Taking a 'Reality' Check: Expanding Pre-service Teachers' Views on Pedagogy and Diversity

Abstract

The outcomes of a two-pronged 'real-world' learning project which aimed to expand the views of pre-service teachers about learning, pedagogy and diversity will be discussed in this paper. Seventy-two fourth year and 22 first year students enrolled in a Bachelor of Education degree in Queensland, Australia were engaged in community sites outside of university lectures, and separate from their practicum. Using Butin's conceptual framework for service-learning, we show evidence that this approach can enable pre-service teachers to see new realities about the dilemmas and ambiguities of performing as learners and as teachers. We contend that when such 'real-world' experiences have different foci at different times in their four-year degree, pre-service teachers have more opportunities to develop sophisticated understandings of pedagogy in diverse contexts for diverse learners.

Keywords: service learning; authentic learning; pre-service teacher education; pedagogy;

diversity

Taking a 'Reality' Check: Expanding Pre-service Teachers' Views on Pedagogy and Diversity

1. Introduction

Pre-service teachers often enter teacher education programs with problematic or unexamined assumptions, beliefs and knowledge about students and the role of a teacher (Trier, 2006). Disrupting such assumptions is crucial if, as White (2000) suggests, pre-service teachers with naive epistemological beliefs (where knowledge is simple and easily transmittable) tend to have a simplistic view of classroom problems and draw only upon personal experience to solve them. In addition, White (2000) argues, those with more sophisticated epistemological beliefs (where knowledge is seen as actively and multiply constructed and evaluated) are more likely to see complexity in classroom problems and seek out alternative viewpoints, including those of the child, family and school, before deciding on a course of action.

This paper reports on a project involving 94 students enrolled in a Bachelor of Education degree in Queensland, Australia in 2007. The project aimed to disrupt the perceptions of pre-service teachers about learning, pedagogy and diversity by engaging them in a two-pronged approach to 'real-world' learning outside of the university lecture room, and separate from their practicum.

Exposing students to 'real-world' learning is a growing trend across various disciplines in higher education. While these experiences take place outside of the university classroom, they are linked to the curriculum and reflections on what is

learned as a result. This can reinforce concepts being taught within a course. We contend that when 'real-world' learning is offered as part of the repertoire of academic learning, pre-service teachers have more opportunity to develop a broader worldview related to pedagogy for diverse contexts and diverse learners. These experiences help teachers to understand that their work is not merely functionary, but is central to the future role of schooling for social responsibility, democracy and social justice.

2. Traditional teacher education

The complex and often fragmented demands of teacher education to meet political expectations, bureaucratic standards and partisan claims for particular community interests (Bates, 2005), mean that pre-service teacher educators must negotiate a plethora of expectations. Widening social and cultural gaps between teachers and many of their students demands a knowledge of equity, diversity and global interconnectedness (Butcher, Howard, Labone, Bailey,Groundwater-Smith, McFadden, 2003); a knowledge that is not considered to be evident in many university teacher graduates (Merryfield, 2000). We tend to place unreasonable expectations on such graduates: that they will be able to make changes that previous generations of educators have been unable to make (Butcher et al., 2003). Particularly so, when teacher education tries to placate the system demands for the production of skills for a competitive economy; and the cultural demands of individuals in a quest for meaning (Bates, 2005). Further, this is a climate in which faculty and students are accountable in the quest for 'standards', yet are asked to achieve these standards with increasingly shortened teacher education programs. Resistance to institutional norms is not celebrated (and indeed there seems to be no time for it) in such a system. Thus

traditional approaches to pedagogy in academe which 'privilege top-down presumptions of knowledge transfer from faculty to students and power relations between institutions and community and institutions and faculty' (Butin, 2005a, p. viii) proliferate teacher education programs.

3. Real-world learning

We use the term 'real-world' learning to encompass two different approaches to learning that have been enacted in the project described in this paper. According to Butin (2005), the service-learning experience can be viewed through four distinct lenses: technical, cultural, political and post-modern/poststructuralist. We replace the term service-learning with 'real-world' learning to reflect our new application of this analytical frame to our data. Butin's approach is integral to our theoretical framework around real-world learning in that he highlights the complex hierarchical relationships between the sites, the learners and those offering the 'service' or volunteer work. Both of these approaches involve students' engagement with community sites outside of the boundaries of academe, enabling them to experience diversity in people's cultures, backgrounds, abilities, and needs. These experiences are intrinsically underpinned by the academic work undertaken at university. In this way, the community engagement is theoretically motivated, and the academic work is situated and enacted in 'real-world' contexts. Butin, and others who have applied this framework (see Swaminathan, 2007), suggest that a deeper understanding and problematization of the experience is necessary to understand the impact of the learning that occurs for all participants.

Whilst we acknowledge that school-based experience is also an example of 'real-world' learning; when placed in schools for the practicum experience, pre-service teachers are led by their supervising teacher. They abide by established rules, procedures and curricula into which they have had no input and therefore 'may be more willing to accept the behaviors and practices they observe rather than to question the status quo' (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007). We propose that students need to experience the often contradictory workings of pedagogical knowledge and political motivations in different community contexts, so that they are better prepared for the complexity of enacting their skills and knowledge in their work as educators.

A key focus of both approaches is to broaden real life experience in community organisations that will enable pre-service teachers to question assumptions about the historical hierarchies between individuals in society and critique traditional approaches to teaching and learning. There were, however, notable differences in the enactment of these approaches as they targeted students at quite different stages of their teacher education program. The first approach was conducted in students' final year of their program, and the second approach was undertaken in their first year. In addition, the first approach used Butin's lenses to both *guide* and *analyse* pre-service teacher reflection, whereas the second approach used the lenses only to *analyse* the reflections. Our discussion will show marked differences in the data as a result of these differences in methods of data collection.

