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## Raising the Bar: Ethics Education for Quality Teachers

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## **Raising the Bar: Ethics Education for Quality Teachers**

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Introduction

*Abstract: Since the 1970s an 'ethics boom' has occurred to counter the disappearance of ethics education from tertiary institutions. This 'boom' appears to be absent from teacher education programs in Australia and the United States.*

*Given persistent calls to enhance teacher quality this is problematic because quality teaching is inexorably linked to teachers' beliefs, values and professional ethics.*

*This case study, conducted in a regional Australian university, was designed to document examples of ethical dilemmas faced by pre-service and practising teachers, to explore pre-service teachers' perceptions of ethics education and to examine the BEd course curriculum for ethics subjects across the four-year degree course. Results highlight a need for teacher training courses to include ethical philosophy units. This represents a sustainable way to support professional practice and enhance teacher quality, by preparing and equipping teachers with techniques to explore and teach complex ethical issues in the classroom.*

Quality teachers are considered to be those individuals whose pedagogy is grounded in values and beliefs that lead to caring, positive teacher-student relationships, embedded in trust and high standards of professional ethics. In a context of focused attention upon professional ethics and values education, this case study was conducted to: a) explore professional ethical dilemmas encountered by pre-service and practising teachers, b) explore pre-service teachers' perceptions of the ethics education delivered during their bachelor of education course and c) examine the ethics content of a bachelor of education degree at an Australian university.

### **Teacher Quality and Student Attainment**

Efforts to improve student attainment have given rise to much international research since the 1960s (for example, Coleman Report (1966), Plowden Report (CACE, 1967). While earlier research tended to focus on socioeconomic and intake factors rather than the influence of school to explain student attainment, more recent studies have concentrated on the effects teaching and teacher quality upon student attainment (Carnegie Corporation, 1994; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Newmann & Associates, 1996). For Newman (1996) and Darling-Hammond (1996) student attainment is enhanced by effective teachers who are not only technically competent, with good subject and pedagogical knowledge, but also able to form positive relationships and be a positive role model for their students. These two linked but distinct strands of teacher behaviours, constituting what teachers do in the classroom, enhance student attainment and define teacher quality. These propositions were

also endorsed in Australia. Rowe was emphatic that teacher quality is a key determinant of student outcomes:

...the quality of teaching and learning provision are by far the most salient influences on students' cognitive, affective, and behavioural outcomes... 'what matters most' is quality teachers and teaching, supported by strategic teacher professional development! (Rowe, 2003, p.15)

More recently, Hattie (2009) supported this view, maintaining that teacher quality is an important moderating factor responsible for the differences found in student performance *within* schools. Hattie (2009) analysed more than 50,000 studies and demonstrated that the differences *between* schools in terms of student performance were minute compared to the variances *within* schools, highlighting the importance of the classroom teacher. He concluded that teachers who used particular teaching strategies, such as providing challenging thinking tasks and appropriate feedback, and teachers who had high expectations of all their students and who created positive teacher-student relationships, had above average effects on student achievement and thus could more legitimately be considered quality teachers.

It is no surprise then that several initiatives have been proposed to increase the quality of those entering, or in, the teaching profession. One call to 'raise the bar' (Hardie, 2009) was based on the belief that performance pay will increase teacher quality. Indeed, a survey on attitudes to teaching as a career indicates that while those who choose teaching as a career are motivated mainly by factors such as wanting to make a difference and working with children, remuneration is the most significant factor influencing others in not choosing teaching as a career or leaving it (DEST, 2006).

Yet well qualified, well paid individuals are not necessarily more likely to be quality professionals, as recent global events have shown. The individuals within the finance sector, which precipitated the recent global economic crisis, were both well qualified and well paid.

The education sector is also often under scrutiny. Even in the contexts of well funded and prestigious schools, instances of abuse of power appear regularly in the media (for example, Klan & Rout, 2009). Performance pay might be one way of retaining 'better' teachers but as a stand-alone strategy it is no guarantee that it will improve the quality of educators. For what constitutes teacher quality and how to enhance it is neither simple nor clear.

Connell (2009) proposed that conceptions of a good teacher are constantly evolving and are contestable. Ingvarson and Rowe (2008) argued that the concept of a quality teacher is fraught with difficulties because it is almost impossible to measure directly. They suggested that the measurement of teacher quality for professional accreditation and professional development needs to focus upon what teachers know and should be able to do. They distinguished between successful teaching, teaching which results in high performance outcomes by students, and good teaching which provides the learner with all the opportunities possible to enhance their competence in a particular curriculum area, and does so in a morally defensible way. Ingvarson and Rowe (2008) concluded that what is needed is a re-focusing of the prevailing economic teacher-quality/student-performance/merit-pay research and policy agenda to one centred on teaching standards - what teachers should know and be able to do.

