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## Education or Quality of Teaching? Implications for Australian Democracy

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## Education or Quality of Teaching? Implications for Australian Democracy

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*Abstract: The argument being made here is that democratic life is more likely if educators actually 'educate', rather than comply with quality of teaching approaches as promoted by the Australian federal government. Engaging with some philosophy of education can assist educators to resist being seduced by notions such as 'quality teaching', 'evidence-based' practices and 'impact' and to exercise the intellectual and political resolve necessary to ensure educational practices promote democracy (Biesta, 2010a) and are not surrendered to the control of non-educators. Blake et al. (2000, p. xiii) identify that philosophy is usually avoided in discussions regarding quality, evidence-based approaches and accountability because bureaucrats are "intolerant of philosophical debate". By drawing largely upon the works of Dewey and his notions of education, democracy and the science of education, it is argued that what is needed is for teacher-educators to focus on 'educating' teachers, as professionals, to be critically scientific and democratic.*

**Keywords:** ITE, education, quality teaching, philosophy of education, indoctrination, democracy, evidence, scientific, Dewey.

### Introduction

This paper challenges the current focus on 'quality' teaching, which mainly consists of politically approved evidence-based practices and policies (Peile, 2004; Whitty, 2016). It is contended here that this phenomenon of quality teaching actually opposes democracy within the teaching profession and society at large. A more suitable approach for promoting democracy is *educative* teaching, understood as a scientifically informed art or craft, undertaken by professionals who are democratically and intellectually free to draw upon research, including scientific research, to make their *own* judgements regarding particular practices. It is therefore of great concern that the current emphasis on evidence-based practices used to underpin quality teaching, is specifically aimed on reducing the capacity for educators to participate in decision-making, thus reducing teaching to the mere application of techniques, which are assumed to be able to *cause* learning in a somewhat positivistic sense (Elliot, 2004) where teachers are only one factor of several inputs (Biesta, 2017).

The concept of quality teaching emerged in England in 1983 when Margaret Thatcher's *Teaching Quality* was released. In the same year the *A Nation at Risk* was published in the United States which also promoted an emphasis on quality for teaching. In Australia quality in teaching was established in 1999 as a means for improving student learning outcomes in the *Australian Government Quality Teacher Programme*. Since then this notion of quality of teaching is being promoted as the major in-school factor which presumably can demonstrate its 'impact' by improving student learning outcomes (Australian

Council for Educational Research, 2003; Department of Education and Training, 2013; Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG), 2014). Certainly there is some evidence to indicate that teachers can and do make various sorts of differences in the measurable learning outcomes and even the lives of some students. However, by giving exclusive focus to the performance of individual teachers through their own efforts, attention is diverted away from the government and its responsibilities for distributing resources to various communities (Campbell & Proctor, 2014; Teese & Polese, 2003).

In recent years we have witnessed a war against education and against democracy by some western governments (e.g. Chomsky, 2016, Giroux, 2014, Stevenson, 2011). One aspect of this war is increasing government interventions to take control of the curriculum in teacher education, especially in higher education (Pring, 1999). The common ideological views driving these policies in education reform have signalled the end of giving value to actual experts, (Grattan, 2017). This seems to be the case especially for education in this era of 'post truth' where the authority for making policies related to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs are clearly in the hands of politicians and their departments rather than with the academic experts of education. The current interest of many western governments is not upon improving the professional capabilities of existing teachers, but rather it seeks to intervene in order to take "more direct control over teaching training" (Whitty, 2016, p. 25) and to dictate the actual programs which prepare teachers and which are usually provided by universities (TEMAG, 2014). This intervention is being overseen in Australia by the government's Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) under the leadership of John Hattie. New requirements for ITE accreditation are now being imposed by AITSL who base their standards upon this notion of quality of teaching. Unfortunately teaching itself is being represented by technocratic strategies rather than as an art as William James (1899) argued, and therefore teaching itself is considered by Biesta (2017) to be in need of being rediscovered. In addition to this change to teaching, what is of great concern here is that both AITSL's materials and Hattie's own works do not include any promotion of either education or democracy as important concerns.

Unfortunately the demise of *education* and democratic life in ITE are occurring largely unnoticed, even by teacher-educators who are being swamped by what Ball (2003) refers to as the policy technologies of markets, managerialism and performativity. Consequently we are witnessing a growing trend to avoid 'education' and to focus exclusively instead on 'learning and teaching', narrowly conceived as being of 'quality', 'evidence-based', measurable and having a presumed 'impact' on student learning outcomes. This trend to replace 'education' with 'learning' is described by Biesta (2010a) as 'learnification' because it misrepresents learning as something technical and as if *all* sorts of learning are equally desirable. It also neglects the significance that education has for democracy. It is important to recognise that this trend to focus on learning outcomes and quality of teaching instead of education and democracy is highly problematic. For example, because quality teaching and high-quality teaching are simply defined as having an impact on learning outcomes, these phenomena can also be regarded to be appropriate for quite undemocratic and miseducative practices such as indoctrination and brain-washing, because these too depend upon learning outcomes as explained in the section below which addresses indoctrination. It is therefore important for teacher-educators to actively clarify what sorts of teaching and learning are educative and appropriate for democracy and what sorts of teaching and learning are undesirable and even *miseducative* (Webster, 2017). The notion of the quality of teaching does not offer any criteria to assist with making this differentiation and therefore lends itself to the de-democratizing policies which are increasingly being established (Apple, 2013; Biesta, 2010a; Giroux, 2014).