Our first approach falls under the banner of 'service-learning' which is a potentially transformative pedagogical practice (Butin, 2005a) underpinned by social justice objectives. It is often literally described as 'service to the community', and

promotes volunteerism and civic participation. In our enactment of such a program, students become active participants in community organisations which focus upon inclusivity and diversity. Service-learning advocates suggest that such programs strengthen community relationships and improve students' personal sense of responsibility and care through integrative learning experiences (Bordelon & Phillips, 2006). There is the potential here to view service-learning as the 'saviour' of apathy and our increasingly individualist agendas in contemporary society (see Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002 for more on individualism in society). We don't suggest that this approach will necessarily have positive outcomes for all students or all sites (see also Butin, 2005 and Swaminathan, 2007), yet we argue that students in their final year as pre-service teachers benefit from a 'hands-on' reflective approach to diverse physical, emotional, social and intellectual needs of learners. So too, the service-learning sites can benefit from the new ideas and ways of engaging that the students bring to the site. Service-learning can sometimes be viewed or enacted in limited ways, for example as 'work experience', 'volunteerism' or as 'helping the unfortunate', which does not interrogate the power dynamics and the role that privilege plays in such dynamics (Clark & Young, 2005). Thus, reflection is an essential part of the learning process, so that students problematise the impact they have on the site, and whether the site recipients are 'empowered' by the 'service'. Reflection can operate at several levels including academic, critical and spiritual (Koth, 2003) and can also be used to derive personal knowledge and create strategies for making meaning, through the process (Bartolome, 2005). Service-learning has the potential for pre-service teachers to question and confront social inequities and to begin to deconstruct their own lifelong attitudes as they become more socially just teachers (Baldwin et al., 2007).

6

The second of these approaches is understood by us to be 'authentic learning', whereby students are given opportunities to observe and enact theories of communication, language and learning in 'real-world' contexts. Authentic learning is described as experience that exposes students to what happens in the 'real world' and thereby positions them as social and cognitive apprentices to the 'experts' who work in real world settings (Elliot, 2007; Fullan, 1991; Rule, 2006). There is a growing recognition that professional learning is significantly enhanced by offering authentic experiences in non-traditional partnership learning sites (Butin, 2005a; Tochon, 2000). Our purpose for this project is to broaden students' ideas about pedagogy; how and where it happens; how it differs in different contexts and for different purposes; who is in control and what explicit and implicit outcomes they can describe and reflect upon. Designing learning that encourages students to question and examine sometimes even unconscious assumptions that may limit the learner's openness to change, growth and personal development is a goal of an *authentic* learning environment (Laiken, 2006). We see this approach as particularly useful in pre-service teachers' first year of their education degree as it focuses on communication through different designs of meaning, which is integral both for the pre-service teacher at university and for the students they will eventually teach. This approach is underpinned by multiliteracies design and pedagogy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kalantzis & Cope, 2005; New London Group, 1996), which sees the diverse learner as an active participant in knowledge generation. It engages learners in multiple modes of meaning including linguistic, visual, spatial, gestural and audio. Critically framed real-world and global issues are paramount in this approach to pedagogy, and the learning always begins with the life-worlds and experiences of the learner before

explicit instruction by 'experts', 'mentors' and/or teachers is introduced. Applying this new knowledge in real contexts is integral for deep learning to occur.

Service-learning and authentic learning can problematise traditional academic pedagogies, and can illustrate a different way to negotiate the complexities and contradictions of teacher education. Such approaches break with tradition and can illustrate that academic parameters are a social construction and can be changed (Butin, 2005a). Pre-service teachers can be seen as active, resistant and reflective as they 'encounter the dilemmas and ambiguities of living with and through the complexity of how life works' (Butin, 2005b, p. 98). We propose that students need to experience the often contradictory workings of pedagogical knowledge and political motivations in different community contexts, so that they are better prepared for the complexity of enacting their skills and knowledge in their work as educators.

4. The context of this project

This two-pronged project about 'real-world' learning has been enacted in the final and first years of a four-year pre-service teacher education program (Bachelor of Education) in a large Faculty of Education in Queensland, Australia. The project took place in 2007. Key tenets of the project relate to the interconnectedness of university learning and engagement in community sites. We approached the project with the view that each of these aspects inform and strengthen the other, hence on-going reflection was an integral component, and was an element of the unit assessment. The units share the goal to "help learners to develop, monitor and evaluate their own thinking and learning skills within the social and cultural context of education" (University Educational Practitioner Attribute), however students from each unit were not aware of the program in the other.

The fourth-year arm of the project involved a core unit for early childhood, primary and secondary students on inclusive education. Five hundred students enrolled in the unit. The majority of these students were white, mono-lingual and from middle class backgrounds. The students were in their last year of study and had experienced three different teaching placements in schools. All students in the unit (n=500) were provided with information about the goals and assessment requirements of the Service-learning Program along with information about the type of service in the organisations. Approximately 160 students applied and the first 72 student applicants were given placements. The number of places in the program was determined by the number of partner organisations. The students were required to complete an on-line and individual written Service-learning Reflection Log. The Log required students to extend their thinking by asking them to consider how the service experience broadened their appreciation of an inclusive society and their future work as a teacher in schools. The on-line nature of this Log allowed students to share their experiences with other students and their tutors in the service-learning pathway. The Reflection Log combined with the service-learning accounted for 70% of the total unit work. Specific goals of the Service-learning Program were to: 1) enhance student learning by joining theory with experience and thought with action; 2) enable students to help others, give of themselves, and enter into caring relationships with others; 3) assist students to see the relevance of the academic subject to the real world; 4) increase the civic and citizenship skills of students; 5) assist agencies to better serve their clients and benefit from the infusion of enthusiastic volunteers; 6) expose students to societal inadequacies and injustices and empower students to remedy them; 7) develop a richer context for student learning and 8) provide cross-

cultural experiences for students. Twenty-five students gave permission to the researchers to access their Service-learning Reflection Logs.

