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Teacher Educators Embrace Philosophy: Reflections on a New Way of Looking at Preparing Pre-Service Teachers

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Abstract: Over the last decade in Australia, the role of the teacher has changed. Teachers are now expected to model and foster in their students a wide range of skills such as critical thinking, self-regulated learning, knowledge of self and others and lifelong learning. These changes are having a significant impact on the design of pre-service teacher education programmes, with university educators re-evaluating the teacher training curriculum and embedded pedagogical processes in order to consider how they might develop these skills in pre-service teachers. One approach is to consider the processes and practices inherent in philosophical inquiry. This paper reports on three participants' reflections of a 12-week philosophy programme that was conducted for teacher educators at Queensland's University of Technology (QUT) in 2008. The programme was facilitated by teachers from Buranda State School who have been teaching philosophy in their P-7 school for more than ten years. This paper provides insight into teacher educators' reflections on the philosophy programme and the associated changes and challenges of implementing such a programme in pre-service teacher education degrees.

Introduction

The role of the teacher has changed substantially in recent times. While effective teaching pedagogy was once thought to entail strict discipline, rote learning and transmission of information, effective teachers are now required to engage their students in thoughtful reflection, critical thinking and self-awareness (Crebbin, 2004; Lunenberg, Korthagen, & Swennen, 2007). In Australia, one way in which educational direction has been reshaped is through values education. Values education in Australian schools became a key aspect of government policy in 2002, when the then Commonwealth Minister for Education, Science and Technology, Dr Brendan Nelson, commissioned a study to explore current values-based education practices in Australian schools.

The Values Education Study Final Report (Zbar, 2003) used qualitative data obtained from 69 Australian schools to explore the ways in which schools were teaching values. As expected, schools used a diverse range of methods to incorporate values education into student learning. Some schools felt that values education

should be incorporated implicitly through modelling and the day-to-day classroom and school practices. Others felt students should be encouraged to critically analyse value positions while determining value positions of their own. Yet again some schools opted for the explicit teaching of a list of set values that had been previously decided on as fundamentally important, while others used a combination of all approaches. One approach to enhancing students' thinking, values and positions that has been gaining popularity recently is the use of philosophy in the classroom (Millett, 2006).

Philosophy in the Classroom

The use of philosophy in the classroom to enhance the thinking skills of children was first developed more than 20 years ago by US philosopher Matthew Lipman . Lipman developed the 'Philosophy for Children' programme that became popular in the United States and spread to Australia. Over time in Australia, local philosophers and educators revamped Lipman's programme by creating resources that were more appropriate to an Australian context. Heavily influenced by Lipman's work, the resources and processes of doing philosophy with Australian children in Australian classrooms became known as Philosophy in Schools. Both philosophy programmes are very similar however, and both have at their heart the classroom 'community of inquiry'. The community of inquiry requires students to work toward deliberate judgements and democratic decision-making. Students are required to discuss, debate and decide together on issues that are important to them (Splitter & Sharp, 1995).

Teachers are engaged in the community of inquiry as a facilitator or guide, and encourage children to focus on the content of the discussion and the processes that they are engaged in. This requirement of philosophical thought to pay attention to both content and process reveals the highly metacognitive nature of the community of inquiry (Cam, 1995). Children are required to think critically not only about the content they are discussing, but also about their own (and the community's) thinking and reasoning (Splitter, 2006). An important step in the development of critical thinking skills is to understand how to reason well, and why making decisions based on reasoned arguments and judgements is important. Philosophy encourages children to reflect on the quality of arguments offered, and the meaning underlying the argument they are making (Lipman, 1991). Furthermore, students can critique stated positions in reasoned and passionate ways, encouraging them to become aware of a range of positions, and to sit with many differing positions to weigh their merit. The focus of philosophy for the classroom is therefore not on *what* to think, but on *how* to think (Beyer, 1990; Hinton, 2003). Golding (2006, p.66) outlines the following as distinct features of Philosophy in Schools.