Teacher-educators in Australia, and indeed the public at large, ought to be concerned regarding the threat to democracy which is emerging through the demise of *education*. This demise is recognised by Giroux (2014, pp. 38-45) who calls for educators to fight “for democracy as an educational project”. It is being argued here that this demise of education is being assisted through the emergence and dominance of a myopic view on the quality of teaching especially in ITE programs. Pring (2015, p. 35) warns us to “[b]eware, therefore, those who, in the interests of research or political control, change the language of education”. Indeed for many educators this might be too late. Taubman (2009, p. 128) laments “[h]ow did we allow the language of education... to transform itself into the language and practices of standards and accountability?... How did we lose our way?” Disconcertingly, Furlong (2013, p. 167) reports that in the face of the demise of *education* faculties and departments of education “have been silent”. This paper aims to contribute some important clarifications regarding what makes education distinctive and to highlight some of the importance of the relation education has for democracy in order to challenge the tendency to establish quality of teaching as being hegemonic in ITE.

### Ideological Deployment of ‘Quality’ and the Demise of Education

Across the globe there is an ideological assault, mainly from conservatives and neoliberals, which seeks to control various curricula in higher education (Bailey & Freedman, 2011; Chomsky, 1999; 2016; Giroux, 2007; 2014; Hil, 2012; Lyotard, 1984; Readings, 1996; Rorty, 1998; 1999) and ITE is understood to be a clear target of this assault (Apple, 2000; 2004; Davis & Winch, 2015; Gottlieb, 2015; Ravitch 2010; 2014; Sahlberg, 2011; Taubman, 2009) even although evidence to support the claim that ITE needs reform “has been lacking” (Whitty, 2016, p. 20). In Australia, former shadow minister of education, Christopher Pyne, demonstrated the aggressive intent of the government back in 2012 when in an interview he said “we’re going to review our university compacts to attack the issue of teacher training at the university level” (Pyne, 2012). Other examples of clear government intensions to intervene in university programmes providing ITE include Reagan’s *A Nation in Crisis*, Thatcher’s *Teaching Quality*, Mitt Romney’s *A Chance for Every Child*; and Australia’s *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers (TEMAG, 2014)*.

Typically these ideological attacks are initiated through manufactured crises in education such as a perceived failure to attain first place in international standardized tests. For example, Victoria’s Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) (2012, p. 5) produced a discussion paper in which they reported that “outcomes have failed to improve” and that results are “flagging”, yet it is imperative “[t]o reach the global top tier of performance”. In the minister’s message at the beginning of this document, it states that “Every education system that has reached the global top tier of school performance has engaged in ambitious reform to improve the quality of teaching and the school leadership that drives it. Our reform will need to be every bit as ambitious” (DEECD, p. 3). Unfortunately the lack of such ambitious reform in Finland appears to have been overlooked. Finland has experienced ‘top tier’ success, not through such reforms but through greater professionalism and autonomy being extended to teachers (Sahlberg, 2011). Interestingly this DEECD (2012, p. 5) report claims that “above all, the evidence shows us that the quality of **teaching has the largest impact on student learning outcomes**” [original emphasis] but it then qualifies this by acknowledging that “a student’s socioeconomic background” has a larger impact. This latter dimension of socioeconomic factors has not been pursued by either the state or federal governments, or by AITSL.

Also published in 2012 was the New South Wales Department of Education and Communities discussion paper *Great Teaching, Inspired Learning* (2012, p. 2) where the same claims were made by the minister there, that “we know that teaching is the single largest in-school determinant of success at school” and that there is the aspiration to “ensure NSW teachers are the best in the world”. This document reports that Australian students are being overtaken by students in other OECD countries and because teacher quality is understood to be the variable with most impact (presumably accounting for 30% of the variance on student performance) the interest of the government is to be on how to improve the quality of teaching – specifically in ITE programs in universities.

Concerns about an apparent failing teaching workforce have also been demonstrated recently across the media when the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) were released. The Australian Broadcasting Company (2016) used the title ‘Australia crashing down international leaderboard for education, falling behind Kazakhstan’ to describe the latest TIMSS results and the federal minister of education, Simon Birmingham (2016) has claimed that results from PISA are worrying. Such ‘failures’ seem to then legitimize government interventions to ‘fix’ such crises. Even when the focus is not upon fixing a specific crisis, the government promotes the notions of ‘improving the quality’, ‘raising the quality’ ‘applying rigorous quality assurance processes’ and ‘producing high-quality’ (TEMAG, 2014). These appeals for constantly improving the quality is difficult to challenge or disagree with and nobody has ever argued for lowering the quality. Interestingly the causes which are identified for being responsible for the perceived low performances and failures do *not* include: curriculum authorities nor their curricula; ever increasing government interferences; various employers of teachers; or even practicing and experienced teachers; but rather the target is predominantly university curricula for ITE.

To support the assault on higher education by conservatives and neoliberals, and to deflect attention from the actual ideological drive behind it, government literature often makes claims to ‘evidence-based’ findings regarding ‘what works’, as if these somehow constituted ‘proof’ (Pring, 2015). Such a technical approach to teaching and learning, promote the assumption that learning can be *caused* as an *effect* of teaching. These claims are made in order to legitimize government demands to take control of the curriculum in ITE and to dismiss current practices and research of teacher educators on the basis that these ‘lack evidence’ and are therefore illegitimate. These claims for a specific sort of evidence neglect an engagement with much of the actual research in the field *education*. This is demonstrated in the reference lists of government reports which are predominantly filled with references to other government and sponsored think-tank reports but have a distinct lack of academic sources (Whitty, 2016). If such reports were based on serious and rigorous research there might be a better appreciation of the contestability of knowledge claims and even why scholars in the field such as Biesta (2007; 2010b) claim that why ‘what works’ won’t work. Yet Thomas (2004, p. 13) observes that teachers have been unable to recognise the “clandestine way” that the government is imposing its agenda due to the success of its perceived “‘what works’ evidence” approach.