The first-year part of the project involved a core communication unit (primary students) on visual and verbal literacies. The majority of enrolled students were also from white, mono-lingual and middle class backgrounds. As this was a first-time trial of such a project in this unit, the alternative pathway of authentic learning was offered to a small number of volunteer students (n=22). The remaining students (n=360) followed the traditional structure of weekly lectures and tutorials. Students in the alternative pathway were asked to attend lectures, however weekly tutorials were replaced with weekly visits to alternative community sites, along with de-brief sessions on-campus approximately every four weeks. Students and site supervisors were provided with scaffolds and guidelines for observations and operations during the course of the project. Academic readings and lecture materials were provided for students to supplement and underpin the 'real-world' experiences. They were also asked to reflect upon what implications such observations had for them as both students and educators. All students in the unit (including the 'authentic learning' group) were required to keep an on-going reflective journal (in their medium of choice), which accounted for 40% of the total unit work. In addition, they gave a multi-modal presentation at the end of semester to demonstrate their learning within the unit.

5. Community sites

The 'real-world' learning project involves reciprocal relationships with partner organisations. All work was voluntary and non-paid.

Fourth-year students worked in refugee homework centers, meal delivery services to the frail and disabled, respite groups for terminally ill children, leisure programs for children with disabilities and several others. The unit involved the university students completing 20 hours of work in the various non-profit organisations supporting people in need. Twenty-three organisations participated in the project (for details, see Appendix 1). The service reinforces and strengthens the learning in the academic unit on inclusive education, and the learning reinforces and strengthens the service in the organisations. Student responsibilities varied from site to site, and focused on helping with the day-to-day operations.

First-year students worked in an adventure centre, a circus, an Indigenous art centre, a dance school, a horse-riding school, a learn-to-swim program, a junior sport development program, and a Police Citizens Youth Club program. Students completed 14 hours of work. Seven community sites that are for-profit businesses participated in the project (for details, see Appendix 2). In comparison to the fourth year students, who were actively involved at the community sites, the students in the first year played mainly a passive, observational role in terms of pedagogy. Students were particularly asked to observe learners and their diverse characteristics and behaviours, teachers/instructors and their behaviours and characteristics, pedagogical and management strategies used, language used, modes of communication, ways that meaning seemed to be made, contextual requirements, and needs, purposes and background of the organisation.

6. Methodology

The data analysed for this article include the reflective journals or logs from each cohort (final year and first year), semi-structured focus group interviews from each cohort, pre and post project questionnaires and an informal unit feedback questionnaire (from the first-year cohort), university standardised teaching and unit evaluations (from the first year cohort) and feedback from the community sites (from each cohort). Ethics approval to conduct this project was given by the university. The focus group interviews included questions about learners, their commitment to or disassociation from tasks, the role of questioning, behaviours of active learners, characterising 'active' learners, and implications for teachers. The pre and post questionnaires sought information on views about learning, learner characteristics, contexts of learning and relationships between teaching and learning. Feedback questionnaires and unit evaluations asked students to comment on good and/or poor features of the units, teaching effectiveness, use of resources and comments for future offerings.

This paper will evaluate the data gathered in the two approaches to 'real-world' learning using Butin's conceptual lenses: Technical, cultural, political and postmodern (2003, 2005b). The details of Butin's lenses will be discussed later in the paper. The data were used to answer the following research question: Using a 'real-world' approach to pedagogy and learning, is it possible to disrupt pre-service teachers' perceptions of learning, pedagogy, and diversity?

7. Reporting on the data

In the final year cohort, Butin's four lenses (2003; 2005b) informed the development of the Service-learning Reflection Log (see Appendix 3). Therefore, data collected from this group could be clearly categorised across all four lenses. This provided evidence to suggest that Butin's theory was useful when scaffolding the fourth year Reflection Log and encouraged the students to link their experience in the community to their learning about inclusive education at university.

Butin's framework normally relates to service-learning; however we argue that it can also be applied to the authentic learning arm of our project, albeit in a different way, to make sense of its effectiveness within four different lenses. These lenses have accordance with our guiding multiliteracies framework for authentic learning. Particularly, we see the functional, critical and cultural elements of learning; and the multiplicity of viewpoints and designs of meaning within the multiliteracies framework as consistent with Butin's four lenses for analysis. Thus, we found that the first year cohort were less likely to make comments that could be categorised in some of the lenses.

After an initial broad-sweep analysis, all data were organised into four categories: Technical, cultural, political and postmodern. Selections of data will be used to highlight our interpretation and application of Butin's four lenses. The lenses bring greater clarity to the 'real-world' learning experiences.

8. Technical lens

A *technical* conceptualisation of service-learning focuses on its pedagogical effectiveness where learning is conceptualised as 'one among multiple pedagogical strategies; it serves the function of better teaching for better learning' (Butin, 2005b, p. 90). The technical perspective concentrates on the innovative elements that link the service to improved student outcomes in the university unit of study, rather than the implications of the placement for the student, the organisation or the wider community.

In the fourth year service-learning program, all students commented on the pedagogical effectiveness of the experience and described how the learning in the community organisation reinforced the learning about the theory of inclusive education at university. The following data from the Service-learning Reflection Logs are categorised under the technical lens. The numbers in brackets indicate the code for each student in the project.

