

What they should have told me: Six beginning teachers' reflections on their preservice education in the light of their early career experiences

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Introduction

THE STUDY ON WHICH THIS PAPER IS BASED looks into the needs of early career teachers in order to inform the content and delivery of preservice programs. It sought advice from beginning teachers on their views on strengths and weaknesses in their preservice education in preparing them for their current roles. It also considered whether some information should be deferred until the beginning of practice, in order to assist its contextualisation. Finally, the project investigated the relationship between preservice and inservice experiential knowledge, between episteme and phronesis (Kessels & Korthagen, 2001), that is, between theory and practice, or as Kessels and Korthagen prefer, between theory and perception.

This paper reports on the experiences of six early career teachers as they reflected on the issues they were facing in the classroom. They were asked to consider their preservice education and the extent to which they now found it relevant. Participating teachers were employed at one of two schools, either primary or secondary, in south-western Sydney. They agreed to take part in monthly telephone interviews over a three- or four-month period in 2004. Firstly, the paper will review relevant literature. The second part of the paper outlines the methodology and introduces the participants. The remaining sections report the major findings and offer suggestions about the content and delivery of preservice programs.

Literature review

Teachers are being faced with increasing expectations in terms of accountability with regard to student outcomes, record keeping and pastoral care, among others. For beginning teachers, these demands take on added difficulty in the context of relative inexperience and a new workplace. Other complicating professional factors and personal issues may include moving house, living independently of one's parents for the first time, or commuting. Further complicating this is the reality that many teachers' first experience is as casual teachers. Here they may know little of the school's processes and personnel, of students' names and of procedures. McCormack and Thomas (2002) support widely observed anecdotal evidence that casual teachers

are often confronted with more complex issues of management than are their permanent counterparts.

This affects not only the quality of teaching attained by these new teachers, but also contributes to the high level of attrition among teachers in the early years of the profession. Ewing and Smith (2002) point out an attrition rate of between 25% and 40% of teachers in their first five years of teaching, in various developed countries. Teaching is at times a solitary affair, particularly in contrast to the collaborative experiences of preservice (Corrie, 2000).

In an extensive study, involving the collaboration of four Australian teacher education faculties, Schuck, Deer, Barnsley, Brady and Griffin (2002) reported on the needs of beginning teachers. They investigated themes of induction programs, school support, the special needs of casual teachers and requirements for initial teacher education programs. Their findings included the need for preservice education to address: class management and discipline; dealing with ranges in ability; interacting with parents; and fulfilling administration duties. Their findings also generated implications and recommendations for schools, including more, and more effective, support structures. Most strident among their recommendations was a reduced workload for beginning teachers. In this, they echo the findings of Ewing and Smith (2002).

Schuck et al.'s (2002) research confirmed earlier findings and anecdotal evidence that beginning teachers find their preservice education wanting in terms of practical application to the workplace context. Similarly, Ewing and Smith (2002) reported that their informants, beginning teachers, described their preservice training as being idealistic; it left them unprepared to deal with issues such as classroom management and a range of student ability. Also identified were matters of programming and outcome-based assessment.

A more seamless progression from pre- to inservice support for teachers is one common theme, as outlined by Feiman-Namser (2001). Specifically, she recommended the establishment of local networks of educators, and of school/university partnerships to address the difficulties of beginning teachers. Similarly, McCulla (2002) reported on the need for mentors in schools to support and advise neophyte teachers. Of those respondents who did not have a mentor, more than

two-thirds indicated that they needed one. More broadly, McCulla reported on the need for inservice support from universities for their graduates. In like fashion, Darling-Hammond (1994) asserts that these and similar outcomes can be effected by the development of real partnerships, at a structural and conceptual level, between schools and universities.

One way of constructing this progression is to recognise greater commonality and symbiosis in the processes of teaching and learning. For teacher educators, such a stance recognises preservice teachers as the colleagues and co-learners they are. It recognises the learner's capacity to teach, and the teacher's capacity to learn.

