1988) report on higher education that set out a radical restructuring of higher education from a binary system into a unified national system and the reconstitution or incorporation of CAEs as universities (Knight et al, 1994, p. 458). In Australia, as in many other countries, moving early childhood teacher education into the university context was a dramatic encounter between very different cultures. The move was accompanied by the extension of most courses from 2- or 3-year diplomas to 4-year degrees. The situation in Australia resonates with that found in many other western countries and is typified by Lohmander's (2004) description of the Swedish context where:

the training of preschool teachers has progressed from relatively short, self-regulated courses to an extensive ... university degree ... while previously this training was well grounded in practice and the profession, the transfer to universities led to a change in the balance between theory and practice and a program that became more similar in its structure to traditional university courses of study. (p. 28)

Thus, in contemporary times, early childhood teacher educators work in very large organisations, competing with other faculties and departments for funding to support teaching and research activities. Student teachers are expected to engage with the intellectual demands of university learning. Alongside the relocation into universities, teacher education was also subjected to increasing scrutiny by successive federal governments.



*Teacher Education: a site for reform*

Since its move into the university sector, teacher education in Australia (as in most western countries) has been positioned as a site for reform by many significant government inquiries. Dyson (2005) asserts that Australian teacher education 'has been reported on and examined almost beyond belief or reason, especially over the last 25 years' (p. 38). Dyson identifies four issues that continue to arise in debates and reviews of teacher education: education versus training; theory versus practice; supply versus demand; professional versus skilled and competent practitioners. These issues continue to create ongoing tensions in curriculum restructures and fuel ongoing debates regarding the relative importance and structure of the practicum in early childhood teacher education in many Australian universities.

There is congruence between what is happening in contemporary Australian teacher education and other western countries. Indeed, reforms in the United Kingdom are often the precursors for reforms in the Australian context and provide an example of a globalisation at work. The features that have characterised teacher education policy in England and Wales since the 1980s and 90s include a shift away from the disciplines of philosophy, sociology and psychology to much more specific specialised knowledge related to classroom problems such as class control and assessment and 'teachers being trained to teach their subjects according to the National Curriculum and the requirements of public examinations' (Young, 1998, p. 56).

The conditions I have described in this section highlight many of the tensions in early childhood teacher education. The tensions between a technical and intellectual orientation to teacher education, the tension between local curriculum decision making and the demand for compliance with mandated curriculum, and the demands for reform have impacted on the preparation of teachers for all levels of education. These dilemmas and tensions are summarised by Britzman (1991) as tensions 'between schools and the university, between theory and practice, between knowledge and experience, and between the real and the ideal' (p. 211). They resonate with de Lissa's comments in the early twentieth century.

As a result of the changes outlined above, there are now many different models for early childhood pre-service teacher education with varying degrees of specialisation. Some universities offer entirely separate specialist early childhood degrees qualifying teachers to work with children from birth to 8 years. These contrast with degree programs in which early childhood pre-service teachers take some generic or 'core' topics with those preparing to teach in the primary and secondary years and some specialist topics. The changes outlined in this section are reducing the separation that has traditionally been a feature of early childhood teacher education but this is not without resistance. The Australian Senate Inquiry into Early Childhood (Homes et al, 1996) report stated that: 'Academics who appeared before the Committee lamented the trend towards more general rather than specialist training' (p. 86). Early childhood teacher education is thus caught between the demand for change and the need to honour the accumulated traditions of the past that have contributed to early childhood educators' sense of professional identity. The traditions include the claim of unique and specialised knowledge alongside a unique relationship between theory and practice.