'Being able to engage in this learning experience was truly enriching and reinforced my understanding of inclusive education in a real classroom setting.' (1)

'This field experience has enabled me to apply the theory taught in lectures into a real life situation.' (6)

'Having practical, hands-on experiences when studying to work with people is invaluable.' (9)

In the first year program, data from the university standardised teaching and unit evaluations indicated that students in the alternative 'authentic learning' pathway, rated both the unit and the tutors more highly (on average) than did their peers who

14

followed the 'normal' pathway in the unit. This may be attributable to the fact that it was a small group who were involved in something 'special'. However, these positive ratings do indicate the students' satisfaction with the alternative pathway. Data from the informal unit feedback questionnaire indicated that *every* participant in the alternative project cited the opportunity for independence and the site visits as the best features of the unit. Interestingly, many students also cited the reduced contact time with tutors as a feature they would like to change. What is noteworthy is that the students in the alternative pathway (with less tutorial time and regular site visits) achieved a much higher grade average (with academic peer moderation) than any other tutorial group in the unit. We consider that the inclusion of the site visits enabled these students to more fully understand and problematise the theories of communication, meaning-making and pedagogy that we explored within the unit. These students were more prepared than their peers to question and discuss theoretical underpinnings based on what they observed in the community sites. They were, however, unsure about their capacity to achieve success with less structured time in tutorials. This may be more a reflection on their prior experiences of learning than on their experiences in this unit, given their final grade average.

We also noticed quite different perceptions about learners and learning contexts when comparing the pre and post project questionnaires. Such differences suggest at least some level of pedagogical effectiveness of this authentic learning project. Comments related to the characteristics of an effective learner in the pre-project questionnaire were more focused upon routinised and self-regulated learning, organisational skills and students as passive participants.

<effective learners are>'organised and neat...develop a learning routine...time

management skills...able to take in information.' (1st yr pre-qre)

'accept ideas...take instruction and criticism...organised and

willing...patient.' (1st yr pre-qre)

'allowing themselves to respond/not respond...absorbing knowledge...retain

information.' (1st yr pre-qre)

On the other hand, comments related to effective learners in the post-project

questionnaire showed evidence of more sophisticated epistemological beliefs (White,

2000); where students were described as active learners, innovative, willing to

question what they had learnt and apply knowledge in new spheres.

<effective learners are>'independent, active, innovative...able to apply meaning in

different situations and contexts and connect new ideas to things they already knew...'

(1st yr post-qre)

'doers...visualisers' (1st yr post-qre)

'generating knowledge' (1st yr post-qre)

9. Cultural lens

A *cultural* dimension involves 'the meanings of the practice for individuals and

institutions involved' (Butin, 2005b, p. 90) and can assist with acceptance of

diversity. The cultural perspective suggests that by undertaking service-learning,

students will develop a greater respect and understanding of diversity, increase their

engagement and will gain a greater sense of who they are in their community. It can

assist the individual to see how communication and learning can happen in different

ways in different contexts.

16

The fourth year students completed service in an array of community organisations that catered for the needs of a diverse population of children and adults. The students' reflections indicate growing understanding and awareness of different people's needs and backgrounds.

'These people are functioning in society with absolutely minimal English skills, and to see them on the street, and to interact with them on a lot of levels....you wouldn't be aware of how little English they have. For me that's a real eye opener.' (4th yr focus group)

'My experience at ARMS [homework support centre for refugee students] has given me a much greater appreciation of the day to day difficulties faced by so many people who are marginalised in our society largely due to their cultural background, language barriers, migrant or refugee status.' (7)

'This really opened my eyes to how much these families do struggle to make ends meet, and as a future teacher, I will need to understand that students who have come from such backgrounds will need to be handled with care.' (16)

The students in the first year cohort reflected upon the diversity of learners and contexts, teaching styles and ways of communicating or expressing meaning, which were key goals of the authentic learning arm of the project. Several students commented upon learners who learnt more when 'doing' rather than just listening. They also noted that learner confidence has a big impact on the learning, yet confidence was gained in different ways by different groups.

'Girls are trying to get confirmation among themselves...boys are more looking towards the instructor. That was really interesting...(1st yr focus group)

They noticed learners who copied peers rather than listening to the teacher, and they reflected upon different modes of communication and expression, both for themselves as students and for learners that they might teach.

'Now I'm doing a collage in my journal, whereas before I'd be like just writing it. So like expressing what you're learning, a different way. A different method.' (1st yr focus group)

Some students in the first year arm of the project explained those modes of communication that they observed as most effective for non-English speaking learners.

'...some people speak no English. It's interesting to see the gestures they use and how they get that information across to them – bodily kind of ways.' (1st yr focus group)

The language used here reflects the language used in the unit materials related to gesture and bodily designs of meaning (Evans, Davies, & Wright, 2004; Stinson, 2004). These students show evidence of applying that knowledge to their observations of diverse learners in the sites. They also comment upon the different teaching styles and strategies that were appropriate for different purposes and contexts. One student explains that she observed a very teacher-centred approach with skill and drill – an approach that she suggests she wouldn't normally advocate, but which seemed to be appropriate in this situation.

'As much as you want to judge and say it's the worst thing ever, it's not. We did lots of drills...then we went to play a game...there were lots of questions...and the kids had so much fun.' (1st yr focus group)

Other students also discussed times when teacher-centred approaches work, such as when physical safety is at stake or when an extremely important skill is needed to progress to the next activity. These students seem to be trying to negotiate the often contradictory discourses which surround traditional 'skill and drill' approaches to pedagogy and more learner-centred approaches.

Students in the fourth year were placed in community sites providing free services to meet community needs. These organisations are dependent upon volunteer commitment. Site coordinators commented about the benefits of the service-learning program for their organisation.