A related issue for teacher educators is that of generating and sequencing meaningful learning experiences. Korthagen (2001, p. 66) outlines the attendant process as follows: "not by presenting 'interesting theory' but by first creating suitable experiences" (p. 66). Preservice teachers need to feel that they are "active participants in the construction of the content of the teacher education program" (Korthagen, 2001, p. 53). Korthagen, commenting on Stenhouse, goes on to say that

pedagogy is not the technical process of "transmitting" predescribed curriculum content, but involves experimentation and inquiry by the teacher. Instead of having teachers become the executors of the plans of innovators from outside the schools [teachers should] keep control of their own work. (p. 53)

Grossman, Wineburg and Woolworth (2001) speak of the necessity of 'teacher community', in the context of practising teachers. They recommend the establishment and support of communities of discourse among teachers. Their recommendations could reasonably be expanded to include discourses between practising and preservice teachers, and between universities and schools. The following section outlines a study that sets out to open a dialogue between beginning teachers and preservice teacher education.

Methodology and participants

This research focused on beginning teachers in two schools, one primary and one secondary. The schools are in south-western Sydney, an area which has been traditionally difficult to staff, and which recruits a significant number of new teachers. Despite reasonable levels of material affluence, the area is, compared with other parts of Sydney,

characterised by lower levels of socio-economic capital. It has a large non English-speaking population, large numbers of new migrants, and is at times subjected to negative popular and media stereotyping.

Beginning teachers at these schools had recently undertaken inservice training, provided by the regional subdivision of the state education department, with regard to issues they were likely to face in the workforce, administrative issues etc. Discussions with the Principal of one of the primary school revealed a perceived gap in preservice education on the part of these beginning teachers. This school Principal suggested a second, secondary school for inclusion in the study.

After an initial face-to-face meeting with the prospective participants, telephone conversations took place with each on a monthly basis at mutually agreed times, once these teachers indicated their willingness to participate. Each of the six participants (three from each school) took part in up to five interviews over a four-month period. One of the teachers is an ex-student of mine.

The telephone conversations took the form of semi-structured interviews (see Appendix), wherein the researcher prompted the informant with theme-related questions such as difficulties and joys the teacher may be experiencing in the classroom, and possible reasons for these. The interviews also sought information on contextual matters such as support provided by the school. If respondents identified deficiencies in their preservice education, they were invited to suggest ways in which it could be improved. For the purposes of triangulation, each Principal was invited to nominate the four or five areas of greatest need in terms of beginning teachers' readiness for teaching.

Field notes from the interviews were scrutinised and coded for scatter and cluster in terms of issues raised by the participants. The analysis of each interview informed subsequent interview questions. For instance, the challenges raised by informants, such as behaviour management, became prompts in subsequent interviews.

The participants had undertaken a variety of teacher education courses.

Among the primary school teachers, Elsie completed a three-year Bachelor of Arts, followed by a one-year Bachelor of Teaching (Primary). The main strength of her preservice education was its delivery of literacy education. Patricia completed a four-year

Bachelor of Education degree. For her, the strengths were practicum, especially the internship, which provided experience in the day-to-day running of a classroom. She also praised three subjects in particular, which provided practical ideas and materials for her teaching. She suggested a two-stage internship, taking place at the beginning and the end of the year. This would inform the questions she had to ask lecturers in the interim. As it was, it tended to be "very abstract at uni". Kim completed a four-year Bachelor of Education (BEd) program. She has also completed a Graduate Certificate in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), which she undertook when she noted the high numbers of non English-speaking background students in her classes. She noted that she was highly motivated to undertake this certificate course, in response to an observed need. She completed a valuable subject in her BEd on TESL, but noted that this was only an elective, so many students would not have had this experience.

Of the secondary school teachers, Alison completed a three-year Fine Arts degree, followed by a one-year fast-tracked Bachelor of Teaching degree. One of the most positive features of her course was being taught by practising teachers. One short-coming was a lack of attention to classroom management. She was also disappointed not to be told of the long waiting list for full-time visual arts teaching positions. Erika completed a three-year Bachelor of Science, followed by a one-year Bachelor of Education. She felt that the courses prepared her adequately for teaching, but her preparation was also enhanced by teaching experience overseas. Dave was a carpenter and builder before entering the profession as an industrial arts teacher. He undertook an accelerated teacher training course. The strength of this course was the in-school component. Nevertheless, more school-based observation and teaching would have been good, as would more attention to classroom management.