In this brief review of the history of Australian early childhood teacher education, it has become evident that the relative status between teachers' practical knowledge and formal or theoretical knowledge has been one of the most pervasive tensions in early childhood teacher education. I suggest that revisiting this tension offers new possibilities for examining the boundaries the binary has established and that the debates about 'what' knowledge is most important are best informed by reconsidering the relationship between theory and practical knowledge

### **Implications of the Theory/Practice Binary**

The distinction between theory and practical knowledge has a long history, for Plato's idea of 'phronesis' or practical wisdom introduced the concept of knowledge that was the result of 'doing' as distinct from knowledge that was separate and distinct from the 'real' world. The difference and distinction between '*episteme* or knowledge about the world ... and *techne*, knowing how to do something ... is that the first is propositional or informational knowledge and the second is knowing how to do something, or competent performance' (Fenstermacher, 1994, p. 26). Ryle

(1949) argued that 'knowledge-how' could not be reduced to 'knowledge-that' and that these were distinct domains that were independent of one another (in Fenstermacher, 1994, p. 26). What is particularly important in these historical (and now contemporary) debates is that the distinction has become a binary with the resultant status differential: using epistemological criteria of validity and generalisability to measure has meant that practical knowledge has traditionally had less status and credibility than theoretical knowledge.

The distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge about teaching continues to underpin many discussions about educational knowledge. Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1999) contend that 'this distinction, between theory and practical knowledge, works to maintain the hegemony of university-generated knowledge for teaching' (p. 289). Discussions regarding the professional knowledge of teachers, as Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1993) observe, invariably refer to 'the knowledge generated by professional researchers ... a knowledge base almost exclusively constructed by outside experts' (p. 1). Shulman (1986) also notes that the wisdom of practice or teachers' own form of professional understanding was often omitted in debates regarding the knowledge base of teaching. The status of teachers' practical knowledge is an ongoing issue in early childhood teacher education.

Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1999) contribute significant ideas to the debates and tensions regarding teacher knowledge. They distinguish between 'knowledge-for-practice', where university researchers generate 'formal knowledge and theory' to be used in classrooms, and 'knowledge-in-practice', which competent teachers have and develop as they design rich learning experiences in the classroom (p. 250). A third kind of knowledge is described by Cochran-Smith & Lytle as 'knowledge-of-practice', where teachers are 'working within the contexts of inquiry communities to theorise and construct their work to connect with larger social, cultural, and political issues' (p. 250). The concept of teachers' knowledge-of-practice offers a way forward from an either/or binary between theoretical/ practical educational knowledge to a more dialogic relationship between these different ways of knowing about teaching.

#### *Beyond the Binary: generative possibilities*

Within Cochran-Smith & Lytle's (1999) framework teachers treat the knowledge and theory produced by others as generative, and use this knowledge as the basis for 'interrogation, interpretation, and intentional' investigations in their classroom (p. 250). There are similarities between Cochran-Smith & Lytle's concept of knowledge-of-practice and Foucault's (1980) theorisation regarding the relationship between local, subjugated knowledges and theoretical knowledge. Within Cochran-Smith & Lytle's model teachers make strategic use of local knowledge by 'entertaining' (Foucault, 1980) it against the claims of theoretical knowledge. In this way, it can be argued that they are participating in a process of generating new knowledge. From this perspective, the teacher/student teacher/teacher educator becomes a mediator, exploring the limits and possibilities of 'ways of knowing' and 'blurring the gap or momentarily erasing the binary between theory and practical knowledge' (Lenz Taguchi, 2007, p. 279). This process involves both 'learning about' knowledge that others have developed (theory) and testing and contesting this theory as a catalyst for developing new knowledge. This approach requires a repositioning of the teacher/student teacher/teacher educator, away from the certainty of truth to a position of inquiry. Taking a stance of inquiry involves the forming and reforming of frameworks for understanding practice. These frameworks are drawn from both theoretical and practical knowledge as 'those who teach and learn from teaching ... interpret and theorise what they are doing' (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 65). They resonate with de Lissa's and Newton's understandings of teacher education in the early twentieth century.