Notwithstanding the above, there is some agreement about what characteristics are indicators of a quality teacher. Wescombe-Down (2009) maintained that the mark of a quality teacher is centred on 'pedagogical fitness'. A pedagogically fit teacher 'establishes

and maintains a positive, inclusive and safe learning environment' (Wescombe-Down, 2009, p.20) where student beliefs, confidence, skills and values can be fostered and developed. Reporting research, Rowe (2004), Rowe, Stewart and Patterson (2007), Lovat and Toomey (2007) and Hattie (2009) similarly state that in addition to teacher subject knowledge and competence, desirable teacher qualities most often cited by students were a demonstrated sense of care and trust. As Arthur (2010) explains, students perceive in their teachers' pedagogy dimensions of genuine caring underpinned by their ethical, moral positions.

Empirical studies consistent with these notions suggest that better teacher-pupil relationships may have an impact upon learning, behaviour and attendance (Arthur & Wilson, 2010; Sakiz & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2009; Gorard & See, 2011), whereas poor student-teacher relationships are often characteristic of those students with problems in school (for example, Boon, 2008). Hattie's (2009) meta-analysis of 50,000 studies, including studies reporting direct student appraisals of their teachers, endorsed the notion that quality teachers had high expectations of their students and demonstrated care for them.

Of particular interest in this context is a study reported by Gore, Ladwig, Griffiths and Amosa, (2007), designed to specifically examine the mechanism linking student attainment and teacher-pupil relationships. Gore et al.'s (2007) study involved 3000 school students as they progressed through four years of schooling between 2004 and 2007 in the state of NSW. Their findings suggest that when the pedagogy employed by teachers was paired with high expectations and beliefs that were socially inclusive and morally defensible the most vulnerable students in their classes, those from a lower SES background, Indigenous and ethnic minority students, benefitted most. Gore et al. (2007) argued that it was the approach with which teachers tackled their professional duties that made a difference. An approach based on commitment to their students' learning, underscored by a commitment to social justice. They surmised that teacher commitment to student learning sprang from an internalised value system, underscored by particular values and beliefs. They argued that teachers' values and beliefs determine teacher quality, and emphasised the need for teachers to reflect upon their beliefs, and for training to provide the space for this to happen.

...if a [teacher education] program is to promote growth among novices, it must require them to make their pre-existing personal beliefs explicit; it must challenge the adequacy of those beliefs; and it must give novices extended opportunities to examine, elaborate, and integrate new information into their existing belief systems... (Gore et al., 2007, p.7)

Gore et al.'s (2007) views are also found overseas (for example, Arthur, 2010; Alexander, 2009; Revell & Arthur, 2007; Nucci, Drill, Larson & Browne, 2005).

### **Teacher Values and Beliefs, Ethics Education and Values Education**

The idea that teacher quality and quality teaching are linked with teacher values and beliefs is widely held (Arthur, 2010; Clement, 2007; Gore et al., 2007, Lovat, 2007; Lovat & Toomey, 2007; Lovat, Toomey, Clement, Crotty & Nielsen, 2009; Rowe, 2004; Westcombe-Down, 2009).

The significance of beliefs for understanding human behaviour is well documented. Cordelia Fine (2006) distilled a number of psychological research studies into a book illustrating the links between beliefs, stereotypes and behaviours. In an earlier review of

the research on teachers' beliefs, Pajares catalogued several sources supporting the notion that "beliefs are the best indicators of the decisions individuals make throughout their lives" (Pajares, 1992, p. 307), noting the strong links between teachers' beliefs, their planning, instructional decisions, and classroom practices. He emphasised that beliefs are "far more influential than knowledge in determining how individuals organize and define tasks and problems and are stronger predictors of behaviour" (Pajares, 1992, p. 311). The social organisation of life in the classroom experienced by learners is critical to their outcomes and depends upon the managing teacher's commitment. This commitment, characterised by particular and distinct behaviours, is underpinned by, and is a function of, the teacher's beliefs and professional ethics (Kagan, 1992; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992).