'Students bring many different skills and share them with clients.'

'Older volunteers who worked with the students gained some insight into teacher training. This experience helped them become more tolerant of young students.'

'The clients enjoyed the visits when delivering meals. Having young people visit is great for the clients.'

In comparison, students in the first year project did not make any comments related to some aspects of the cultural lens, for example, volunteerism or civic engagement. The sites they attended were part of the broader community, however they were also businesses which needed to make money. Mostly middle class clients paid for themselves or their children to attend. These types of sites do not rely upon volunteers; hence students may have de-valued their own input. The students did not reflect upon their contributions to the sites nor on the influences that they may have had on the learners or teachers. However, comments from several site supervisors

suggest that the students' engagement at the sites resulted in more reflective pedagogy.

> 'They were great and very helpful...it made me think about how clear my instructions were...' (riding school)
> 'It made me think a couple of times about how I actually go about instructing the kids. I got quite shocked when I was told the littlies don't seem to listen to a word I say, but watch the bigger ones... I took some notice and that was right. You live and learn...pretty smart students.' (circus)

These supervisors suggest that they were more reflective about their own pedagogy and the way that learners learn as a consequence of the students' visits. They became more aware of the differences in learners and learning styles through their engagement in this project with our students.

10. Political lens

A *political* focus involves 'promotion and empowerment of the voices and practices of disempowered and non-dominant groups in society' (Butin, 2005b, p. 91). This perspective is related to power. Service-learning is viewed as a process that will alert students to recognise dominant groups and values in our society. The combined experience of service and reflection may develop goals to transform power relationships.

The fourth year students were able to witness examples of discrimination and marginalisation that influence choices people have in society. These macro power

relations included the difficulties experienced by some people and the harsh reality of hierarchy and effects of the power of the dominant voice. The following data are categorised in the political lens and illustrate student's learning in this area.

'This also really highlighted to me...some of the discriminatory practices we have in our society to people who haven't got their basic English skills.' (4th yr focus group)

'There is a pressing need in contemporary Australian society to address the need for appropriate and effective ESL teaching.' (17)

'This experience has also helped me to become more conscious of the needs of different people in the community, in particular the elderly. I am aware of how the elderly are disadvantaged in today's youth-centred culture.' (4)

Several students mentioned positive examples of inclusive practices which they observed in the community organisations.

<the organisation>' helps reduce ostracism within society by allowing people with disabilities to effectively interact within their local community.'(5)

'students feel a sense of responsibility, empowerment, and ownership.' (8)

'empower students to express their own opinions and ideas.' (13)

In order to make sense of the data from the first year cohort, we found that we needed to broaden Butin's macro conception of power to include the micro-physics of power that play out in everyday activities (Foucault, 1972). For example, the way our pedagogy can change based on parental expectations or 'who is watching'.

The first year students were not asked specifically to comment on political aspects of the community sites. They were mainly working with white, middle class

learners, and as such they did not actively seek to empower non-dominant groups in their accounts. There were, though, some instances where students recognised dominant or majority discourses (Apple, 2004; Bernstein, 1996) permeating the learning sites.

'The environment in which the learning takes place affects the learning as well as the influence of individuals in that environment. Some things may be more encouraged to learn about than other things and some behaviours are more accepted than others. It depends on the views and opinions of the majority.' (1st yr post qre)

This comment reflects the understanding of how institutional discourses (Shapiro, 1995; Singh, Kenway, & Apple, 2005) shape the learning that is valued and therefore rewarded. The micro-physics of power were recognised when the interests of particular groups were seen to influence the pedagogy at some sites.

'At the swim centre... Parents sit in the front row and their eyes are like hawks. They just watch everything, they watch the instructor. I feel for her because they really monitor her.' (1st yr focus group)

The notion of teaching as a political enterprise is becoming a visible discourse for some of these students. They observe pedagogy in sites which have different goals, with clientele who have different levels of social and cultural capital (Compton Lilly, 2003, 2007) and consequently differentiated levels of power in broader society. Their reflections on the practices in such sites have given students the opportunity to experience the ambiguities and complexities of pedagogy when different social, cultural or economic discourses are at play.

22

11. Postmodern/poststructural lens

Finally, a *postmodern/poststructuralist* perspective would focus on 'how the service-learning process creates, sustains, and/or disrupts the boundaries and norms by which we make sense of ourselves and the world' (Butin, 2005b, p. 91). This lens could be used to question whether the 'real-world' learning disrupts perceptions about who the teacher is and who the learner is?; who is served and who is doing the serving?; and how are identities shaped and performed through this experience?

The fourth year students in the service-learning program demonstrated deep thinking and learning in the data gathered in the Service-learning Reflection Logs and the Focus Group interviews. The Log was scaffolded to encourage the students to link their experience in the community to their learning about inclusive education at university. The questions were designed to challenge their assumptions and beliefs and to consider their future roles as teachers. The following sections of data illustrate how the learning experience challenged their ingrained traditional beliefs and understandings about people in society and in particular prompted a reconsideration of their own identity and opportunity.