I suggest that the conceptual framework elaborated by Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1999) offers a way forward in the impasse that has been created by polarised epistemological positions for it seems that any simplistic distinction between theory and practical knowledge will not suffice within this frame. A stance of inquiry does not sustain an 'either/or' position between theory and practice nor does it retain the dominance of theoretical knowledge for the process involves using both knowledges to generate new knowledge. Cochran-Smith & Lytle have introduced a useful way of thinking about practical knowledge that offers possibilities for reducing the theory/practice

dualism. Within their conceptualisation, theory is used as a basis for testing and exploring classroom practice and this process has the potential to generate new knowledge. The boundary between theory and practice is fractured and the relationship between the known and unknown is explored through a dialogic process. The aim of this process is to develop knowledge about teaching through rigorous, systematic inquiry. This type of knowledge production draws ideas from a wider sphere than the immediate, one-off situation, and therefore meets some epistemological demands for generalisability and significance. From this perspective, the possibilities of developing a systematic, reliable body of professional knowledge are more real. However this knowledge base is always under construction, contestable and unfinished.

In order for a stance of inquiry to be made possible within teacher education, teacher educators must face the demand for sustained and systematic research into the early childhood teacher education curriculum. I share Collins' (2004) position that:

We are trying to construct something new in a post-modern moment when it is no longer tenable to believe in a science of teaching, nor to affirm as simple truth any one Grand Theory – of who children are, how they learn, what one must teach or how one must teach it ... what we do know is that we need to find an intellectually honest way to introduce student teachers to the highest quality theories and debates, the best food for thought, about the elements and complexities of good professional practice. (p. 238)

This requires that teacher educators work in ways that mediate between the known and the unknown and pursue conversations and dialogues that revisit ideas of what it means to teach tertiary students in this postmodern world. It requires access to knowledge, and ways of testing that knowledge, in processes that expand the options for considering the work of learning to teach.

## Conclusion

The ongoing process of learning about teaching and learning using analytic tools provided by poststructuralist theories offers the potential to reduce some of the dilemmas in contemporary early childhood teacher education. These dilemmas include tension between theory and practice, teaching and research. As Britzman (1991) says, from an inquiry perspective 'we are invited to resign ourselves from the imperatives of finality and conformity and view our practices as process and becoming' (p. 239). From such a position, the possibilities for change and development of new knowledge about teaching and learning are achievable.

Approaching the task of 'learning to teach' from an inquiry perspective situates early childhood centres, schools and universities, teachers, teacher educators and student teachers as players in Gibbons' (1994) Mode 2 knowledge production teams. This mode offers the potential for teacher education, teacher educators and student teachers to be positioned in relationships with early childhood centres and schools that reduce some of the divisions that have historically limited educational reform. From this perspective, both teacher educators and student teachers are offered professional identity positions as contributors to new knowledge and change agents rather than replicators of the historically constructed status quo in early childhood education.

## References

- Baker, B. (1999) The Dangerous and the Good? Developmentalism, Progress, and Public Schooling, *American Educational Research Journal*, 36(4), 797-834. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/00028312036004797>
- Barnett, R. (2003) *Beyond all Reason: living with ideology in the university*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Beatty, B., Cahan, E. & Grant J. (Eds) (2006) *When Science Encounters the Child*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Bernstein, B. (1996) *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Blackmore, J., Wright, J. & Harwood, V. (Eds) (2006) *Counterpoints on the Quality and Impact of Educational Research*. Lilydale: Australian Association for Research in Education.
- Bredenkamp, S. (1986) *Developmentally Appropriate Practice*. Washington: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