Findings

Over the duration of this study these beginning teachers' skills and confidence grew markedly. Several factors contributed to this growth. These included increased knowledge of school systems and personnel and the development of a wider range of management strategies, as well as increased content knowledge. Elsie described her practice as being "a bit iffy at the start, but I can see it coming

together". Teachers of younger students in particular also noted the progress their students were making. An increasing ability to match children's names, faces and personalities also assisted in the efficacy and ease of teaching. In the very last weeks of the study, it also appeared that the teachers became more relaxed as the end of the school year approached.

It was also encouraging to witness the enthusiastic engagement of these teachers. Elsie, for instance, came to the phone on one occasion, having been "sewing green pants for a frog" for the end-of-year school assembly. Such assembly performances were also recognised by those teachers involved for their team-building capacity, despite their attendant distraction from curriculum-based work. Idealism also remained robust with most of the teachers most of the time, tempered at times with occasional cynicism and disillusionment. However, the enthusiasm wasn't limited to teachers of younger children. Alison took a group of junior secondary students on a Duke of Edinburgh camp one weekend. While she found the experience tiring at the time and during the following week, she observed that it paid dividends in terms of winning students' respect and willingness to cooperate in class. When classes became talkative, she would hear students say to their peers, "shut up, she's cool". Certainly, there was no apparent despair either in the accounts or the tone of these beginning teachers, and cynicism was rare, interspersed with enthusiastic accounts of achievements. The words of one of the informants, in reference to one of her students demonstrating "a real into-it-ness", also applies in general to these teachers themselves.

Both schools appear to have well-developed support mechanisms for their beginning teachers. These include collaborative partnerships with senior staff. Elsie was "half conscripted, half volunteered" to work with the Principal on the design of reports. Similarly Dave was "roped in" to do a conflict resolution session led by some guest speakers. Erika acknowledged the benefits of regular meetings between the group of early career teachers and their supervisors. Topics for discussion are open to negotiation by the beginning teachers, and have often centred on behaviour management, with particular students the focus of discussion. Systemic support, such as the PSFP (Priority Schools Funding

Program, for schools in socioeconomically or otherwise disadvantaged areas) were also noted and praised by the teachers.

The Principals nominated the following as the main areas of need: curriculum knowledge, including a deep understanding of "what a particular indicator might look like" in terms of assessment and evaluation; programming; understanding school procedures and infrastructure; taking initiatives and exercising leadership; stress management and classroom management, especially in dealing with intercultural issues. The principals noted that teachers who had undertaken an internship program had a much better understanding than did others, of the everyday pragmatics of running a classroom. They also noted that there were progressively fewer 'gaps' in beginning teachers' preparedness over recent years.

The most consistent issues raised by the teachers were classroom management, (confidence in) dealing with parents, intercultural and inter-language issues, children with learning difficulties, and literacy. Some issues were common to teachers at both schools, while others were more specific to one. An example of the latter is literacy teaching, which, not surprisingly, was noted mainly by the primary school teachers. It is worth keeping in mind, too, that primary school teachers in New South Wales typically undertake four years of preservice education, while their secondary colleagues may enter the service with as little as one year's preservice education, following a degree qualification in their teaching subject/s.

Difficulties in classroom management were more prevalent in, but not exclusive to, the secondary school. Elsie reported on a useful hierarchy of sanctions for disobedient students. She observed, however, that "seasoned kids look to get in trouble" and respond to sanctions by saying "I don't give a stuff". Similarly, Dave recounted a conflict resolution session led by guest speakers. "My group ended in a brawl", he said with some bitter irony. According to one of his students, "we did this last year. It was crap". Indeed, getting some students to take their work seriously is a significant problem at times for these teachers. This is particularly the case in what may be perceived as 'non-core' subjects, as opposed to maths or English.

Kim felt that some of the preservice mantras, such as 'be consistent' were found wanting in practice, adding that "you need to learn this on the

job". In terms of strategies, Elsie observed "I copy what I see", and found it valuable to observe experienced teachers' responses to breaches of discipline.

Patricia commented that she didn't want to regress to distributing worksheets. She added that they are accompanied by an assumption that "if the kids are quiet and occupied, they're learning".

On occasion, it is apparently minor issues that don't occur to a teacher during pre-practice. One example is getting the lesson started and then calling the roll, rather than stalling the lesson with roll call at the beginning, as reported by one of the informants. Indeed, this seems to have been 'new territory' for many of the teachers entering the service. They entered the classroom prepared to teach, and found their rhythm disturbed by having to deal with absence notes, collection of money and the like. Perhaps not surprisingly, these teachers were not instructed in such matters during their preservice education. When asked if these issues had been modelled during practicum, Patricia said "you're just looking for teaching when you're on prac". The routine nature of administration also extends more than Patricia had expected to some aspects of teaching: "It's so different to uni. You spend so much time saying 'ants in the apple, a, a, a'".