'Another thing that I really noticed is how much we take for granted a basic education, like going to school year 1 to 12, and having consistency in our education. It was a shock to me, but it shouldn't have been, that some people just don't get educated. Like women don't get educated in some countries.' (4th yr focus group)

'When I worked with a lot of ESL students, I realised just how difficult it is for them to become a part of mainstream. The stories some of these people have break your

heart. I was just talking to the man working at the counter, and he was talking about

how he didn't see his family for 15 years.' (4th yr focus group)

'My tutoring experience with [the homework refugee centre] allowed me to

recognise the privileged life we have in Australia. I was pointing to a picture of a

rocket – my personal association with the word is space and going to the moon. My

student's association was very different – bombs and destruction. So while I felt that

a rocket was a symbol of discovery and demonstration of human ingenuity, H's was

contrasting in that this reminded her of the fearful experiences in her homeland. This

made me realise the very different perspective two people can have because of their

very different life experiences.' (7)

In the first year cohort, some students showed evidence of questioning who the

teacher is and who the learner is. Approximately one quarter of these participants

made comments that questioned the teacher-learner nexus, with some of these

acknowledging that learning happens in spaces other than specific sites of pedagogy

such as classrooms or real-life learning classes.

'I now see teaching and learning to be intertwined. One cannot teach unless prepared to

learn.' (1st yr post-qre)

'Learners can be teachers. Teacher=learner=teacher.' (1st yr post-qre)

'It's not all about me being the teacher…they're going to take a lot of information from

other sources.' (1st yr focus group)

Each focus group of first year students discussed and questioned characteristics

of learners. They problematised the notion of the learner as necessarily docile

(Foucault, 1977).

24

'…even if the kids are fidgety…they are still watching…they still want to do it.' (1st yr

focus group)

However, some of their comments about learners were not problematised. For example, one student makes generalisations about gendered behaviour: that boys are 'confident and skilled' while girls are 'really giggly'. This student was working with a group in a male-dominated sport, yet she has not drawn in the powerful social discourses of 'normal' gendered performance in this context. Girls and boys learn from an early age that particular performances of gender are expected and valued in particular contexts (Davies, 1989; Griffin, 2004; Keddie, 2003). This student has not queried such gendered performances (indeed, we did not ask it of her); rather she has accepted these performances as evidence of boys' superior ability in the skills of the game.

12. Discussion

The purpose of this two-pronged 'real-world' approach to pedagogy and learning has been to disrupt pre-service teachers' perceptions of learning, pedagogy and diversity.

The fourth year part of the project was specifically focused upon extending students' experience with a diverse range of people in society and therefore contributing to a better understanding of how teachers can support students and families. Some service experiences extended student knowledge about diversity in peoples' cultures, backgrounds, abilities and needs and broke down stereotypes and anxieties that often exist for beginning teachers. The service-learning experience provided new challenges for the students in naturalistic settings to examine and reflect

on the tasks at hand, and their meaning in relation to the educational goals established by their academic program (Hecht, 2003). Through active learning this pedagogy enhanced the depth of understanding for these students, by facilitating a practical application of learning in real-life tasks with real consequences, allowing them to apply the knowledge and concepts learnt in the tertiary program to the real-life world. The reflections aided this process by allowing the participants to see the links between their acts of service, the connection to their university study and their view of the world (Bringle, 2003).

On the other hand, the nature of the first year part of the project was useful to problematise these students' assumptions or beliefs about learning, pedagogy and communication. The students are immersed in complex and contradictory discourses about what constitutes 'good' pedagogy or learning, particularly in relation to literacy and forms of communication. For example, debates in the Australian media, such as the phonics versus whole language debate in early literacy classrooms, suggest a binary between the two approaches, which literacy research has addressed. Luke and Freebody (1999), Kalantzis (2006) and others suggest that a repertoire of resources or pedagogical strategies is the key. Data from this project which indicate students' discussions about different contexts and teaching approaches, suggest that students are taking notice of how different contexts and purposes can call for different pedagogical styles; that teachers need various strategies and styles that they can choose to weave through their pedagogy where appropriate. The binary notion of didactic styles as *bad* versus learner-centred approaches as *good* or vice versa, is problematised here as students realise that good teachers draw on a number of different approaches at different times for different purposes. This is consistent with multiliteracies pedagogy

(Kalantzis & Cope, 2005), which posits both explicit instruction and learner-driven pedagogies as key elements of learning at different times in the learning process. These students have thus shown evidence of applying key concepts from their university coursework to their observations in the community sites. This is a powerful finding in that students are making comments about effective pedagogy *that is not taking place in a classroom*. They recognise that pedagogical spaces for young people are not the exclusive domain of the classroom teacher, and that we can learn from these 'other' contexts of 'real-world' learning.

We cannot discount the effect of other experiences that these students may have had during the project; for example, in other university units or in their everyday lives. However, we suggest that by viewing these data through Butin's four lenses, we have been able to gain rich insights into the complexities of pre-service teachers' epistemological beliefs, and to some extent, disrupt naïve positionings of learners and teachers and the work that they do. A key finding from this project relates to the difference between the fourth year and first year arms of the project. The data collected from the fourth year cohort were more comprehensive across each lens. This was because the development of the Service-learning Reflection Log was informed by Butin's four lenses. Thus, a significant finding from this project relates to the use of these lenses during data collection. We suggest that the process of using these lenses to *guide* pre-service teacher reflection and therefore the learning, results in richer data that can be analysed to give potentially deeper insights into pre-service teachers' epistemological beliefs.

13. Conclusion

Pre-service teacher education programs need to encourage our teachers to question and challenge traditional practices and assumptions associated with schools. There are many historical and structural factors that have informed teaching practice. Our focus is to help teachers explore new ways of teaching and working with students that suit the local context and community. A common language develops when teachers learn to work together with a range of professionals and people in the community. Critical engagement with people and issues in different contexts can provoke deep reflection about taken-for-granted assumptions about particular groups, for example, of pupils or parents. Language usually reflects conceptions and beliefs about a whole range of issues. Through processes of *guided* critical reflection about views and actions, teachers will gain an awareness of their assumptions and preconceived ideas, and how they relate to practice. Through this reflective process, teachers may be able to develop coherent rationales for their beliefs and classroom practices and may even become more aware of viable alternatives rather than proceeding on impulse or tradition.