What emerges from government appeals to so-called ‘evidence-based’ findings is a dogmatic approach to the curricula in ITE. It is dogmatic because there is a deliberate attempt to shut down possibilities for contesting, critiquing or challenging the evidence and ‘best practices’. For example, John Hattie (2016, p. 6) has recently accused the field of teacher education for being “the most evidence-free part of our education system”. However he does *not* invite teachers or teacher-educators to challenge his findings or to conduct their own research to produce their own evidence because, as he states, “[t]he solution is already with us” (Hattie, 2016, p. 10). In making this claim he is expressing a preferred hierarchical

arrangement where the authorities, such as AITSL and its chair, do the research, investigations and discoveries of ‘what works’ while teachers and teacher-educators are relegated to the lower status of simply ‘applying’ the presumed ‘solution’ uncritically and unquestioningly because of the ‘evidence’ on which these practices, standards and solutions are based. Such a hierarchical approach is inimical to democracy and portrays a deliberate intervention to reduce the ontology of academic teacher-educators and teachers to one of passivity and compliance (Lachs, 2007) rather than of being intellectually curious, sceptical and free to adopt – or refute – various claims to knowledge – such as associated with free and *educated* professionals (Meyers, 2012).

Ready-made ‘solutions’ are presented under the banners of ‘quality teaching’, ‘quality teacher education’ and even ‘high-quality teacher education’. These terms are shared with other governments around the world who share a very similar ideological view which seeks to control curriculum in university-based ITE programs (Apple, 2000; 2013; Whitty, 2016). It is important to recognise that the term ‘quality’ has not emerged from the discourse of education but rather it originates from business discourse (Mertova et al., 2010). It is clearly identified with industry and has now been adopted/forced upon higher education. However, Readings (1996, p. 22) identifies how ‘quality’ along with the term ‘excellence’ have vied with each other as the ‘ultimate issue’ for marketing and policy initiatives relating to higher education, simply because these terms “have the singular advantage of being entirely meaningless” because they are “non-referential.” This allows bureaucracies to define various standards according to their own criteria without referencing how the professionals and experts in the field might define quality or excellence. It is even doubtful that educators would even use these terms. However, the strategic deployment of these terminologies by governments are an attempt to legitimize their role as regulator, quality controller and inspector (Biesta, 2010a, p. 101) as evidenced through the increasing authoritative role which AITSL seeks to have. Unfortunately, through the government and AITSL we now witness that prioritizing the quality of teaching is reducing the profession of teaching (and even ITE) down to the mere training of technical competencies (Bahr, 2016).

Whilst various leading academics in Australia such as Dinham (2015), Gore (2015) and Mayer (2015) are engaging with the key concerns and language raised in these reports such as the notions of ‘quality teaching’ and ‘evidence of what works’ in an attempt to wrestle these terms back to being more aligned with the scholarship in the field, it is contended here that educators ought to *reject* the privileging of these terms altogether. Teachers and teacher-educators ought instead to reinstate and pursue an understanding of *education* and in particular, an understanding of education which is clearly aligned with democracy. This might involve exercising a greater willingness to confront governments and their agencies who are taking control of the curricula in higher education. Such confrontation with political resolve has been made previously. For example, Pring has shared his encounter with Dr Marjorie Reeves on this very point, who,

*when appointed to the Central Advisory Council for Education in 1947, she was told by the then Permanent Secretary, Redcliffe Maud, that the chief duty of a member of the Advisory Council was to be prepared to die in the first ditch as soon as politicians tried to get their hands on education. Government was there to assist citizens... and professionals who knew best how to promote their welfare. (Pring, 2008, p. 191).*

It needs to be acknowledged that education is unable to be apolitical and so perhaps, in the spirit of democracy, it is incumbent upon teacher-educators to more actively participate in contested ideas at various political levels, rather than too readily comply with terminologies which are often presented in an authoritative manner because clearly ‘education’ is at risk of

being marginalised and replaced by other terminologies such as ‘quality teaching’ and ‘learning’ which are quite different phenomena.

### **Quality Teaching and Learning are unable to Distinguish between Education and Indoctrination**

It is argued here that it is important to distinguish *education* from indoctrination in order to ensure that the concepts of teaching which are promoted in Australian ITE programs are educative and promote democracy. Currently the notion of the quality of teaching as promoted by the government and AITSL is unable to offer criteria which can make such a distinction. Both of these organisations vigorously avoid the moral and political aspects which are intrinsic to education. Last year was the centenary of John Dewey’s *Democracy and Education* which was published in 1916. This was a significant text at the time and provided an overall view of Dewey’s philosophy regarding how both democracy and education are inextricably linked together. During the last century many publications, including some very recent ones (e.g. Cunningham & Heilbronn, 2016; Garrison, Neubert & Reich, 2015; Higgins & Coffield, 2016) have continued to validate the importance that Dewey’s work has for understanding the inextricable relation between education and democracy. Whilst Dewey’s *Democracy and Education* is not a panacea, it is nevertheless considered fitting therefore, to reflect upon the significance which democracy and education both have for ITE programs in Australia by drawing upon some of Dewey’s works.