AIM:	Meaningfulness
CONTENT:	Rich concepts and philosophical questions
CULTURE/PROCESS:	Community of inquiry
THINKING:	Questioning, suggesting, reasoning, evaluating, reflecting
TEACHER:	Thinking coach and philosophical guide

A number of philosophical thinking tools are made explicit in the community of inquiry and work to enhance children's thinking and reflection skills (Burgh & O'Brien, 2002). Cam (1995, p.16) outlines a number of these including exploring conceptual boundaries, discovering criteria, uncovering conceptual connections, defining terms, classifying objects, identifying logical relations, drawing deductive inferences, analysing conditional statements and constructing analogies. As the teacher identifies these processes as they occur during a philosophical session, children are encouraged to think about and understand these components of thinking. Children thus learn to reflect on their thinking, and the thinking being articulated within the community of inquiry, by applying a range of philosophical processes. They become aware that the statements they articulate must be supported by reasons. As the ability to articulate reasons is essential for understanding, engaging children in the philosophical community of inquiry allows children to become more aware of their thoughts, the meaning of their words, and the complexity of the world (Knight, 2006).

Fisher (1998) argues that philosophy is important as "it deals with the fundamental questions of life, such as 'What makes me who I am? How can I know anything for certain? and How should I live?'" (p. 20). Encouraging children to answer these and other philosophical questions encourages them to actively interrogate their own values and beliefs (Burgh & O'Brien, 2002). For children to be aware of their own understandings, and be able to make thoughtful and reasoned decisions about their lives, they must have spent time pondering these types of questions. This kind of inquiry has been largely neglected in most areas of the school curriculum (Fisher, 1998), indicating that without incorporating philosophy in schooling, children may never get to ask themselves these integral questions. Based on a belief that children must learn critical thinking and reflection skills, one Brisbane primary school, Buranda State School, has been teaching philosophy for over 10 years.

Philosophy at Buranda

Buranda State School has been widely documented as an outstanding school that has experienced remarkable changes over the last decade. Buranda implemented philosophy as a key component of its curriculum in 1996. Philosophy is run as a core timetabled subject of at least one hour per week and is taught by all classroom teachers who have undertaken in-service training on how to teach philosophy. Principal Lynne Hinton (2003) argues that the use of philosophy enables her students to improve their understanding of the world in which they live, and become better at thinking. Using the notion of a classroom community of inquiry, students participate in discussions about many of life's 'big' questions, such as 'What does being afraid mean?', 'Are some things beautiful to everyone?', 'Does treasure bring happiness?', and 'What is it to live a good life?'. Additionally, the students are encouraged to think and talk about their thinking, enabling them to become more aware of their thoughts. Through working collaboratively with others, students gain a greater understanding of how other people think, and develop respect for differing opinions (Tan & Leong, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). As a direct result of the philosophy implementation, Buranda State School has had a significant increase in enrolments, improved work practices, the development of a professional learning community, highly supportive parent and community involvement, reduction of bullying within

the school, reduction of student behavioural issues and demonstrable improved student outcomes (Hinton, 2008).

A typical philosophy session at Buranda might begin by students reading aloud a story that explores philosophical themes such as friendship, beauty, death, existence and knowledge (for smaller children the teacher may read the story). After reading, the teacher would ask students what questions they are wondering about as a result of hearing the story. Children are encouraged to ask big questions, those that have a philosophical underpinning, ensuring the discussion is a philosophical one. The teacher writes the students' questions on butcher's paper in plain view of all students and writes the student's name after the question he/she asked. The children then look over the questions and group them according to apparent themes. Often, the teacher will then choose one of the themes and ask a student who offered a question with this theme to begin explaining his/her question and why it was asked. This begins a discussion where the students talk when they are holding a ball, and they choose the next speaker by passing the ball to that person. In addition to this, students can work in small groups to discuss questions and concepts that the teacher has prepared earlier and handed out. The small groups then return to the larger community of inquiry to listen to, and discuss, each others' ideas.