Although it is difficult to empirically assess the impact of belief and values upon pedagogy, several education researchers have identified significant relationships between teacher beliefs, teaching practices, and student learning experiences in the context of science teaching (Bryan & Atwater, 2002; Haney, Czerniak & Lumpe, 1996; King, Shumow & Lietz, 2001; Tobin & La Master, 1995). For example, Sadler, Amirshokoohi, Kazempour, and Allspaw, (2006), found that when teaching ethically sensitive science topics, teachers "typically felt ill prepared to engage classes in controversial discussions, and they also cited a lack of appropriate resources to help structure these experiences" (Sadler et al., 2006, p.357). They concluded that to address the gap in teacher expertise to debate ethical dilemmas when teaching sensitive issues, pre-service teacher training programs must include a focus on ethics which elaborates the connections between ethics and science to help teachers deal with the challenges they meet in the classroom. Only in this way can they hope to enhance the quality of their teaching approach and their students' engagement. Given that teachers' behaviour is substantially influenced and even determined by their thought processes (Clark & Peterson, 1986), and that values, beliefs, and ways of thinking influence practice (Nespor, 1987), an emphasis needs to be placed upon ethics education in the training of pre-service teachers. The historical development and current applications of ethical philosophy need to be explored in depth and in context in pre-service teacher education programs (Mergler, 2008). Burant, Chubbuck and Whipp, (2007) argued for an urgent re-focusing on morals through teacher training programs:

...we are convinced that our attention in teacher education must shift considerably to the formation not only of knowledge and skills but also of the moral sensibility that underlies them. The moral nature of teaching cannot be conflated with the knowledge and skills important for teaching; neither can it be neatly separated from them. As we have known throughout the ages yet also frequently ignore, the moral is always in play in classrooms in teachers' actions, whether intentionally or not, and the complexity of the classroom environment--its immediacy and ever-changing activities--makes demands on teachers that reveal their orientation to their work in a myriad of daily acts. Because of that seamless connection, explicit attention to the moral formation of pre-service teachers is crucial. (Burant et al., 2007, p. 408)

Support for this viewpoint is found in Campbell (2008). She lamented that "teacher education neglects the teaching of ethics" (Campbell, 2008, p.372) and urged that more emphasis must be placed on moral and ethical education because teacher training programs are "the initial place to acquaint new teachers with the moral dimensions of their chosen profession" (Campbell, 2008, p.373). Moreover, as Snook (2003) pointed out, because education aims to change people in particular ways, and uses methods which involve close, personal, hierarchical relationships, teaching is an occupation where ethical issues are central and therefore the provision of ethics education to support the code of professional conduct of teachers is crucial. Snook (2003) and Campbell (2008) echo the views of others

(for example, Carr, 2003;2006) who have appealed for ethics, that is moral philosophy, to take a more central role in pre-service teacher training programs.

Another important reason for urging that pre-service teachers engage with ethics education in teacher training programs (Alexander, 2009; Curtis, 2010) is that teachers are now required to guide their students through issues of human rights, conflict resolution and social justice, matters included under the auspices of values education. The inclusion of values education in the formal curriculum in Australia (Australian Government, 2005) means Australian schools must now comply with the *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools* (NFV-EAS) Framework (Jones, 2009).

Values education describes a globally endorsed move that charges teachers and schools with the role of inculcating values to their students, abandoning prior beliefs that these are only in the domain of families and religious institutions. Known internationally by various names, including moral education, character education and ethics education (Lovat & Toomey, 2007), and despite some slight differences in emphasis, this move recognises that teachers are expected to play a key role in the moral education of their students (Lovat et al., 2009). Although this teacher role was described and advocated as early as 1909 (Mackenzie, 1909), it places an increasing emphasis on teacher training courses to prepare pre-service teachers to educate diverse students about values and morals (Curtis, 2010; Jones, 2009; Lovat et al., 2009).

Without training to develop appropriate skills to teach values in schools, studies have shown that teachers pursue values education with students mostly on the basis of behaviour management; this tends to be unreflective and operating at the level of the hidden curriculum (Fiero Evans, 2005; Thornberg, 2008). They discuss values and norms in relation to behaviour and character development but “they do not make explicit reference to any moral philosophical, moral psychological or moral educational theories” (Curtis, 2010, p.114). For Snook (2003) values education cannot be disentangled from the philosophical discussion of ethics, or moral philosophy. An ethics curriculum will not only support pre-service teachers in teaching a diverse range of students about morals and values, but also assist them to analyse critically their own personal views and practices. Such engagement in reflective practice is also a mark of a quality teacher (Delpit, 2006).

It is through reflective practice that teachers are able to moderate and refine their pedagogy to meet the needs of their learners. Bibby (1999) argued an ethics curriculum is essential for teachers to “scan their professional environments for emerging issues ...also to exercise public leadership” (p.3). Curtis (2010) also advocated for pre-service teacher training programs to explicitly teach values education and related topics for similar reasons. Further, an ethics curriculum highlights the foundational ethical underpinnings to professional codes of conduct in undergraduate teacher education (see review by Campbell, 2008).