Education is a contested phenomenon concerned with value priorities and visions of a better society. This is in contrast to ‘learning’, ‘teaching’ and even the quality of teaching, which are more technical in nature and tend not to be concerned with aspirational visions of a better society. Dewey (1985, pp. 103, 106 & 369) makes the case that any understanding of education must be founded upon a particular vision of society (which in his case was primarily democratic) and therefore it was education’s task to enable individuals to be worthy of such a society. This requires persons to grow through knowledge – not in a possessive manner of accumulating and acquiring ‘things’ such as information, knowledge and skills, but rather persons are to grow in their character, being habitually curious, sceptical and willing to critically question and challenge the legitimacy of various claims to knowledge (Dewey, 1985, pp. 47, 55 & 77). He argued that all education is also moral education which pertains to “the whole character” because “the qualities of mind” are “intrinsically moral qualities” (Dewey, 1985, pp. 366-7). Dewey was against the passive consumption of information from ‘authorities’ because this tends to “swamp” the capacity for thinking (Dewey, 1985, pp. 159, 165 & 170) which he regarded is a central characteristic of all educational experiences. He also warned against the “zeal for ‘answers’” because this tends to require a “zeal for rigid and mechanical methods” which work against the growth of intelligence (Dewey, 1985, p. 183). Hence education can be considered as evaluative and pertains to moral philosophy and political theory.

The terms ‘teaching’ and ‘learning’ have recently replaced ‘education’ in much of the literature produced by governments and even many educational institutions, but these terms cannot be equated with education. This is because the phenomena of teaching and learning apply equally well to *miseducation* and indoctrination. Indoctrination usually requires people to teach particular doctrine and for others to learn such doctrine and ways of relating to such doctrine. For example, Peters (1966, p. 40) explained that “[a] teacher could teach astrology or the art of forgery; but he would not be regarded as ...educating people”. Systems of miseducation and even indoctrination, such as is typified through some forms of religion and ideology, also rely upon ‘teaching’ and ‘learning’ so that adherents effectively learn doctrine.

Indoctrination and miseducation are not isolated to cults or extremist groups but can even be present in mainstream practices. For example, Chomsky (2016, p. 90) argues that our mainstream schools and universities are indoctrinatory, claiming that the purpose of this indoctrination is to avoid “excessive democracy” and to keep the public from the “throats” of the ruling elites. We therefore need to give careful consideration to what sorts of teaching and learning are specific to miseducation and to indoctrination in order to avoid them. Typically miseducative learning refers to limiting the critical intellectual and moral growth of persons as demonstrated through blind acceptance, boredom, uncaring, closed-minded, scatter-brained and lacking of self-discipline (Dewey, 2008a). Teacher-educators also need to understand the sorts of teaching and learning which are specific to *education* in order to promote democracy in Australia. According to Dewey, *educative* learning is typically associated with expanding the intellectual and moral growth of persons. This sort of growth involves aspects such as raising curiosity, appreciation of the contestability of knowledge claims, being willing to challenge and test ideas, and increasing the capacity for being able to give more possible meanings to experiences.

The philosophers Hirst and Peters (1970), consider that indoctrination is not associated with particular doctrines or knowledge but rather it pertains to the relationship learners have to the knowledge/doctrine they are learning. Hirst and Peters warned against approaches which involve students learning facts and knowledge but are prevented from critically evaluating such facts and claims to knowledge. Indoctrination “discourages the evaluation of beliefs, e.g. the appeal to authority as a backing [with]... very little possibility of getting [students] to grasp the reason why of things” (Peters, 1966, p. 261). This is reflected in Degenhardt’s (1976, p. 23) understanding of indoctrination which involves “getting people to hold views in a fixed, unquestioning way” which, for example, is associated with the method of direct instruction (Luke, 2014). It is not the knowledge which is the issue, but it is the manner in which people relate to the knowledge. Indoctrination becomes an issue when students are unable to – or are prevented from – critically testing and challenging the legitimacy of knowledge claims. In short, the sorts of teaching which display a lack of respect for learners as autonomous, thinking and rational persons in their own right, are *not* educative and may indeed be indoctrinatory as they cause “crippled reflective capacities” in students (Merry, 2005, p. 406) and encourage their uncritical acceptance of knowledge.

In contrast to Dewey’s emphasis upon character education and the central importance of thinking, Hattie and Yates (2014, p. 7) make the claim that memorisation is more valuable than thinking, supporting Willingham’s thesis that “the mind is not designed for thinking”. Consequently Hattie and Yates conclude that memory work is more important than thinking in order to make learning visible. These authors also suggest that there is a fast-operating System 1 involving habits and routines, and a slow-operating System 2 which involves thinking. Clearly they favour System 1 with its emphasis on memorizing meaningful information even although Hattie (2009, p. 249) acknowledges that it is basically only surface information which can be processed in this way. Teaching has better quality when its intended learning is merely the uncritical absorption of explicitly given information as per the recitation method of Traditionalism (Hattie and Yates, 2014). The goal is simply to move information from short-term memory to being stored in long-term memory. They write “Metaphorically, the long-term memory is the archival library store where data are filed for retrieval. It is held that this system holds information in permanent storage form” (Hattie and Yates, 2014, p. 122). Due to Hattie’s position in AITSL his views are significant for ITE where the promotion of approaches such as direct instruction and clinical interventions are considered to be valuable for pre-service teachers to focus upon, due to reducing the focus of educators to be on learning outcomes which are visible and measurable, rather than upon

education. Hence Biesta's (2017) argument is for educators to 'rediscover' the sort of teaching which is appropriate for education.