While this process may seem simple, it is anything but. The discussion that ensues is not a random free-for-all where students articulate whatever jumps into their head (Splitter & Sharp, 1995). Instead, the teacher works to guide the discussion along meaningful and related lines, encouraging students to build on others' ideas, as well as provide examples and counter-examples of what other students have suggested. Teachers are also required to gently remind students of the rules that ground the philosophy lesson, rules including only one person speaking at a time (hence the use of the ball – only he/she with the ball can speak), treating others with respect, disagreeing with the idea rather than the person and listening attentively. For students to feel safe in the community of inquiry, and willing to adopt these rules, the teachers must model similar behaviours. Cotton (2002) identified the following teacher behaviours as imperative within the community of inquiry; early establishment of ground rules, showing respect for all students, providing non-threatening activities, accepting individual differences, modelling thinking skills and allowing students to participate actively in the community.

The role of the teacher in the classroom has been found to be the single most important factor in student learning (Australian Council of Deans of Education, 2005; Carnegie Corporation, 1994; Hattie, 2003; Lovat, 2007; Willms, 2000). While teachers must possess knowledge, understanding and skills in content and pedagogy, there is more than this to being an effective teacher. An effective teacher will be supportive of his/her students; will develop strong relationships; will come to know his/her students as individuals; will have an understanding of the social and cultural contexts of the students'; and will model good behaviour, critical thinking and self-awareness. A simplified list of quality teaching dimensions might note such things as: intellectual depth, communicative capacity, empathic character, reflective powers, self-management, and self-knowing (Lovat & Toomey, 2007). All of these traits, skills and dispositions are necessary when using philosophy in the classroom, and are developed through the process of engaging with philosophical inquiry.

Philosophy for Schools in Pre-Service Teacher Education

As more and more schools are embracing philosophy as a way to teach children critical thinking, and the need for values education encourages teachers to develop their students social, emotional and moral worlds, it is becoming increasingly important that pre-service teacher education degrees incorporate appropriate pedagogical skills and processes (Ramsey, Mowbray, & Moore, 2001). Important skills that should not be overlooked in any pre-service teacher programme are the necessity to instil in pre-service teachers the ability to reason effectively, engage in self-reflection and develop self-knowledge. Pre-service teachers need to be encouraged to develop their "ability to examine and identify the personal characteristics, beliefs and attitudes that make them who they are and influence the way they think about teaching and learning" (Baum & King, 2006, p.27). Teachers must constantly make important decisions that will affect themselves and the learning experiences of their students. The key to effective decision-making is quality reasoning and self-reflection skills (Millett, 2006), and pre-service teacher degrees must specifically target the development of these areas. Integrating philosophy into pre-service teacher degrees may be an effective way of developing the essential skills and pedagogies that modern teachers need.

Despite the many benefits that the content and processes of philosophy may bring to pre-service teachers, Millett (2006) argues that "it has proven difficult to introduce Philosophy for Children in to the curriculum of pre-service teachers in Australia" (p. 52). While a small number of universities offer broad 'philosophy in education' units, or units on 'teaching critical thinking', they do not delve with any real depth into the ways in which teachers can use philosophy in the classroom (Millett, 2006). This has important ramifications on two levels. Firstly, pre-service teachers will most successfully go on to implement philosophy into their classrooms if they believe that developing open-minded critical thinkers, who are reflective, caring and responsible, is a central and important part of their profession. Quite sensibly, pre-service teachers develop their ideas about what is considered important in education due to what is focused on most heavily within their education degrees. Thus, until the idea that teaching philosophy to school aged children is highly beneficial takes a more central role within the pre-service teacher curriculum, it is unlikely that beginning teachers will embrace, or even be aware of, the potential of philosophy in the classroom.

Secondly, if teachers are expected to develop critical thinking skills, self-regulated learning approaches, knowledge of self and others and lifelong learning in their students, it is imperative that they have reflected upon these qualities within themselves. Allowing pre-service teachers to engage with the philosophical underpinnings surrounding education and their role as teachers would encourage them to develop their own critical thinking and reasoning skills. Using the community of inquiry approach with pre-service teachers allows them to be a part of a process that they could later implement in their own classrooms. Before teachers can effectively teach anything to their students, they must have engaged in the processes themselves, and be able to provide effective modelling of desired dispositions (Knight, 2006). As such, the Philosophy in Schools movement would be sufficiently boosted by the integration of its focus into pre-service teacher education degrees. Similarly, if pre-service teachers are to be effectively taught ways to incorporate philosophy into the classroom, teacher educators must first be familiar with ways of doing this themselves.