## Professional Knowledge that Counts

- Brennan, D. (1994) *The Politics of Australian Child Care: from philanthropy to feminism*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Britzman, D. (1991) *Practice Makes Practice: a critical study of learning to teach*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Burman, E. (1994) *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology*. New York: Routledge.
- Cannella, G.S. (1997) *Deconstructing Early Childhood Education: social justice and revolution*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Cochran-Smith, M. & Lytle, S. (1993) *Inside Outside: teacher research and knowledge*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Cochran-Smith, M. & Lytle, S. (1999) Relationships of Knowledge and Practice: teacher learning in communities, *Review of Research in Education*, 24, 249-305.
- Collins, C. (2004) Envisaging a New Education Studies Major: what are the core educational knowledges to be addressed in preservice teacher education? *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 32(3), 227-241. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1359866042000295398>
- Cullen, J. (1999) Children's Knowledge, Teachers' Knowledge: implications for early childhood teacher education, *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 24(2), 13-15.
- Dahlberg, G., Moss, P. & Pence, A. (1999) *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care*. London: Falmer Press.
- Dawkins, J. (1988) *Higher Education: a policy statement*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Delpit, L. (1995) *Other People's Children*. New York: New York Press.
- Dyson, M. (2005) Australian Teacher Education: although reviewed to the eyeballs is there evidence of significant change and where to now? *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 30(1), 37-54.
- Ellsworth, E. (1997) *Teaching Positions: difference, pedagogy and the power of address*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Fenstermacher, G. (1994) The Knower and the Known: the nature of knowledge in research on teaching, *Review of Research in Education*, 20, 3-56.
- Fleer, M. (1995) Does Cognition Lead Development, or Does Development Lead Cognition? in M. Fleer (Ed.) *DAP Centrism: challenging developmentally appropriate practice*, 11-23. Sydney: Australian Early Childhood Association, Canberra.
- Foray, D. (2003) The Production of Knowledge in Different Sectors: a model and some hypotheses, *London Review of Education*, 1(1), 7-19. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14748460306689>
- Foucault, M. (1980) *Power/Knowledge: selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*, ed. C. Gordon. New York: Pantheon.
- Gahan, D. (2007) Historical Perspectives on Kindergarten Education in Queensland, in J. Ailwood (Ed.) *Early Childhood in Australia: historical and comparative contexts*. Frenchs Forest: Pearson Education.
- Gibbons, M., Limoges, C., Nowotny, H., Schwartzman, S., Scott, P. & Trow, M. (1994) *The New Production of Knowledge*. London: Sage.
- Grieshaber, S. & Cannella, G. (2001) From Identity to Identities: increasing possibilities in early childhood education, in S. Grieshaber & G. Cannella (Eds) *Embracing Identities in Early Childhood Education: diversity and possibilities*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Groundwater-Smith, S. & Mockler, N. (2006) Research that Counts: practitioner research and the academy, in J. Blackmore, J. Wright & V. Harwood (Eds) *Counterpoints on the Quality and Impact of Educational Research*, 105-119. Lilydale: Australian Association for Research in Education.
- Hill, S., Comber, B., Louden, B., Reid, J. & Rivalland, J. (1998) *100 Children Go to School: connections and disconnections in literacy development in the year prior to school and the first year of school*. Canberra, ACT: Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs.
- Homes, B., Le Guen, R., Connaughton, J., Kwan, E., Corrigan, P. & Willis, J. (1996) *Childhood Matters: the report on the inquiry into early childhood education*. Canberra, ACT: Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee.
- Hultqvist, K. (1997) The Child: a historical perspective on the emergence of the psychological child in the context of preschool – notes on a study in progress, *Childhood: A Global Journal of Child Research*, 4(4), 405-423.
- Kessler, S. & Swadener, B. (Eds) (1992) *Reconceptualising the Early Childhood Curriculum: beginning the dialogue*. New York: Teachers College Press.