Education is primarily an ontological affair rather than simply one of training in competencies involving the acquisition of skills and knowledge. This was recognised earlier by Whitehead (1957, pp. 3-5) who identified that the focus for education is to be upon living humans and their minds and not to merely focus on 'dead' or 'inert ideas', and warned that if these latter were privileged over the former then this would be "harmful" to persons – much like indoctrination. This was understood by Dewey (2008a, p. 29) who asked what value "is it to win prescribed amounts of information [i.e. dead or inert facts]... if in the process the individual loses his own soul: loses his appreciation of things worth while...?" Dewey was not against the importance of learning knowledge as some progressives have argued, but he understood that the learning of 'warranted assertions' – rather than 'knowledge' (as conclusions) – has educative value because students can come to understand the warrants or justifications and reasoning behind various assertions which are regarded to be claims to knowledge. Knowledge, even when understood epistemologically, does not consist of inert 'facts' disassociated from their claims to validity. Therefore the rote memorization of facts which lends itself effectively to Hattie's notion of 'visible learning', is not considered to be educational even when such information might be regarded as 'true'. This is because students are not given opportunity to engage with the justifications and warrants which make such 'facts' belong to what is to be accepted as knowledge. Therefore even the learning of 'true facts' could actually be considered as indoctrination if the critical capacities of the learners become 'crippled' in the process. This educational dimension is entirely absent from the most recent accreditation requirements being forced onto ITE programs by the federal government through AITSL. Within ITE especially, *education*, with its intrinsic contested visions for a better society, is being replaced by training in a technicist approach to quality teaching. In order to address this it is argued here that teacher educators ought to remind ourselves of the importance of having a political vision, and so the following section will review a specifically democratic vision for society and some of the implications this might have.

### **Understanding Democracy as a way-of-being**

It is contended here that it is valuable for teacher-educators to be mindful as to what democracy requires of education, as per Dewey's text and others since (e.g. Biesta, 2011; Cunningham & Heilbronn, 2016; Fairfield, 2009; Giroux, 2014; Higgins & Coffield, 2016; Kelly, 1995; Pring, 2007), lest we be seduced into losing it in exchange for the effective and efficient learning outcomes promised through technicist approaches such as having 'quality' in teaching. The term 'democracy' can be understood variously, and in everyday speech it usually refers to systems of government. However, Dewey (1985, p. 93) introduces us to the notion of a democratic way-of-being by arguing that democracy is "primarily a mode of associated living". For Dewey (1977a, p. 233) democracy means that persons are "to have a share in determining the conditions and the aims of [their] work" and hence people are to have autonomy (Sahlberg, 2011; Wallace, 2007). Democracy can be embodied by persons as a way-of-being irrespective of the governmental or institutional system in which they work (Webster, 2012). Therefore teachers can *be* democratic and offer democratic educative experiences for students, even although the schools and universities in which they work may not be clearly democratic. However, it has been reported (Bailey and Freedman, 2011; Coffield, 2016) that in recent times democracy may only be possible through the active political resistance of teachers due to the antidemocratic nature of so many schools and

universities. Due to the fact that being democratic is no longer a clearly recognised characteristic of the professionalism of teacher-educators and teachers, Giroux (2007, p. 3; 2014; p. 87) laments that “many educators have lost a meaningful language for linking schooling to democracy” leading to the situation where even “higher education’s faith in and commitment to democracy” is fading. Currently in Australia, as with all other parts of the western world, we are witnessing an increasing number of undemocratic and even anti-democratic practices in the schooling and higher education sectors (Hil, 2012; Roberts & Peters, 2008; Teese and Polesel, 2003). This is part of a global phenomenon where neoliberal ideas are directly affecting education policies and practices (Carr & Hartnett, 1996; Furlong, 2013; Giroux, 2014).

Carr and Hartnett (1996, p. 196) observe that for a democracy “teaching is understood to be a morally informed activity that requires theoretical knowledge and understanding of the democratic educational values (such as individual autonomy and equality of opportunity)” where there is no “separation of ‘educational studies’ from ‘teaching practice’”. Carr and Hartnett argue that the often assumed separation between theory and practice is a manifestation of the schism between ‘liberal education’ and ‘vocational training’ which often portrays ‘educational studies’ as merely abstract and irrelevant ‘theory’. Gottlieb (2015, p. 73) similarly locates this separation as an attempt to conceive that “practical knowledge [i]s a subspecies of theoretical knowledge” which is philosophically highly problematic. Clearly we can appreciate that teachers in a democracy exercise *both* theoretical knowledge regarding ‘education’ contextualised by a political view of society *and* practical knowledge of teaching which is often associated with ‘training’.