Learning to Think: Philosophy in the Classroom

In response to the introduction of the Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers introduced by the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) in 2006, QUT has been undergoing a process of renewal in its pre-service teacher education curriculum. The QCT (2006) standards outlined that teachers must possess certain capabilities that will allow them to "provide high quality instruction and support" (p.4) for their students, in order for their students to become lifelong learners with transferable skills. The standards also outlined that teachers must commit to professional reflection in order to develop their capabilities as effective teachers. QUT's renewal process has involved realigning curriculum units to fit with the professional standards as well as considering new and different ways of teaching pre-service teachers to effectively arm them with the knowledge and skills demanded for teaching in the 21st century. The concept of philosophy in the classroom aligns neatly with the professional standards, allowing teachers to develop their own professional skills and pedagogies while developing their students' critical thinking, reasoning and self-awareness skills. As such, teacher educators at QUT engaged in a professional development programme entitled *Learning to Think: Philosophy in the Classroom* in order to discover ways in which they could implement philosophy in their pre-service teacher degrees.

Design and Implementation of the Programme

In April 2008 a collaboration proposal was developed between Lynne Hinton, Principal of Buranda State School, and Professor Wendy Patton, Executive Dean, Faculty of Education, QUT. This proposal outlined the need for QUT teacher educators to be trained in philosophy by teachers from Buranda so that they could implement a philosophy unit for their pre-service teachers in 2009. Buranda's programme, *Learning to think: Philosophy in the classroom*, covers a diversity of teaching approaches and focuses on teaching children how to critically think for themselves. The programme was implemented with teacher educators in August 2008 to enhance the real world capacity of QUT staff. These QUT teacher educators volunteered to commit themselves to two hours per week for a 12-week programme, plus preparation time in terms of completing the week's prescribed readings. The 23 teacher educators were drawn from all schools within the Faculty of Education, as well as all backgrounds from early childhood through to senior secondary, some with extensive philosophy backgrounds and others with minimal experience.

The three authors of this paper had minimal exposure to philosophy in their backgrounds. Participant One (P1) had not been exposed to philosophy in any systematic educational way. Her training had focused on psychology, law and education. She came to the philosophy programme however with an intense interest in the subject of philosophy, and a desire to explore philosophy in all its facets. Participant Two's (P2) background is in psychology. She had not participated in any formalised study of philosophy prior to engaging in the current program. Participant Three's (P3) background is in arts and education and she had some undergraduate education in philosophy but mainly in relation to Studies of Religion and History. As a Secondary School teacher P3 taught some very basic philosophy directly related to search for meaning and human existence.

The programme for the QUT teacher educators was adapted from the existing Buranda philosophy training programme to include more of a theoretical underpinning. The programme included some lecture style sessions, workshops,

demonstration lessons, observations and the unique opportunity to teach a philosophy lesson to a class at Buranda State School. It was facilitated by Buranda State School staff but also included contributions from visiting academics with an extensive background in philosophy for children. During the programme the QUT staff witnessed how philosophy in the classroom works from both a theoretical and a practical perspective. There were opportunities to investigate and participate in communities of inquiry as well as a chance to gain further professional development in questioning theories and techniques. Extensive additional readings have also greatly enhanced the theoretical underpinnings of philosophy in the classroom.

The remainder of this paper outlines three programme participants' reflections of the 12-week programme. These three participants reflected each week on their own thoughts, values and attitudes to the concept of philosophy in the classroom and journalled these after each week's session. Examining these reflections has provided insight into disciplinary knowledge; reflection on teaching knowledge, skills and pedagogies; and personal development of the participants through the programme. The reflections explore the challenges of implementing such a programme within a Bachelor of Education field studies unit (as currently proposed by the Faculty), as well as the participants' hopes for the future of pre-service teacher curriculums.