References

Apple, M.W. (2004). *Ideology and curriculum* (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge Falmer.

Baldwin, S.C., Buchanan, A.M., & Rudisill, M.E. (2007). What teacher candidates learned about diversity, social justice, and themselves from service-learning experiences. *Journal of Teacher Education, 58*(4), 315—327.

Bartolome, L. (2005). Beyond the methods fetish: Towards a humanizing pedagogy. In A. Darder, M. Baltodano & R. Torres (Eds.), *The critical pedagogy reader* (pp. 408—429). New York: Routledge Falmer.

Bates, R. (2005). An anarchy of cultures: The politics of teacher education in new times. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 33*(3), 231—241.

Beck, U., & Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002). *Individualization: Institutionalised individualism and its social and political consequences.* London: Sage.

Bernstein, B. (1996). *Pedagogy symbolic control and identity: Theory, research, critique.* London: Taylor & Francis.

Bordelon, T.D., & Phillips, I. (2006). Service-learning: What students have to say. *Active Learning in Higher Education, 7*(2), 143—153.

Bringle, R.G. (2003). Enhancing theory-based research on service learning. In S.H. Billig & J. Eyler (Eds.), *Deconstructing service-learning: Exploring context, participation, and impacts* (pp. 3—21). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Butcher, J., Howard, P., Labone, E., Bailey, M., Groundwater-Smith, S., McFadden, M., et al. (2003). Teacher education, community service-learning and student efficacy for community engagement. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 31*(2), 109—122.

Butin, D. (2003). Of what use is it? Multiple conceptualizations of service-learning

within education. *Teachers College Record, 105*(9), 1674—1692.

Butin, D. (2005a). Preface: Disturbing normalizations of service-learning. In D. Butin

(Ed.), *Service-learning in higher education: Critical issues and directions* (pp.

vii—xxi). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Butin, D. (2005b). Service-learning as postmodern pedagogy. In D. Butin (Ed.),

Service-learning in higher education: Critical issues and directions (pp. 89—

104). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Clark, C., & Young, M. (2005). Changing places: Theorizing space and power

dynamics in service-learning. In D. Butin (Ed.), *Service-learning in higher

education* (pp. 71—88). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Compton Lilly, C. (2003). *Reading families: The literate lives of urban children*. New

York: Teachers College Press.

Compton Lilly, C. (2007). Forms of reading capital: Learning from one ged family. In

M.V. Blackburn & C.T. Clark (Eds.), *Literacy research for political action

and social change* (pp. 113—130). New York: Peter Lang.

Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2000). Introduction: Multiliteracies: The beginnings of an

idea. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and

the design of social futures* (pp. 3—8). Melbourne, Victoria, Australia:

Macmillan.

Davies, B. (1989). *Frogs and snails and feminist tales: Preschool children and

gender*. Sydney, New South Wales, Australia: Allen & Unwin.

Elliot, C. (2007). Action research: Authentic learning transforms students and teacher

success. *Journal of Authentic Learning, 14*(1), 34—42.

Evans, J., Davies, B., & Wright, J. (Eds.). (2004). *Body knowledge and control:*

   Studies in the sociology of physical education and health. London: Routledge.

Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge.* London: Tavistock.

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison.* Harmondsworth,

   United Kingdom: Penguin.

Fullan, M. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change.* New York: Teachers

College

   Press.

Griffin, C. (2004). Good girls, bad girls: Anglocentrism and diversity in the

   constitution of contemporary girlhood. In A. Harris (Ed.), *All about the girl:*

   Culture, power and identity. New York and London: Routledge.

Hecht, D. (2003). The missing link: Exploring the context of learning in service-

learning.

   In S.H. Billig & J. Eyler (Eds.), *Deconstructing service-learning: Exploring*

   context, participation, and impacts (pp. 25—49). Greenwich, CT: Information

   Age.

Kalantzis, M. (2006). Changing subjectivities, new learning. *Pedagogies: An*

   international journal, 1(1), 7—12.

Kalantzis, M., & Cope, B. (2005). *The designs for learning.* Altona, Victoria,

Australia.:

   Common Ground.

Keddie, A. (2003). *Little boys: The potency of peer culture in shaping masculinities.*

   Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Deakin University, Geelong, Australia.

Koth, K. (2003). Deepening the commitment to serve: Spiritual reflection in service-

   learning. *About Campus, 7*(6), 2—7.

Laiken, M. (2006). Authentic graduate education for personal and workplace

transformation. In A. Herrington & J. Herrington (Eds.), *Authentic learning*

environments in higher education (pp. 15—33). Hershey, PA: Information

Science.

Luke, A., & Freebody, P. (1999). Further notes on the four resources model.

Practically Primary, 4(2), 1—8.

Merryfield, M. (2000). Why aren't teachers being prepared to teach for diversity,

equity

and global interconnectedness? A study of lived experience in the making of

multicultural and global educators. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 16,*

429—

443.

New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures.

Harvard Educational Review, 66, 60—92.

Rule, A.C. (2006). The components of authentic learning. *Journal of Authentic*

Learning,

3(1), 1—10.

Shapiro, S. (1995). The challenge to critical pedagogy. In P. McLaren (Ed.),

Postmodernism, post-colonialism and pedagogy (pp. 187—204). Albert Park,

Victoria, Australia: James Nicholas.

Singh, M., Kenway, J., & Apple, M.W. (2005). Globalizing education: Perspectives

from above and below. In M. Singh, J. Kenway & M.W. Apple (Eds.),

Globalizing education: Policies, pedagogies & politics (pp. 1—30). New

York: Peter Lang.