Dewey (1985, p. 93) argues that democracy is primarily a moral way of life because such a way-of-being requires each individual “to refer his [sic] own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others and to give point and direction to his own...”. This is significantly important for education because teaching for a democracy ought to be recognised as a morally-informed practice – *not* as a morally neutral activity as portrayed through various ‘clinical’ and technicist approaches transplanted from medicine and the health sciences (Eraut, 2004; Peile, 2004). It is clear that both intellectual and moral virtues are intertwined with each other as an expression of a socially-intelligent character. The ontology on an individual ‘grows’ in a Deweyan sense (Chomsky, 2016, p. 59). This is why Dewey (1977a, p. 39; 2008b, p. 109) observed that intelligence can only offer itself as a power by “some system of wants” and therefore he argued that “[d]emocracy... [involves] changed psychology” where intelligence is brought to ‘educate’ the *wants* and *desires* of individuals. As a consequence, individuals come to have greater interest and care in the ideas and knowledge they are learning about, and to actually come to desire what they ought to desire as they grow in virtue (Biesta, 2013).

Amongst the various wants and desires that people may have, Dewey identified that these ought to be centred upon ultimate or significant purposes which he described as ‘ends-in-view’. Such end-purposes or ‘aims’ are intrinsic to free, intelligent and autonomous persons. Dewey explained that his notion of being ‘independently effective’ allows persons to be able to have a voice in determining the conditions of their own work. This was in contrast to ‘slaves’ which he described as simply accepting “from another the purposes which control his conduct” (Dewey, 1985, p. 90). He therefore identified that central to being democratic was having one’s *own* aims or ends-in-view. This is why he described democracy as a spiritual force because it *moves* people to action in order to attain an ultimate and meaningful aspiration. He argued that we become more effective as people if we are ‘single-minded’ with regards to having a purpose for which we are ‘wholehearted’ which singly is able to make sense of all of our other motives and desires.

In clear contrast to AITSL's teaching standards and the government's push for quality in teaching, Dewey (1977b, p. 239) in his article *Democracy in Education*, argued that teachers ought to have the three characteristics of: having an independent force; intellectual initiative; and inventive ability; and for being inspired by the three motives of: love for their students; an interest in the welfare of society; and a desire for truth for its own sake. But of utmost importance over these three motives an educator ought to have an aspiration for democracy. Thirteen years later in his book *Democracy and Education*, he described democratic freedom for teachers as consisting of the same three characteristics of independent force; intellectual initiative; and inventive ability which he reworded slightly as being *judicious*, and he also expanded on these to include foresight of consequences and ingenuity of adaption to such anticipated or observed consequences (Dewey, 1985, p. 311). Here we can appreciate the autonomous nature that was to be expected of the democratic person and especially of the teacher (Wallace, 2007). One who was intelligently informed and had critical insight regarding what might be best and just for her students and their communities.

In contrast to Dewey's commendation for such democratic attributes, it is interesting to note the characteristics of democratic people as described by some anti-democratic ruling elites. For example, the Trilateral Commission's report titled *The Crisis of Democracy* (Crozier, et al., 1975, pp. 6-7) identified that the threat posed to powerful elites is from people described as "value-oriented intellectuals" who "assert their disgust" with corruption, materialism, monopoly capitalism and who challenge the authority and legitimacy of institutions. These are not the characteristics which are associated with Australia's 'quality teachers', who instead are to merely demonstrate in a technocratic fashion that they can implement policies of best practices such that their students can perform certain sorts of visible assessments. Such a contrast has been noticed by Chomsky (2016) who argues that global neoliberal policies and programs have been undermining democracy over many years, especially since 1968 in order to 'moderate' democracy by encouraging the public to accept a more passive role of being obedient spectators rather than active participants daring to challenge the ruling elites. Hence he notes that the interests of the ruling elites tend to ensure that education systems remain systems of indoctrination designed to discourage any inclinations for civil disobedience of any sort.

However, If teachers and teacher-educators are to become more democratically 'value-oriented' as described above rather than being 'technocratic and policy oriented' as encouraged in neoliberal environments, and therefore become 'disgusted with corruption and monopoly capitalism', then perhaps, as a profession, we might be willing to challenge and even to be disobedient to government policies which seek to undermine *both* democracy *and* education (Apple, 2013). Educators, as democratic persons, ought to see themselves as active social agents rather than Hattie's view of being mere transmitters of information and having a perceived apolitical but 'positive' impact on how information is stored and retrieved in the brains of students. Hattie's approach is much like Freire's (1970) banking concept which Freire warned is used to oppress people. In order to make democracy and education possible Dewey (2008b, p. 110) argued that educators ought to be more "militant" regarding our democratic aspirations because "no genuine education is possible without active participation in actual conditions". In his time he identified that the capitalism of his day was responsible for many of the social ills being experienced. Consequently he and others (e.g. Apple, 2013; Chomsky, 2016; Fairfield, 2008; Fromm, 2010; Giroux, 2014; Lachs, 2007) appreciate that if democracy is to be restored then it must be radical and revolutionary in character because its visions for a better society offer a direct challenge to the ruling corporate elites who are nowadays infiltrating education and in particular ITE.

## Being Democratic Involves being Scientific

Dewey (1985; 1988) made the case that a democratic-way-of-being includes exercising a scientific attitude in addition to being philosophical. This is considered particularly important in our time where we observe in education and educational research a rise of scientism through a “revived positivism” (Blake et al., 2000, p. 223). What Dewey means by a scientific attitude is that as part of democratic deliberation individuals ought to have the freedom to test ideas and techniques to determine for themselves their potential value. He argued for the importance for engaging with evidence in order to challenge various forms of authoritarianism, including the traditionalism found in much theology and metaphysics. Democracy is not an ‘addition’ to scientific work but it emulates the social understanding of science. The attitude of being willing to actively challenge and experiment, which is a hallmark of a democratic way-of-being, is in contrast with an attitude of compliantly and unquestioningly accepting policies, techniques and understandings from authorities.