In sum, an ethics curriculum in pre-service teacher programs assists teachers to tackle values education in the classroom and to reflect in their own practice so that they are better able to respond to their students’ needs.

## **Background and Study Rationale**

During the 1970s, an ‘ethics boom’ occurred to counter the disappearance of ethics education and the marginalisation of moral education from higher education (Glanzer & Ream, 2007). The ‘boom’, witnessed in most professional undergraduate programs, is notable for its apparent absence from teacher education programs in the United States (Glanzer & Ream, 2007; Milson, 2003; Revell & Arthur, 2007) and in Australia (Lovat & Toomey, 2007; Newman & Pollnitz, 2005).

While it is not known precisely how many tertiary institutions in Australia specifically teach ethics through their teacher training programs, in relation to early childhood educators, Newman and Pollnitz (2005) reported that their investigation of early childhood practitioners' knowledge of the Early Childhood Association (ECA) code of ethics revealed that only about half of the early childhood personnel surveyed were aware of the existence of the code. Such a result might indicate that these practitioners' knowledge was obtained from sources other than teacher training institutions.

With a view to addressing these concerns, higher education curriculum reform moved to include more ethics courses for undergraduates in Australia (Slattery, 2009). This decision followed similar trends overseas to remedy the past century's marginalization of moral education from college and university curricula (Glanzer & Ream, 2007).

Are universities responding to the profession's needs? Are they including moral themes, values education and ethics curricula in their programs to prepare pre-service teachers for the range of moral nuances of teaching? The research literature reporting ethics education in pre-service training programs is limited.

Some sources outline pre-service and practising teachers' ethical dilemmas (e.g., Bibby, 1999; Campbell, 2003; Bergmark & Alerby, 2006). Overall, pre-service teachers' views about ethical dilemmas and ethics' training, or the extent of such training across Australian universities, are not well known (Lovat & Toomey, 2007). In addition, Anderson et al. (2007) maintain that it is difficult to know exactly what attempts universities are making to teach values (and ethics), because institutions are loath to specify what values they are targeting for fear of appearing to 'indoctrinate' pre-service teachers and because research in this area is difficult.

Political and ideological reasons have been proposed for the difficulties faced by those trying to introduce ethics curricula into teacher training degrees (Freakley, 2007). These include espoused relativism, precluding many undergraduates from engaging with ethics, and complacency in society and the schools in which pre-service teachers spend considerable time honing their teaching skills. They are thought to create a culture and a hidden curriculum that preclude trainee and newly qualified teachers from taking strong ethical stances (Freakley, 2007). Yet there is an expectation by Teacher Registration Boards nationally that professional codes of conduct, derived from ethics, have been internalised by newly-qualified teachers ready to use in the classroom.

Problems arise when codes of professional conduct have been merely memorised, and not analysed, debated or examined thoroughly from an ethical perspective. Empirical studies (for example, Cummings, Harlow & Maddux, 2007) have shown that pre-service teachers score poorly on moral reasoning compared with other undergraduates. This follows them into the work place where qualified teachers say they lack effective strategies and resources to teach students to explore ethical issues (Verrinder, 2007).

One way to address difficulties with moral reasoning is to provide learning experiences and training for pre-service teachers. Some empirical evidence suggests that interventions and training can raise the ability of pre-service teachers to deliberate moral reasoning issues (Cummings, Maddux, Maples, & Torres-Rivera, 2004) and their self-efficacy to teach values (Nucci, et al., 2005). Therefore courses in ethics or moral philosophy might be useful in preparing pre-service teachers for teaching, ethical decision making in the workplace and for the reflective practice required to improve the quality of their teaching.

## Study Aims

The considerations outlined above were the impetus for a case study centred in a regional Australian university. The study was designed in response to a workplace-integrated learning initiative to improve the quality of graduating students.

Within a world-wide climate of focused attention on ethics education, the aims of this study were to:

1. document examples of a range of ethical dilemmas faced by teachers in the workplace and pre-service teachers during, or in preparation for, practicum;
2. examine the Bachelor of Education course curriculum for specific ethics modules/subjects across the four-year course at one School of Education in a regional university; and
3. explore pre-service teachers' perceptions of their training in ethics as a foundation for meeting the demands of teaching in a school.

## Methods

Ethics clearance was sought and participants' informed consent was obtained. Experiences and perceptions of ethical dilemmas were collected through focus group and individual interviews with final year pre-service teachers, recent graduates and practising professional teachers. All participants were volunteers recruited for interview through the School of Education by the author and by invitation from school administrators in several schools. The interview protocol comprised two broad open-ended questions:

- . What does 'ethics' mean to you?
- . Describe any experiences you have had in relation to ethical behaviour in the workplace.