Dealing with parents whose worldview or language may be very different to their own emerged as a difficulty for several of these teachers. Kim reported that some families appear to provide no support for doing homework, and no place for it to be done. While ESL (English as a second language) teaching was offered as an elective in her preservice course, Kim felt that this provision was inadequate.

Both schools appear to have strong communication strategies with parents, and parental support largely determines student responsiveness to discipline measures. Alison reported that with one exception, her encounters with parents of students who had misbehaved were positive; in most instances, parents "feel bad" when they learn that their child has misbehaved. In some instances, though, interpretations of subsequent student conduct were based on the inference that improved behaviour was a result of parental intervention and support at home. Similarly, unchanged behaviour on the part of students was attributed to an assumption of parental indifference to the behaviour, to school or to learning. Several of the

informants, however, acknowledged difficulties for parents, confronted with long hours of work and commuting, language difficulties etc. A twenty-something aged teacher may be closer chronologically and culturally to their students than to their students' parents, and might be still living under their own parents' roof. For such teachers, dealing with parents of their students may well be a daunting proposition, particularly when the news to be conveyed is less than pleasant.

The influence of parents and families also impacts what could be called "experiential capital". Some children appear to have very few extracurricular experiences to draw on. According to Dave, some children don't know what a hammer is for, and have never seen one used. Patricia commented that the low socio-economic status of some families presents very real problems. She said that when shown a picture of the Sydney's Olympic stadium, one student asked, "is that the Harbour Bridge?" She added that some children have no books at home. Patricia tries to weave into her lessons experiences she has on the weekends, but some children have very little to relate on that matter; "going to Maccas [McDonald's] is a big deal". Patricia commented that this limitation makes creative writing a difficult undertaking for these children.

Language and cultural differences emerged as another issue for these teachers. The area in which these schools are located is characterised by large numbers of newly-arrived migrants. There are relatively high proportions of students who do not speak English as their first language. Patricia, for example, made reference to 11 languages represented in her classroom. Kim undertook a TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) course while she was teaching at a nearby detention centre for illegal immigrants and asylum-seekers. This attendance was in response to a direct need she saw in teaching newly-arrived children. She found that her motivation to learn and her ability to make sense of and critically analyse the content of the course were enhanced by having a corresponding work situation. In her words, "you learn and then you can teach it for yourself". She added, however, that her preservice practicums had also been useful in that regard. Erika found that having learnt English as a second language provided her with insights into associated difficulties, and with the nature of language. She was also a model and an example of success for students from non-English

speaking backgrounds. Teachers who speak English as a second language, apart from LOTE (Languages other than English) teachers, however, are in the minority in Australia.

Patricia commented that some Muslim children have negative attitudes to women. In similar vein, Erika spoke of a student who was talkative during an Anzac Day ceremony at school, including during the minute's silence to remember Australian and allied soldiers killed in wars. When she reprimanded the boy for this, he swore at her in Arabic. He was subsequently required to apologise to Erika, and was suspended. This anecdote highlights just some of the complexities in working for a multicultural school body. Erika was unable to say whether Ahmed's apparent disrespect was inadvertent, compulsive or wilful. Given the current geopolitical context of Australia's intervention in the Middle-East, it could be a combination. Arguably, the consequences imposed in response to such behaviour need to discern this and take it into account.

The wide range of abilities emerged as a complicating factor, particularly at the secondary school, perhaps because of the increased conceptual complexity of teaching/learning material. Erika said that she has had to modify her lessons considerably to cater for a wide range of abilities. Even so, she now makes provision for those students with difficulties to see her during recess or lunch periods, for supplementary tutoring. Somewhat to her surprise, she found that students, particularly those in more senior grades, were willing to participate in this process without seeing it as punitive, or shameful in the eyes of their peers. Nevertheless, this constitutes a considerable time imposition on the teacher, and may be difficult to sustain.