Dewey highlighted how important it is for free people to be able to distinguish between a proper ‘scientific’ attitude from one that relies on mere empiricism (Dewey, 1985, p. 233; Webster, 2009). This has great importance for understanding ‘evidence-based’ research findings. Empiricism is simply a claim about a phenomenon made on the basis of an accumulation of past experiences, and is therefore associated with the methods of meta-analysis such as employed by Hattie. Science, on the other hand, involves active inquiries designed to test and falsify various claims. Science attempts to replicate findings as its primary source of evidence, rather than merely empirically to look backwards historically for evidence. According to Dewey (1989, p. 275),

*The empirical method inevitably magnifies the influences of the past; the experimental method throws into relief the possibilities of the future. The empirical method says, ‘Wait till there is a sufficient number of cases’; the experimental method says, ‘Produce the cases.’*

While the experimental method is not being asserted here to be the one means by which ‘Truth’ can be established, it is significant to note that Dewey was very concerned that people, especially teacher-educators, should not be seduced by empirical evidence that clearly is not scientific evidence. Consequently, in his time, he responded to those who promoted pseudo-scientific findings such as Edward Thorndike by drawing on both philosophy and science. Dewey’s *Democracy and Education* was published in 1916 specifically as a textbook and Cunningham (2016, p. 27) notes that at this time textbooks “played an important role for new initiatives into teacher education... vying for influence in defining new fields of professional knowledge and practice.” He reports that “in 1901 Edward L. Thorndike began to write textbooks ‘to make money and to spread the word’; his *Introduction to the Theory of Mental and Social Measurements* (explaining the need for statistical methods as a vital new step in educational research, the quantitative study of human behaviour) was first printed in 1904” (Cunningham, 2016, p. 25). We can sense the aspiration that Thorndike had for transforming teaching through his so-called ‘scientific evidence’ of quantitative and behaviouristic measures (which were empirical rather than scientific), as demonstrated in the following passage where he wrote,

*A complete science of psychology would tell every fact about every one’s intellect and character and behaviour, ...It would aid us to use human beings for the world’s welfare with the same surety of the result that we now have when we use falling bodies or chemical elements. ...we shall become masters of our own souls as we now are masters of heat and light. (Thorndike, 1910, p. 6).*

Here he expressed high hopes in the learning sciences to produce principles and procedures which could *cause* people to learn much like the ‘impact’ characteristic central to ‘quality’ teaching. Even although he identified himself to be a psychologist and not an educator, Thorndike nevertheless demanded that teaching should be de-skilled to “a technical, subordinate task” and he expected “teachers should come to understand their subordinate place in the educational hierarchy” (Lagemann, 2000, p. 60). Chomsky (2016, pp. 8-9), who appreciates the scientific attitude that comes with democracy, identifies Thorndike’s work amongst those who intend “to check the democratic tendencies” by encouraging the public to uncritically trust “our superiors” and not to challenge them. Thorndike, through his “narrowly behaviouristic and deterministic view of learning” (he too avoided ‘education’ and replaced it with ‘learning’) “had plans for conquering the world of pedagogy” (Lagemann, 2000, pp. 64-5).

It is argued here that this aspiration of Thorndike’s is much like that of what we are witnessing here in Australia at this time. For example, Hattie (2009, pp. 6 & 26) makes the claim that his research findings can provide “the successful recipe for teaching and learning”. This comparison of teaching and learning to a recipe is considered highly problematic by Dewey who expressed that,

*Nothing has brought pedagogical theory into greater disrepute than the belief that it is identified with handing out to teachers recipes and models to be followed in teaching... Mechanical rigid woodenness is an inevitable corollary of any theory which separates mind from activity motivated by a purpose... In brief, the method of teaching is the method of an art, of action intelligently directed by ends... To suppose that students... in the university, can be supplied with models of method to be followed in acquiring and expounding a subject is to fall into self-deception that has lamentable consequences. (Dewey, 1985, pp. 176-9)*

Dewey was very concerned with the threat that Thorndike’s scientism posed for both education and democracy because people on the receiving end of a methods-driven approach could not grow in the habits of a democratic way-of-being but would become quite passive and docile (Dewey, 1985; 2008a). Dewey argued that for a democracy, practices in education ought to be ‘intellectually rigorous’ and involve a great deal of ‘thinking’ on the part of both teachers and students. This is why he emphasised the importance that both philosophy and a scientific attitude are because both promote rigorous thinking and examination. Dewey warned teacher-educators and teachers to be wary of obediently receiving end-purposes from external authorities otherwise “the intelligence of the teacher is not free” (Dewey, 1985, p. 116). Acknowledging that information “is necessary” Dewey (2008c, p. 99) nevertheless argues that a scientific attitude is more important, with its characteristic “open-mindedness, intellectual integrity, observation and interest in testing ... opinions and beliefs” and thus enabling persons not to be so easily manipulated and seduced by superstition, propaganda or authorities in general.