All interviews were conducted by the author. They included seven Education undergraduates (in two focus groups), three recently-graduated teachers and eleven secondary and primary teachers from Queensland public schools. The number of participants in the study was dictated by the breadth of issues reported, as concept sampling was used (Creswell, 2008).

Interviews were audio taped and transcribed; all personal identifiers were removed from the written transcripts. Each transcript was read independently by two researchers in an inductive process to discover which ethical issues were raised. Analyses focused on phrases, explanations and observations made by participants that illustrated the themes under study.

Ethics preparation of pre-service teachers in the School of Education was evaluated by examining all the subjects offered through the Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree course for ethics content. The assessment methods of all subjects were also checked to ascertain if they assessed ethics or professional ethics. To determine the pre-service teachers' perceptions of the BEd course curriculum in relation to ethics training, a survey was used. It comprised of 12 Likert-type questions (Table 2) and one free-form question; it was distributed during tutorial sessions at the university and completed by 86 of 120 (72 percent) fourth-year pre-service teachers.

## Results

### Interview Data

A range of ethical dilemmas was reported by practising teachers and pre-service teachers (Table 1).

The themes shown in Table 1 were raised by several interviewees independently (in cases where the issues was reported during an individual interview) or by way of agreement (in cases of issues reported during focus interviews with pre-service teachers).

Dilemmas were, in some cases, described extensively. Workplace bullying was the subject of extensive elaboration by four individuals, all of them victims of unethical administration practices in a school in which they had worked prior to the interviews. Interestingly, one of the victims of administrative bullying was identified as a bully by colleagues in a subsequent secondary school placement, where he allegedly indoctrinated students and publicly denigrated the work of his colleagues.

Of real concern is the fact that this individual regularly supervised pre-service teachers in their practicum. However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to analyse the interview data beyond the point of identifying instances of ethical dilemmas.

Ethical dilemmas cause significant day-to-day stress and dissatisfaction with the profession for supervisors, teachers and pre-service teachers. They range from a persistent lack of care for work commitments (turning up unprepared, not performing the work of a teacher, merely child minding), to ethical dilemmas centred on curriculum delivery (teaching sex education as a stand alone science topic, without due consideration of ethics/morals; teaching evolution while simultaneously and publicly blaming religion for mental health issues, youth suicides and wars, a la Richard Dawkins) to more serious ethical issues of assessment (we are asked to change student grades so the school looks better) cultural intolerance, non-inclusive practices, and inappropriate interactions of a sexual nature between teachers or teachers and students (admin. turning a blind eye to student – teacher liaisons, admin. ignoring the sexual harassment of teachers by students, principal sexually harassing pre-service teachers, pre-service teachers condoning pornographic material on students' mobiles, swearing like the students).

Table 1 shows some of the areas in which ethics impinge upon and shape teachers' work.