- Knights, J., Lingard, B. & Bartlett, L. (1994) Reforming Teacher Education Policy under Labour Governments in Australia 1983-93, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 15(4), 451-466.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0142569940150401>
- Lenz Taguchi, H. (2007) Deconstructing and Transgressing the Theory-practice Dichotomy in Early Childhood Education, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 39(3), 275-290.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2007.00324.x>
- Lohmander, K. (2004) The Fading of a Teaching Profession? Reforms of Early Childhood Teacher Education in Sweden, *Early Years*, 24(1), 23-34. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0957514032000179034>
- MacNaughton, G. (2003) The Possibilities and Challenges of 'Not Knowing': early childhood teachers' knowledge and thinking in uncertain times, in O. Saracho & B. Spodek (Eds) *Studying Teachers in Early Childhood Settings*. Greenwich: Information Age Publishing.
- Marshall, J. (1990) Foucault and Educational Research, in S. Ball (Ed.) *Foucault and Education*. London: Routledge.
- Matusov, E., DePalma, R. & Drye, S. (2007) Whose Development? Salvaging the Concept of Development within a Sociocultural Approach to Education, *Educational Theory*, 57(4), 403-419.
- McDevitt, T. & Ormrod, J. (2004) *Child Development and Education*. Upper Saddle River: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Meredyth, D. & Tyler, D. (Eds) (1993) *Child and Citizen*. Griffith: Griffith University.
- Press, F. & Hayes, A. (2000) *OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy: Australian background report*. Canberra, ACT: Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs.
- Rhedding-Jones, J. (2002) An Undoing of Documents and Other Texts: towards a critical multiculturalism in early childhood education, *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 3(1), 90-115.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2002.3.1.10>
- Rose, N. (1989) *Governing the Soul: the shaping of the private self*. London: Routledge.
- Ryan, S. & Grieshaber, S. (2005) Shifting from Developmental to Postmodern Practices in Early Childhood Teacher Education, *Journal of Teacher Education*, 56(1), 34-45.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0022487104272057>
- Seddon, T. (2000) Working Knowledge for New Educational Landscapes, paper presented at the conference Working Knowledge: Productive Learning at Work, Sydney, December.
- Shulman, L. (1986) Those Who Understand: knowledge growth in teaching, *Educational Researcher*, 15(2), 4-14.
- Silin, J. (1987) The Early Childhood Educator's Knowledge Base: a reconsideration, *Current Topics in Early Childhood Education*, 7, 17-29.
- Singh, P., Han, J. & Harreveld, B. (2006) The Impacts of Redistributive Quantum Funding: managing quality education research to extend talent, sustain openness and build toolkits, in J. Blackmore & J. Wright (Eds) *Review of Australian Research in Education: counterpoints on the quality and impact of educational research*, 175-189. Lilydale: Australian Association for Research in Education.
- Soto, L.D. & Swadener, B. (2002) Toward Libratory Early Childhood Theory, Research and Praxis: decolonising a field, *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 3(1), 38-66.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2002.3.1.8>
- Thomas, R. (2000) *Comparing Theories of Child Development*. Stamford: Wadsworth.
- Walkerline, V. (1984) Developmental Psychology and the Child-Centred Pedagogy, in J. Henriques, W. Holloway & C. Urwin (Eds) *Changing the Subject*, 153-202. London: Methuen.
- Whitehead, K. (2008) The Construction of Early Childhood Teachers' Professional Identities, Then and Now, *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 33(3), 34-41.
- Whitehead, K. (2010) A Decided Disadvantage for Kindergarten Students to Mix with the State Teachers, *Paedagogica Historica*, 46(1), 83-95. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00309230903528470>
- Young, M. (1998) Rethinking Teacher Education for a Global Future: lessons from the English, *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 24(1), 51-62. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02607479819917>

---

**SUSAN KRIEG** is a Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood at Flinders University with responsibility for developing a new, innovative early childhood pre-service degree. Prior to taking up that position in 2007, her experience as an educator included 25 years' teaching across all levels of schooling, leadership at local, state and national levels. Susan has worked as District Co-ordinator, Principal, Curriculum Manager, and President of the Junior Primary Principals' Association of

*Professional Knowledge that Counts*

South Australia. Her research career began in the classroom and school context with involvement in large-scale and small-scale research projects that contributed new knowledge about teaching and learning to her own practice but also to national research projects such as the longitudinal Department of Education Science and Training project '100 Children go to School'. Her research interests focus on social justice in early childhood, professional identities and curriculum innovation. *Correspondence:* Susan Krieg, Flinders University, GPO Box 2100, Adelaide, South Australia 5001, Australia ([susan.krieg@flinders.edu.au](mailto:susan.krieg@flinders.edu.au)).