Findings

Valuable Aspects of the Programme

The participants in this programme embarked upon a journey of self-discovery as they became aware of how their feelings towards the philosophy programme changed over time and how their feelings were an important component in gaining a deeper understanding of their teaching beliefs and practices. All three participants entered the philosophy programme with excitement and enthusiasm and a range of personal expectations about what they wanted to achieve by undertaking the programme. These feelings are highlighted in the following reflections that were noted after attending their first class - an introduction to philosophy.

> I guess I am wanting philosophy to be another thing in my life that changes the way I view the world. I want to see and think about things on a deeper level. I am looking for enlightenment (P1).
>
> I am really quite excited about being involved in the philosophy programme. I am hoping that I will learn a range of pedagogical strategies that may enhance my students' learning and that will help my students become more independent and critical thinkers (P2).

However, participants also reported that there were times when the philosophy programme did not meet their expectations. In the early stages of the programme, participants wrestled with feelings of fear, frustration, anxiety, uncertainty, and disappointment, as indicated below.

> I suppose I am not sure where everything is heading and how this is going to be implemented here at QUT. How will it be taught? What will be taught? How much time allocation? What subjects, etc? (P3)

This participant also noted her disappointment when she observed a philosophy lesson being facilitated in the classroom and it was not being taught in the manner she expected.

> They were having an interesting discussion on the colour blue but it was cut very short, and it could have been explored in more depth. My belief was that philosophy wasn't rushed and that it gave time for meaningful discussion within a community of inquiry (P3).

Another participant noticed that her teaching beliefs, for example students should become autonomous learners capable of critical thinking, were not always congruent with her teaching practices in which the teacher used direct instruction to lead students to develop beliefs that were consistent with her own.

> To be honest, something I am finding hard to overcome is my desire to get kids believing what I want them to believe. I find that I want them to feel a particular way (such as racism is bad). I worry that I will end up telling them how to feel. I fear that without direct instruction, they may make up their own mind and I won't be able to control that. Oh dear! How can I be in favour of independent critical thinking and so frightened of it at the same time? (P1)

Over time, however, the teaching of philosophy in the classroom slowly became clearer as one participant reported:

> I am struggling with the idea of how to 'do' philosophy in the classroom although I am getting a clearer picture that it's about asking questions to help children clarify, organise, categorise and define their viewpoints and ideas. It's about helping children to think better, allowing children to walk around in their own minds and get familiar with what is going on there. (P1).

Participants came to understand how pre-service teachers might feel when they are learning things outside their level of comfort.

> The lesson really brought home to me the need to create and maintain trust and respect in the classroom during philosophy. I actually find it quite vulnerable to have my say and outline my justifications, and the way others respond to that really matters. (P1)

Another participated reported:

> In our first lesson, I felt a bit overwhelmed at having to read aloud a passage from a story in front of my peers (other academics). A few things crossed my mind before I began. What if I stumble? What if I don't portray the character in the story appropriately? What will my peers think of me? Once I began reading the story I focused on the task at hand, but I remember feeling a sense of relief upon finishing the reading. This reinforced to me the importance of creating a supportive environment for students to learn. Students need to feel comfortable taking risks when they learn something new, not intimated as they imagine their peers judging their capabilities. (P2)

Reflecting on their learning experiences each week helped the study's participants to establish their own personal view of what quality teaching entails.

> This started me thinking about how formulaic the whole [philosophy for children] procedure was. Is there room for

> individual tweaking and changes? I must say I am not really in favour of formulas – no teacher or student is the same. We should be teaching in an individualistic manner. Good teaching isn't just a join the dots activity. (P3)

This participant noted that "quality teaching is closely linked to excellent pedagogy strategies such as questioning and being able to facilitate a discussion". She elaborates further in the following reflection:

> We looked at the Question Quadrant which I had never come across before. I really liked the visual of having the quadrant on the floor marked out with ribbon and placing various types of questions that were placed on cards in the quadrants. It further reinforced for me the benefits of visual prompts and tactile ones and not just something on the whiteboard. This is an excellent pedagogical strategy. Which reminds me that effective teaching and learning comes down to the skills and how philosophy is taught. (P3)