<i>Overarching Issue</i>	<i>Ethical Dilemmas Reported by Experienced and Pre-service Teachers</i>
<b>Behaviour management</b>	<p><b>Recent Graduate:</b> Being aware of different cultural perspectives to behaviour management and educational expectations, Indigenous cultural sensitivities.</p> <p><b>Head of department:</b> Providing pupils with a rationale and the means with which to construct their own code of classroom behaviour; accepting the cultural and religious background of students and their practices and convey affirmation for them to the class</p> <p><b>Teacher/ Pre-service teacher:</b> Behaviour management and the equity dilemma of detentions and suspensions.</p>
<b>Equity issues</b>	<p><b>Teacher:</b> Avoiding racism, nepotism, giving as much access to resources (workshop) and one's time to all students including those with disabilities and learning difficulties not just to the bright students.</p> <p><b>Pre-service teacher/Teacher:</b> Improper grading, partiality based on who is liked, past performance, background.</p>
<b>Human rights</b>	<p><b>Head of department:</b> Permitting (and teaching to the best of your ability) a student back into your class after that student has assaulted you.</p> <p><b>Teacher:</b> Giving students with special needs as much time, help and resources as are necessary to help them to achieve, even if that is more than you would give to typical students and greatly increases your work load .</p>
<b>Conflicts between personal and professional ethics</b>	<p><b>Head of department/Teacher:</b> Teaching about the theory of evolution against the validity of students' religious doctrines. Modelling appropriate behaviours and moral values to students at all times so that there is no hidden curriculum and ambivalent messages.</p> <p><b>Teacher/s:</b> Teaching sex education to young students without a comparable values-moral component.</p> <p>Reporting to parents (rather than the Principal) a case of sexual misconduct between a teacher and a 16 year old same-sex student.</p> <p>Dealing with a suicidal, anorexic student who becomes dependent on a same sex teacher for extreme emotional support – how does a teacher support the student just enough, but not cause her to become dependent on the teacher?</p>
<b>Collegial ethical issues</b>	<p><b>Pre-service teacher/s:</b> Leering or sexual innuendos between colleagues/principal and teachers/ students.</p> <p>What do you do when you witness inappropriate, prolonged or unwelcome touching to comfort a distressed student?</p> <p><b>Head of department:</b> Plagiarising work done by other teachers and using it without acknowledgement to the author.</p> <p><b>Teacher/s:</b> What do you do when you see indoctrination and belittling of students' religious beliefs or practices?</p> <p>Malicious gossip about colleagues.</p> <p>Bullying behaviour; entering a colleague's class room and taking control, undermining the classroom teacher's authority.</p>
<b>Negotiating with community stakeholders</b>	<p><b>Head of department:</b> Informing parents about their children's achievement and classroom behaviour when a parent does not like to hear that their child is responsible for particular behaviours.</p> <p><b>Teacher/s:</b> Being cautious when telling particular parents about a child's school activities when you know they will practice extreme physical punishment on a child.</p> <p>Taking into account the personal circumstances of a child coming to school unprepared when considering consequences for behaviour (e.g., a child who was inattentive in class due to spending the night awake and out of their home to enable their mother to conduct her prostitution "business")</p>
<b>Confidentiality issues</b>	<p><b>Teacher/s:</b> Talking about students' personal/ family issues in a staff-room.</p> <p>Keeping school matters within school walls, particularly in cases of students at risk</p> <p><b>Pre-service teacher:</b> Talking about students' personal issues in a staff-room, referring to them as 'slut'.</p> <p><b>Head of department:</b> Telling a parent that their under age child (16) is having a sexual relationship with another student (14)? (need the student's consent to do so).</p>
<b>Examples of pre-service teacher's unethical behaviour on practicum.</b>	<p><b>Teacher/s:</b> Missing work ethic and being unprepared to meet the needs of the students in both classroom and extracurricular activities.</p> <p>Lack of a vocational attitude in respect to the profession. Showing clear bias against minority groups.</p> <p><b>Head of department:</b> Non- adherence to school policy in dress code and seductive behaviour with adolescents; non-adherence to school behaviour management; condoning pornographic images on students' cell phones; over-friendly behaviour with adolescent students of the opposite sex (touching, hugging). Using inappropriate language, including swearing, blaspheming in front of students and colleagues. Modelling inappropriate values in the school grounds, smoking, laughing at pornographic images on cell phones.</p>

<p><b>Hidden curriculum institutional (un)ethical practices</b></p>	<p><b>Pre-service teacher/s:</b> Improper grading; partiality shown based on who is liked, past performance, background.  <b>Teacher/s:</b> Referring to minority groups in disparaging ways.          Bullying teachers to alter their marking so that the assessment of the school reflects higher achievement.          Sexual innuendo and harassment of pre-service female teacher by principal. Condoning sexual liaisons between teachers and students by Principal's inaction.          Inclusion of students with special needs into the class room deemed to be "a waste of time...for one boy with behaviour problems- time that could more usefully be spent on preparing a caring for the rest of the class".  <b>Recent Graduate:</b> Sexual harassment of male teacher by female students dismissed as a joke by the administration.  <b>Head of department/Teacher/s:</b> Indoctrinating students or promoting extreme political, controversial social or religious views.</p>
<p><b>Ethics comprehension</b>          (What does 'ethics' mean to you?)</p>	<p><b>Pre-service teacher:</b> Right behaviour, what's right and what's wrong. Probably just following the code – I mean we've been told that when we do assignments and stuff that there's a Code of Ethics and that so getting permission to do certain things and there's right and wrong I guess ethical would be what's right and unethical would be what's wrong. I don't know but I think the definition of right and wrong would depend on the context.</p> <p><b>Teacher:</b> It's about how you were raised. It's a generational thing. Personal beliefs and an accepted means of behaving in the community. Ethics to me is do unto others like you would like them to do unto you really, so, in fact, the old Christianity thing. Ethical behaviour would be to avoid gossip, not getting involved in slanging matches behind people's backs.</p>
<p><b>Systemic power relationships</b></p>	<p><b>Recent Graduate/ Teachers/ Pre-service teacher:</b> Authority in relation to students is greatly diminished – behaviour management is very difficult and you need to have parental support.          Authority removed by administration and parents-no value for teaching yet expectations for discipline and moral education are firmly in place.</p>

**Table 1: Examples of ethical dilemmas reported by pre-service and practising teachers**

### **Audit of the Ethics Curriculum Offered by the University's School Of Education**

In an examination of the subjects offered across the four-year Bachelor of Education degree course individual subject outlines were scrutinised, noting the learning objectives of each subject as well as the assessment descriptions and marking rubrics. This revealed that ethics was not taught explicitly at any particular year level.