Stinson, S.W. (2004). My body/myself: Lessons from dance education. In L. Bresler

    (Ed.), *Knowing bodies, moving minds* (pp. 153—168). Boston: Kluwer

    Academic.

Swaminathan, R. (2007). Educating for the "real world": The hidden curriculum of

    community service-learning. *Equity and Excellence in Education, 40*(2), 134-

    143.

Tochon, F.V. (2000). When authentic experiences are 'enminded' into disciplinary

    genres: crossing biographic and situated knowledge. *Learning and Instruction,*

10

    (4), 331—359.

Trier, J. (2006). Reconceptualizing literacy through a discourses perspective by

    analyzing literacy events represented in films about schools. *Journal of*

    Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 49(6), 510—523.

White, B. (2000). Pre-service teachers' epistemology viewed through the perspectives

    on problematic classroom situations. *Journal of Education for Teaching,*

    26(3), 279—306.

Appendix 1
Service-learning Community Sites

Partner organisations	Service-learning program	Program recipients	# of Students	# of Reflection Logs
Alzheimer's Association Queensland	Respite care centre	People who have a disability	2	
Anglicare Refugee and Migrant Service (ARMS)	Annerley Literacy Centre Newmarket Learning Centre Homework Assistance Program	Year 6 to tertiary level	27	9
Autism Queensland	Therapy and Education (Physiotherapy, psychology, etc.)	Children who have a disability	4	1
Beenleigh & District Special Needs Support Group Inc.	Experiental, hands-on learning activities (fishing, gardening, etc.)	People who have a disability	4	3
Bellview Care Centre	Respite care centre	Senior citizens	2	
Brisbane North Lifestyle Support Services (LSS)	Home assist support services	People who have a disability	2	1
Burnie Brae Centre	Home assist support services	Senior citizens	2	1
CHARM Support	Home assist support services	Young people who have	1	

Services		a disability		
Drug-Arm Australasia Centre for Addiction, Research and Education (CARE)	School-based presentations and workshops	Year 7 and up	2	2
Golden Years Senior Centre	Diversional therapy, leisure activities	Senior citizens	4	1
HAND Day Respite	Courses in literacy and numeracy Leisure activities	Adults who have an intellectual disability	4	2
Meals on Wheels (various locations)	Meal preparation and delivery	Senior citizens, disabled citizens	3	4
Save the Children Fund (SCF), QLD division	Mobile Playscheme (early childhood programme)	Children and their carers	2	1
Somerville House Boarding School	Administration	Children	1	
Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is	Educational projects	Children	1	
Westcare Disability Support Services	Home assist support services	People who have a disability	1	

Appendix 2
Authentic Learning Community Sites

Partner organisations	Program recipients	# of Students
Australian Acting Academy	children – all ages	4
Australian Football League (AFL)	primary school children	6
Flipside Circus	primary school children	2
Hill District Police Citizens Youth Club (PCYC)	children – all ages	3
Laurie Lawrence Swim Centre	children – all ages	1
Riverlife Adventure Centre	general public	3
Wattle Creek Riding School	general public	3

Section One – Information about You (approx 500-600 words)

1.1 Introduction

Why did you choose the Service Learning pathway?

1.2 School Reflection

Think back to your *own experiences* of school (primary/secondary):

a) How did you respond to the range of diverse students (disability, culture, family differences etc) in your school community when you were a student?
b) Describe how some students were excluded and included at school.
c) How can schools contribute to the development of a more inclusive society?
d) What problems do you have with the concept of inclusive education?

Section Two - Reflection in Anticipation of Events (500-600 words)

2.1 Focus on Aspects of the Context

a) What do you know of the context of the community organisation in which you will do your service Learning?
b) Use the organisation's website, make some phone calls and explore the following issues:

> What is the main work of the organisation?
> Whose needs does the organisation serve?
> What type of work is involved for the people working in the organisation?

2.2 Focus on the Learner

a) What would you like to achieve in this experience?
b) How are you feeling before the placement?
c) What challenges do you expect for you personally in the experience?

2.3 Focus on Learning Skills and Strategies

a) While you are working for the organisation, what do you think will be important to observe?
b) What do you want to find out more about?
c) How will this learning reinforce and extend your learning about inclusive education at university?

Section Three - Reflection in the Midst of Action

3.1   Describe and critically reflect on 3 important events/observations and the impact on you personally. It is recommended that you keep a journal during the Service Learning experience, which will assist you with this task. Use the 4R's framework adapted from Bain et al, (2002) to scaffold and structure your reflection (see Page 3). This section should reflect your own experience but should link to your learning at university and in particular your textbook. You

should have 10 references (minimum) throughout section 3.1. This will be explained further in a tutorial.

Starting points for discussion include:
- Document your observations about the culture and values of the organisation, processes of communication, collaboration, team work.
- Were any of your ideals or beliefs challenged or reinforced?
- How is your experience different from what you expected?
- How did you respond to the challenges you discussed in section 2.2?
- What are some of the pressing needs/issues in the community, and how are these needs addressed by the service provided by the organisation?
- Consider how your learning from this event will contribute to your future teaching role in schools.

Event /Observation 1 (500-600 words)

Event /Observation 2 (500-600 words)

Event /Observation 3 (500-600 words)

Section Four - Reflection after Events (approx 500 words)

4.1 How did your experience in the organisation reinforce your learning about inclusive education at university?

4.2 What practical knowledge and skills have you gained?

4.3 When you are a first year teacher, how will you operate to inform and progress the development of more inclusive culture, policy and practice in your school community?

4.4 Discuss how your beliefs have changed as a result of this experience?

4.5 Did you achieve what you described in 2.2 in the Service Learning Reflection Log?

4.6 What could be improved in the Service Learning Experience?