Patricia said that six of the 22 children in her class were identified as having learning difficulties. Having started out to program for the whole class, she is now responding to the need for one-to-one programs. She works most intensively with those having most difficulty. She mused, however, "the top kids don't suffer. It's the middle kids who miss out".

Difficulties in teaching literacy and engendering a love of reading were most problematic for NESB (non English-speaking background) children, and those with learning difficulties. Patricia felt that there had not been sufficient attention to literacy teaching at university; when she began classroom practice, she "didn't know how to teach reading".

She commented that some cultures have stronger oral than written traditions, citing Pacific Islanders as an example. She was surprised to find a resistance to reading among some Arabic children, despite a strong tradition of Qur'anic recitation.

Developing expertise in assessment is problematic for a number of these teachers. Some of the secondary teachers were teaching in more than one subject area, and consequently had to adopt a variety of assessment and reporting methods. They found that exposure to a number of methods was good for their professional development, and that support was available from the school. Still, the knowledge needed to understand and administer such a range of methods was demanding. As Elsie said, "If someone is stanine X, what do I do with this?"

In response to the above issues, the teachers made a number of recommendations for preservice education. Patricia wished she had observed more lessons, particularly in literacy. She recommended more observation lessons and more practising teachers lecturing at university. She conceded that she had become better at watching lessons and modelling her teaching on them now. Elsie suggested more time devoted to viewing and discussion of videos of 'natural' classroom practice. Similarly, Alison noted that during the year, her position as Support Teacher Learning Assistance, allowed her to observe a range of teaching and management strategies. Those who had undertaken internships, involving longer periods of teaching, recommended such programs and extolled their virtues.

Teachers discerned the theory/practice dichotomy. Elsie commented, "The theories stick in my head, but I don't refer to them as much as I would've thought. You don't say 'today I'll use Cambourne'; you think on your feet". Patricia, on the other hand, reported drawing on a range of approaches in reading, including sight words and whole language approaches.

None of the teachers was enthusiastic about the inclusion of more assessment tasks during practicum, claiming that it was already too busy a time. Also, while they invariably viewed their practicums as a most valuable time, they talked of them being a beneficial 'learning time'. On further questioning, they generally described practicum in terms of learning *practicalities*, "learning the ropes" according to Elsie, rather than as an opportunity

to test theories. It may be that the demands of practicum play a role in preventing them from further theorising their practice, or consciously practising their theories. Kim suggested a three-week practicum at the conclusion of the degree as a chance to “put theory into practice”. Another constraining factor for Kim is that during practicum, “you’re in someone else’s classroom”. A number of the teachers also mentioned that they didn’t get to see report writing or rehearsals for end-of-year performances in process while on practicum, because of the time of year practicum takes place. This issue probably assumed significance during the conduct of the research because some were writing their own reports for the first time. Kim also suggested opportunities for critiquing the school’s systems for behaviour management and the like during practicum.

It appears that there is a cultural divide for many of these teachers as they begin their careers. At times the teachers need to understand and bridge cultural or intellectual barriers in their teaching. This is highlighted by, among others, polarised attitudes to Anzac Day, and the differences between some teachers’ and students’ weekend experiences. Patricia commented, “uni was excellent if you’re going to teach on the north shore [a relatively affluent area of Sydney]”. Similarly, Kim observed that more preservice attention to teaching English as a second language is needed “especially if you’re going to teach in western Sydney”. The differences are highlighted by another comment from Patricia. “At university you do philosophy and sociology of education etc. Here, the real issues are this child hasn’t brought any lunch to school”.

Discussion, conclusions and further questions

These findings underscore the differences between tertiary and school classrooms, particularly with regard to matters such as management, administration and delivery of pedagogy. While the tertiary classroom experience offers valuable support for teachers, it does not simulate a typical school classroom. It may be that for the majority of teacher educators, matters of administration are not spoken of in class because they are assumed to be self-evident. These matters may therefore escape the attention of at least some preservice teachers because they remain unspoken.