Another participant suggested that "quality teaching encompasses a multitude of skills." She describes these skills in the following manner:

> As a teacher it is important that you develop a high level of self-awareness and self-understanding. Fostering skills in students such as drawing inferences and substantiating conclusions, listening and critical reflection, exploring and understanding different perspectives requires teachers to become also proficient in these skills. These skills develop over time and it will be important when teaching philosophy to pre-service teachers that I remember to first develop a caring environment for students to learn and then allow them the space and time to become capable in demonstrating these skills. (P2)

One of the three authors had the opportunity to teach a philosophy lesson at Buranda State School with a Year 4/5 class. This experience reinforced the learning and theory explored over the programme by allowing for a practical application in a real world setting.

> After I introduced myself I asked a student to briefly recap on the story for everyone. Student A volunteered to do this – apparently she had been away when the story had been read and had asked her teacher if she could read it at lunchtime – how awesome is that?!! My focus question was *Is it good to be different?* which was one of the student's original questions. So I started them off talking about the things that make us look different and then we moved onto the acceptable continuum… The second card was being beautiful – this was a great discussion. They really got into the whole notion of beauty is in the inside and we came up with a criteria list for this which I wrote on the whiteboard. None of this was what I anticipated but it went really well. When we were talking about kicking your best friend they came up with some great responses – it's not okay to kick your best friend but you might need to kick someone if they were a murderer! Wow they really do think. (P3)

Challenges and Limitations

The philosophy programme was delivered in a classroom over 12 weeks in two hourly sessions. The time-limited nature of the lessons posed some challenges for the facilitators of the programme as they tried to provide teacher educators with a sufficient understanding of the theoretical frameworks underpinning philosophy as well as deliver an overview of the philosophical inquiry process and model the pedagogical tools used by teachers in a community of inquiry approach. As a result, lessons were often hurried and delivered in a lecture style format and time for reflection as a group was omitted. One participant commented on the limitations of such an approach.

> I am surprised that they are teaching us about philosophy this way – lectures. There are a whole lot of interesting people in the room who would like to share their ideas and inquire together, but there is just no room for it. And it is boring. You really feel that you are being told a lot of already settled information and you do think, and so why do I need to learn this? I want to act on this information, get dirty in it, suck it up, spit it out, wrestle with my colleagues in the ideas and possibilities. Everything is connected and I have newly forming ideas that I want to share and test and challenge and change, and they are just not giving me the opportunity to do it. You need to engage in dialogue to enhance your learning, and social dialogue leads to internalisation. (P1)

Another participant had similar perceptions about the way philosophy was being conveyed throughout the programme.

> Many of the teaching tools are new to me and whilst I have had the opportunity as a participant to see some of the teaching techniques modelled to me by the facilitators, I have not had sufficient opportunity to utilise these strategies as a teacher educator. I would prefer to practice something as soon as I have learnt it and I am guessing my students probably feel the same way. It makes you question why teacher educators are still using lectures as their main delivery style. Perhaps we need to re-think how we are teaching our future teachers. Perhaps we need to move away from disseminating information to students and instead focus on active engagement. I am also disappointed that there has not been time for reflecting at the end of each lesson as a group. We certainly are not modelling what good quality teaching entails. (P2)

Teacher educators often deliver information to students in lecture style forums as it is an efficient approach for distributing a significant amount of content to large cohorts of students. It became apparent to participants in this study that teacher-driven lectures are certainly not conducive to modelling to pre-service teachers how effective teachers in the classroom facilitate student learning. As one participant suggested "students love the opportunity to discuss, debate, and challenge", however teaching in this lecture-style didactic manner prevents students from doing this. Thus students are less likely to develop a deep appreciation of the usefulness of the content

and theories that they are being taught as they are not given the opportunity to utilise their knowledge and skills immediately.

One participant suggested that philosophy for pre-service teachers may be best approached in smaller, interactive tutorials.