Ethics was found to be taught explicitly and assessed only in electives in first and second year Health and Physical Education (HPE) for those specialising in HPE. Those specialising in Early Childhood Education were exposed briefly to ethics in relation to teaching in this age group, however the exposition did not involve any formal assessment. While professional standards for teachers were included in most of the subject descriptors, the ethics (philosophy) underpinning professional standards were not taught or examined in any subject of the four year degree. Professional standards and behaviours were discussed before each practicum in the second, third and fourth years and students' performance was assessed by the supervising teachers as being competent or non-competent.

### **Survey Results**

Fourth year pre-service teachers reported a critical need for instruction and training in ethics (Table 2). Case studies, workshops, reflective journals and lectures were endorsed as useful learning experiences. Of note are the results for Questions 3, 4, 7, and 11. They show clearly the large degree of uncertainty pre-service teachers experience in relation to ethics.

<i>Survey question</i>	<i>Responses (%)</i>				
	<i>Completely Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Completely Agree</i>
1. I have sufficient knowledge to understand professional conduct	3.5	15.1	31.4	29.1	20.9
2. I am sufficiently prepared to respond to any ethical professional dilemmas that I might face in the workplace.	16.3	27.9	37.2	16.3	2.3
3. I would like more time spent in the curriculum to analyse professional ethics	1.2	4.7	23.3	29.1	41.9
4. I would like explicit instruction on the foundations of professional ethics	3.5	4.7	22.1	31.4	38.4
5. I learn through case studies	1.2	3.5	27.9	33.7	33.7
6. I understand all ethics issues	17.4	27.9	36.0	15.1	3.5
7. I would like explicit instruction on personal ethics	1.2	2.3	26.7	40.7	29.1
8. Sometimes my professional and personal ethical conflict	12.8	16.3	40.7	12.8	17.4
9. I learn through lectures	23.3	15.1	44.2	10.5	7.0
10. I learn through workshops	0	1.2	29.1	38.4	31.4
11. I am familiar with principle and virtue based ethics	34.9	26.7	19.8	12.8	5.8
12. I learn through a reflective journal	18.6	23.3	40.7	10.5	7.0

**Table 2: Survey results**

The qualitative results (Table 3) derived from the pre-service teachers' responses to the extended-answer questions on the survey reveal a similar picture. They indicate a clearly perceived gap in their undergraduate preparation in ethics.

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- . What ethics I have learnt I picked up outside university; need instruction through the BEd degree
  - . Real life circumstances!! Practical.
  - . Professional standards for HPE
  - . My ethical values have been developed prior to university - however it should be included in the curriculum
  - . More on it, like who decides what ethics and values we teach and what ethics and values we should teach
  - . I understand the basic idea of ethics but am not sure about how or what I would do in certain situations
  - . I think that it is important to discuss ethics and to be exposed to different ideas and explore what others think
  - . How ethics change over time - political and economic influences
  - . Explicit instructions on legal & preventative measures
  
  - . Dealing with subjects sensitive to adolescents, such as sex, drugs.
  - . How to handle family cultural matters
  - . Consequences of ethical breaches
  - . How to handle inclusion that compromise the well-being of the whole class
  - . More unpacking of professional standards
  - . All ethics should be covered instead of none being covered.
  
  - . I want to be helped to consider other viewpoints as I am becoming hyper critical of people's views; I don't want to become so narrow minded. I want to get out of my box to examine other views.
- 

**Table 3: Qualitative survey responses: Pre-service teacher's suggestions for ethics training in the BEd curriculum**

## Discussion

A major finding of this study was the lack of explicit ethics instruction during the Bachelor of Education degree, echoing previous findings (for example, Anderson et al, 2007; Lovat & Toomey, 2007).

The need for more ethics training in Education was expressed by a pre-service teacher:

We can't be fuzzy on it (Code of professional ethics) because it has to be...part of our practice. Especially having a Duty of Care with the kids so I think it's very important that we know exactly what it is we should be following and not having any fuzzy areas.

The ramifications of this gap are significant. Not only are newly-qualified teachers less well prepared to teach values (Lovat, 1998; Verrinder, 2007) or to demonstrate appropriate behaviours for their students, but also the status quo of existing unethical and unprofessional behaviours in schools (such as cheating with exam marks, bias against minority groups, collegial bullying, poor work ethic and concomitant poor teaching) are unlikely to be shifted.