These differences highlight the need for student-teachers to look at their professional experience/ practicum in new ways. They can be assisted in observing the previously-unnoticed during such experiences. During practicum, preservice teachers may be watching their inservice colleagues primarily if not solely for innovative and interesting teaching techniques. Classroom teachers’ attention to administrative issues such as maintaining the attendance roll may escape preservice teachers’ notice; preventive class management techniques and their rationale may not be immediately apparent, and what they prevent will rarely be obvious. Some of the continua along which school and university classrooms find themselves mutually remote will be discussed hereunder; continua such as those of theory-practice, socio-economic class and dis/advantage, and educational, social and English language capital, as well as areas in which the beginning teachers found their preservice preparation wanting. The tension between theory and practice (Kessels & Korthagen’s (2001) episteme and phronesis) in tertiary education has often been commented upon by students and others. But this may be only one of several dichotomies or continua that need further examination in terms of differences between tertiary and primary/secondary teaching contexts. Moreover, the theory-practice dichotomy may have served to mask other disparities between the university and school classroom, as outlined below.

- A tertiary education context presumes an ability on the part of students instinctively (or at least with some prompting that ‘this is the game today’) to engage in higher-order thinking. The ability to do this cannot be assumed in every school circumstance. In my teaching of social and environmental education, discussion and opinion-sharing feature prominently. A substantial proportion of primary classroom teaching in particular, however, entails (what may appear to us as adults as) the mundane or the routine.
- Linked to the above, the processes of teaching may be, or at least appear, less didactic at university than in a school context. If content material is to be memorised, it is less likely to be drilled in class in a tertiary setting. This apparent regression may strike a beginning teacher as intellectually and professionally unfulfilling.

- The tertiary educator is not acting in loco parentis. Regimes such as hand-raising to answer a question or to leave the room are likely to be relaxed or absent. The responsibility of documenting absences is a moral rather than a legal one. This is not to suggest a lack of duty of care in the tertiary context, but a significant difference in nature and practice, compared with the compulsory years of education. Perhaps further complicating this, many primary teacher educators are ex-secondary school teachers, having been chosen for, among other aptitudes, their expertise in a certain curricular subject area. In many secondary schools, roll-call and related information sharing takes place in a discrete session, removed from teaching and learning episodes. As a result, at least some teacher educators may have little experience in orchestrating roll-call and pedagogy.
- The culture of tertiary education classrooms tends to dictate quite a different set of behavioural expectations and taboos than does its primary or, particularly, its secondary counterpart. In my classes, asking students to self-select groups to discuss an issue is rarely problematic; assuming this approach may be less realistic in many school contexts. There appears to be quite a different set of unwritten but apparently mutually agreed upon perceptions as to what constitutes an incivility in a tertiary and in at least some school contexts.
- It may also be that the value attributed to creative teaching by students and staff at university confounds other issues, and distorts students' constructs of school learning. It is to be hoped that teacher educators model and affirm creative, engaging and innovative teaching strategies. Creative techniques energise both teacher and learner. One of the principals in the study, however, observed that "beginning teachers have magnificent, creative lessons that are so time-consuming that they can't be sustained when you're teaching all day. And they overlook other things like note collection". There is real and perceived pressure on teacher educators to prove themselves as good and authentic (read: entertaining?) teachers. Ironically, it may be that this pressure drives them to construct an inaccurate representation of the school classroom.

Utilising a multi-layered approach to methodology, the research team attempted to provide a national overview as well as focused local perspective investigations.

The above dichotomies are perhaps best brought into focus by the 'student presentation' at university, where students conduct a teaching/learning experience for their peers. In my experience, the other students are 'on their best behaviour' when peer presentations are taking place. This extra effort might be for a number of reasons: the other students know that their turn to be out the front will (or has) come; the presenter's nervousness may also attract empathy. Students seem to invariably comply with their peers' requests to form groups, role play eight year olds etc. Student presenters do not need to concern themselves with their peers slapping or pinching each other, borrowing-without-asking a pencil, or with the distractions of wobbly teeth. All the while, the teacher educator and students may see this as an authentic off-site representation of the school classroom.

Suffice to say that the tertiary and school teaching/learning environments are substantially different. Further research may shed light on whether education students are more compliant than their counterparts in other faculties. Anecdotal evidence suggests that such may be the case. On the other hand, the difficult-to-staff schools where many of these students are most likely to begin teaching are arguably at the other end of this continuum. That the two teaching contexts are different is probably inevitable, and not necessarily undesirable. Neither the school nor the university teaching/learning context is ideal, and it may be that compliance tempered with questioning on the part of education students is as healthy as an increase in the capacity of some school students for collaboration. To describe the differences between school and tertiary classrooms as a disparity or a mismatch is probably inaccurate, in that it suggests that the two need to be similar. It is valuable for the teacher educator not to hold in contempt the robust and frank nature of exchanges in the school classroom. Similarly, it is valuable for the beginning teacher not to disdain aspects such as the idealism and creative fertility of the tertiary classroom.