> I am imagining tutorials where most of work is done in a community of inquiry and lots of group work is used. I think we have to begin by teaching the principles of the community of inquiry and the value of using philosophy. We need to work in lots of reflection, and perhaps part of their assessment can be reflection on how they are progressing in the community of inquiry, how their group are progressing etc. (P1)

Overall, the experience of participating in the programme for all three authors was a positive one. Engagement with the programme has raised many questions in regards to teaching and learning; for pre-service teacher education and for teacher educators' own teaching styles and philosophies. As a result of the programme and its surrounding discussions, issues such as philosophy in schools, philosophy of education, values education, reflection, critical thinking, curriculum, assessment and metacognition have been raised. As one participant reflected,

> Not only has the whole experience been beneficial in terms of my own teaching and enjoyment and interest, it has certainly given me much food for thought in terms of my professional development. Whilst they [Buranda] don't refer to it [philosophy in schools] as values education I am firmly convinced that it is. So when we talk about teaching philosophy to pre-service teachers I'd like to see the term expanded to values education. The techniques in thinking and questioning are superb but don't need to be limited to the philosophy lesson. They should be used constantly. I've also been thinking more and more about the benefits of reflection and metacognition. It will be interesting to see how the course here at QUT ends up being implemented. I sincerely hope it's not lecture style – it needs to be very hands on and needs to allow the students to practice and experiment and to be really reflective in a deep and not just a superficial sense. (P3)

Concluding Thoughts

It has been argued that teacher education degrees need to enhance the metacognitive, reflective and critical thinking skills of pre-service teachers. Currently, education degrees strive to implicitly teach values, morals and ethics to pre-service teachers. By and large, an explicit focus on the need for pre-service teachers to teach their future students about values and morals is lacking (Mergler, 2008). The authors wholeheartedly recommend the teaching of philosophy in schools as one way of demonstrating values education, critical thinking skills and quality teaching practices to pre-service teachers. By implementing a philosophy in schools component into its pre-service teacher education programme, QUT is attempting to explicitly arm its pre-service teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively engage in philosophical and values-based reflection, discussion and activities with themselves, their peers and their future students.

If, however, we are requiring pre-service teachers to actively engage their students in philosophical communities of inquiry, it is imperative that pre-service teachers have actively experienced the content and processes of this community. The reflections of the teacher educators discussed in this paper clearly outline the vulnerability that occurs initially in this practice, and the values of experiencing this as a participant before seeking to facilitate such a process. In addition, the experience allows one to uncover the hidden assumptions one carries about one's role as a teacher and the role of one's students in teaching and learning, an essential precursor to appropriate behaviour change. It is imperative that pre-service teachers are exposed to a community of inquiry as active participants on a number of occasions so that they personally feel the challenges and ultimate reward of this process. Without a deep experience of engagement, the authors argue that pre-service teachers may be unlikely to utilise philosophy to its full advantage, if at all. This therefore has important ramifications for the way in which philosophy in schools should be taught to pre-service teachers. While universities often resort to large lectures in order to cater for many students within limited timeframes, the authors feel that this approach must be resisted.

The reflections offered by the teacher educators demonstrate the ways in which engaging with philosophy in schools encourages deep thinking and increased self-awareness. It is difficult to partake in a process that requires one to listen attentively, consider differing viewpoints and articulate ideas with supporting reasons without applying these skills to one's further learning (Freakley & Burgh, 1999). As philosophy in schools is essentially a process of critical thinking and self-reflection, the very act of engaging with the process elicits these behaviours (Cam, 1995). As universities aspire to develop teachers who are self-aware, reflective and able to think critically about information they receive, the philosophy in schools programme offers a way of achieving this by implicitly and explicitly requiring pre-service teachers to embrace these principles.

As philosophy in schools, values education and the link to quality teaching begin to gain more recognition in educational circles, the necessity for a strong theoretical and practical foundation in pre-service teacher education will become more apparent. The reflections discussed offer insight into the considerations of teacher educators as they work to incorporate such a focus into their education degrees. Whilst the 23 teacher educators who participated in the programme may have differing views on their experience with the programme or how some of the key ideas can be implemented, the fact that one university has provided professional development for their education staff in this area indicates the increasing importance and relevance of the philosophy in schools movement.

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