Specifically for teachers and their relation to a potential ‘science of education’ this understanding of democracy as an intelligent and moral way-of-being led Dewey (1988, p. 16) to clarify that the final value or ‘reality’ of educational science could not be “found in books” or government literature but rather it is to be found “in the minds of those engaged in directing educational activities” – i.e. the teachers themselves. Dewey, like William James, was very clear that educative teaching (unlike quality teaching) is an art because it involves working with human persons and not inanimate objects. He argued that a science of education cannot be developed “simply by borrowing the techniques of experiment and measurement found in physical science” because mental and psychological phenomena are not capable of being reified “in terms of units of space, time, motion and mass” and any

attempt to do so “is objectionable and destructive” of education (Dewey, 1988, pp. 6 & 13). Similarly Gottlieb (2016, p. 78) recognises that for educational practice, maxims and rules cannot be extracted from empirical evidence of past events and to attempt to do so would be to commit “what Hubert Dreyfus calls the fallacy of the successful first step.” Therefore any ‘scientific’ or ‘evidence-based’ findings can only offer themselves as *sources* to be intelligently and morally used by teachers, not as maxims, models or recipes to be uncritically ‘applied’.

Dewey, who was well aware of the superficial attraction to Thorndike’s so-called ‘scientific’ and ‘evidence-based’ work, explained that,

*It is easy for science to be regarded as a guarantee that goes with the sale of goods rather than as a light to the eyes and a lamp to the feet. It is prized for its prestige value rather than as an organ of personal illumination and liberation. It is prized because it is thought to give unquestionable authenticity and authority to a specific procedure to be carried out in the school room. So conceived, science is antagonistic to education as an art. (Dewey, 1988 p. 7).*

Scientific and evidence-based findings cannot decide the *educational value* of undertakings, but rather it is the “[a]ctual activities in educating [which] test the worth of scientific results” (Dewey, 1988, p. 17). Consequently for democracy, the findings of scientific work have their value recognised in being able to “guide the intelligence of teachers instead of dictating rules of action” and enabling them to be “more circumspect, more critical, as to what they are doing. It may inspire better insight...” (Dewey, 1988, pp. 18 & 39). This approach is recognised by Pring (1999) who argues that the value a university *education* offers student-teachers is recognised through how it enhances their capacity for making their own professional judgements – not in dictating dogmatic models or recipes to be followed in an unthinking manner. He argues that professional judgement is improved through growth in practical wisdom, shaped through critical discussion and deliberation “in the context of the practical, informed by relevant theoretical perspectives which... is more like moral or political deliberation than it is like moral or political obedience” (Pring, 1999, p. 305). Such preparation of teachers “is not dogmatic” but is about the “personal growth” of professionals, who will face “essentially moral” problems rather than clinical ones, simply because the activity of teaching is more of an art than it is a science (Pring, 1999, pp. 305-6). Such a preparation is most appropriate for democratic persons who are intellectually free from ignorance and from dogma. Teacher-educators become de-professionalised when they uncritically and compliantly accept practices from authorities who themselves are *not* educators nor are familiar with *education* research. Replacing the role of democratic and professional judgement-making by appealing to ‘evidence-based research’ which is specifically used to erase the role of decision-making (Eraut, 2004; Peile, 2004), and by simply training educators to universally apply practices under banners such as ‘quality teaching’, are criticized by Biesta (2010a, p. 47) because he claims that these approaches deny “educational practitioners the right not to act according to evidence about ‘what works’ if they judge that such a line of action would educationally undesirable.”

## Conclusion

In this paper it has been argued that it is incumbent upon teacher-educators to be clear regarding the distinctiveness of education and how it differs from indoctrination, to ensure that graduate teachers are enabled to enact teaching and learning activities which are *educative* and not *miseducative*. The federal government and AITSL, throughout their publications on the ‘quality’ of teaching, demonstrate that they do not understand such

distinctions. Dewey's works provide a reminder that democracy and education, along with philosophy and a scientific attitude, are inextricably connected with each other. Kelly (1995, p. 135) adds that "a democratic society needs teachers whose own approach to knowledge and to education reflects those democratic principles which education in a democratic society must communicate to the next generation." Educators have a responsibility to challenge and even confront bureaucracies and government agencies who seek to impose policies and practices which are *miseducative* and antidemocratic. As Carr and Hartnett (1996, p. 197) contend, the reinstatement of a democratic and intellectual approach into ITE "would be to challenge the authority of the state" which is currently opposed to the democratising and professionalising of education and of ITE. This paper challenges how such bureaucratic agencies (such as AITSL) oppose democratisation through a focus on 'quality' in teaching, and argues instead that educative teaching ought to be understood as a philosophically and scientifically informed art undertaken by professionals who are democratically and intellectually free to make their own professional judgements in pursuit of the public good.

For Dewey democracy means freedom, and for teacher-educators this means intellectual freedom which needs to be *fought* for (Walton, 2011) – not violently but in the sense of being politically active rather than passive. Education is primarily moral and political in nature and therefore professional educators ought to be able to deliberate critically and intelligently in order to make professional judgements, rather than simply be compliant unthinking 'appliers' of dogmatic principles which are not supported by *education* research. In order to actively resist the de-democratising policies of bureaucracies, we as educators might like to prompt ourselves to examine and clarify how we value democracy and education. This requires us to research and write about democracy and education, *and* to enact our autonomy, intellectual freedom and moral sensitivity, through the things we *do*. Such democratic embodiment needs to be our 'collective responsibility' (Apple, 2013) as we participate politically in order to pursue a greater sense of democracy in the education profession and in society more generally. Chomsky (2016) and Dewey (1991) argue that movements which can and do change social policies and practices on a global scale, are usually constituted by many small but dedicated groups working for changes at the local level. Therefore, if we employ some philosophical thinking and exercise a scientific attitude in our work to determine what is of *educational* significance, then not only might teaching be 'rediscovered' as Biesta (2017) argues, but there might also be a re-democratisation of the education profession and of society more generally.

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