Perhaps most importantly, the potential cultural and structural differences between the two settings need to be made visible to preservice teachers, in supporting them to adapt to their new

environments. Again, practicum may be the best setting in which to do this, and to develop a framework for doing so. Inattention to these differences in the past may have contributed to a dismissal by beginning teachers of their preservice experiences, realities and 'wisdoms'.

As stated earlier, teachers, by definition, have successfully negotiated the school system. If they have been in graded classes, and in any case in senior years of schooling, they may rarely have rubbed shoulders with students seriously struggling with school, nor might they have witnessed teachers' strategic responses to such needs. They then became part of an academic elite at university. What is needed on their part is an increased ability to experience the world of the struggler, be it a behavioural, academic, experiential, linguistic or other struggler, and recognise and respond to his or her needs, needs potentially so different to their own. Darling-Hammond (1992) speaks of "the capacity to connect with learners, rather than simply covering the curriculum" (p. 9). This is perhaps more easily said than done, given that the curriculum can be an efficient and impassive coloniser of time. Teacher educators, also by definition success stories in the education game, need to connect with their learners, and to connect them to their eventual teaching situations. In each instance, it is valuable to ask how the student, and the teacher (educator) sees — and at times fails to see — their teaching-learning world.

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Appendix. Conversation protocol for beginning teacher research project

- What is it like being in the teaching workforce?/
How has the last week/month been?
[Prompts: joys and frustrations]
- What support mechanisms do you draw on
when issues arise?
[Prompts: internal or external (e.g. school
based) mechanisms, adequacy or inadequacy of
these, if mechanisms are identified]
- Reflecting on your preservice education, how
well did it prepare you for your current circum-
stances?
[Prompts: highlights and deficiencies]
- (If the respondent identifies gaps in his/her
preservice education) are there elements of
teacher education that need to be left until
teachers begin their service? In other words, are
there issues that you would have found difficult
to make sense of before being in the classroom?
- Based on your current experiences, what advice
would you give to providers of preservice
teacher education programs?

Notes for intending contributors

Curriculum Perspectives, a refereed journal, has established a national and international reputation in the field of curriculum. The peer review process involves papers being assessed 'blind' by two members of the editorial board. Each paper is assessed by two different assessors. The turn-around time is normally eight to ten weeks.

Contributions may take the form of:

- General papers that make an original contribution of an empirical or theoretical nature.
 - Papers of a more practical or applied nature and which are case studies about classroom research, curriculum development and evaluation.
 - Brief reports about on-going research and development activities and examples of on-going classroom practices.
 - Papers are included in this section under the title of 'Instances'.
 - Correspondence (letters and short notes) addressed to the Editor.
 - Book reviews.
- The contributor's name and status should appear on a separate page to ensure anonymity in reviewing.
 - Tabular and statistical materials, graphs, figures and charts should be kept to a minimum. Graphs, figures and charts should be submitted in camera-ready standard. Any text should be in Times New Roman font, 11 point size or smaller.
 - Notes and bibliography details should be given at the end of the article. **Footnotes are not to be used** — any relevant information should be incorporated into the text.
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 - Refer to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* for referencing format. For example:
Walker, D.F. (2003). *Fundamentals of Curriculum*, 2nd edition. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
Zevenbergen, R. (2004). Reconceptualising numeracy for new times. *Curriculum Perspectives*, 24(3), 1–7.

Contributions

- Typescripts should be sent to the Editor on A4 paper, typed in double spacing on one side only, with margins of at least 2.5cm on all four sides. Papers for the Articles section should usually be no longer than 8000 words. Instances papers should be 1000–3000 words in length. It is essential that the Bibliography is **double spaced**.
- The master copy and two duplicates should be submitted for publication. At least one copy should be retained for personal reference.
- The **final, revised version** of an accepted paper must be sent as a typed copy, in **double spacing**, and on a computer disk. This diskette must be in IBM format, and the document in Microsoft Word 6 for Windows or a compatible format, otherwise Rich Text Format.
- Contributions should be sent to:
Professor Colin Marsh
24 Metz Way
Wembley Downs WA 6019

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