The 'hidden curriculum' cited as early as 1909 by Mackenzie will persist to influence even those whose innate ethical mores coincide with their professional ones. As Asch's (1955) experiments on conformity have shown it is difficult to voice an opinion that does not conform to that of the majority of an institution. While

compliance with particular behaviours may not correspond to internalisation of beliefs (Festinger, 1953), conformity effects have been found to be strong and disempowering.

Comments from interviewees about power relationships within the profession suggest the level of authority vested in teachers in Australia is low, in contrast to that experienced by Finnish teachers, who are applauded for exceptional quality teaching (Alexander, 2009). As one teacher put it: "...demands made of teachers in relation to modelling ethical and professional behaviours and teaching values to students do not fit in with the value currently placed on teaching as a profession".

This might be partly to do with the inability of teachers to defend their position philosophically, the weak stance of complacent relativism that is often displayed by those in the teaching profession (Freakley, 2007). Attitudes expressed by teachers ("What is right for me may not be right for the (students)") do not help their students who look to them for moral guidance.

Alternatively it could also be something to do with forcing teachers through their training into a mould that represents teaching as simply a matter of mastering a repertoire of practical techniques. The teacher may be seen as a compliant technician with little responsibility for exercising professional discretion (Alexander, 2009; Connell, 2009). Alexander (2009) proposes to give teachers more time for reflection, research and study to improve their quality of teaching. An ethics curriculum can help teachers examine their own position with greater confidence and in so doing to become better qualified to help their students do the same. As Mergler (2008) notes "For teachers to demonstrate the values of respect, inclusion, sensitivity to difference, open-mindedness and cooperation, they need to have reflected on, and realised the value of, upholding these values" (p.4). Ethical issues arise in all academic disciplines and therefore educators need to know how to conduct discussions about ethical dilemmas with their students (Lovat & Toomey, 2007).

Issues arising from collegial or institutional factors such as those reported in Table 1, might be better tackled in the short term if teachers were more confident in articulating their ethical concerns through robust debate. Empirical studies have shown that a persistent and eloquent minority of people can sway a majority, forcing them to consider decisions more thoughtfully and critically even when the minority is wrong (Kelman, 1973). The key is the eloquence and thoughtfulness of the argument; herein lies the challenge to teachers. Long-term effects can also be anticipated as older teachers retire and are replaced by newly-qualified educators who have been given more opportunities to examine their ethical positions and how they align with their teaching.

Table 1 shows that pre-service teachers have a simple, practical comprehension of ethics:

- . *as an ethos*: "Oh I guess the common sort of law of the school you know like what's commonly agreed upon as a good behaviour. Like at a Catholic school and the Catholic ideals would be the sort of structure there"
- . *professional standards*: "Um, I think doing the best possible job you can do, being professional about it" or
- . *relying on deontological arguments*: "ethics to me is do unto others like you would like them to do unto you, so, in fact, Christian values"

Competing arguments around ethical stances are rarely simple or static across time as, for example, the inclusion policy and corporal punishment attest.

Many respondents were aware of a need for greater understanding and how to achieve this. When asked how they wanted to be taught ethics they consistently asked for context-based and practical scenarios. An HPE final-year student noted that "...in HPE we debated the issues of equity in very practical terms". These echo literature

findings (Lovat & Toomey, 2007) and validate the place for an ethics curriculum in pre-service teacher education.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

The current study is a small scale study representing the views of pre-service teachers at one regional university. While results show that there is a need to include some ethics training in the Bachelor of Education degree course, more research needs to establish how other universities in Australia are training pre-service teachers to manage ethics issues and values education. Moreover since this study has only included pre-service teachers studying a BEd degree, the views of those students training to teach through shorter post-graduate courses also need to be explored.

To gain a better understanding of influences shaping pre-service teachers' values, beliefs and ethics, future research needs to examine the links between background variables of pre-service teachers (and practising teachers) and their perceptions of ethics education and professional ethics.

### **Conclusion**

This study highlights a perceived need for the Bachelor of Education degree to include an ethics curriculum. As one pre-service teacher put it: "I think lectures explaining them... (ethics) Because, like the professional standards, they need to be broken down and things like practical examples given".

Ethics need to be both integrated with professional standards and taught in a standalone subject. Sadler et al. (2005) clearly noted that ethics debate facilitates communication and clarification of contextual ethical issues and highlights the interplay of different personal values. Ethics understanding underpins the teaching of values, professional standards and reflective practice. This is particularly important in education with its diverse stakeholders. An ethics curriculum for pre-service teachers is a potentially sustainable intervention across political and economic times and contingencies, to 'raise the bar' by helping enhance teacher quality and, in parallel, student outcomes since positive relationships generally tend to precede learning (Lovat & Toomey, 2007).

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