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The case of the University of Melbourne: leading by 2012

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Background

As elsewhere in the world teacher education in Australia is surrounded by a climate of distrust. Uncertainty in the quality of teacher education programs and the ability of teacher educators to address the needs of schools and society and secure the retention of quality teachers is ever present. The University of Melbourne is one of Australia's largest teacher education providers and over the past five years has wrestled with the issues of mass teacher education, particularly identifiable through the initial preparation of secondary teachers. Prior to 2008 a one-year graduate program which follows a first degree was the initial preparation for future secondary teachers. In 2008 a newly badged two year Master of Teaching program, replacing the one year 104 year old Diploma of Education commenced. Key reforms of the new program included the development of strong school-university community partnerships, newly created teacher education roles for academic and school personnel and a range of course options for the second year of study, the year that leads to the award of the Master of Teaching. The policy rhetoric of the Melbourne Graduate Education states that the school aims to be the leading provider of teacher education in Australia, to be ranked in the first twenty in the world, and by 2012 to be a preferred destination of national and international students seeking a pre-service teaching qualification in Australia.

Research Questions

The opening paper briefly reviews the current policy context of teacher education in Australia and unfolds how in a two year program we have developed an option that enables provisionally registered teachers to complete their teacher registration and receive the award of the Master of Teaching by studying part-time in their first year of teaching. To satisfy the university requirements beginning teachers are required to complete full teacher registration requirements authorised by their school principal and provide evidence of accomplished practice through the submission of a professional portfolio. The option aims to strengthen initial teacher knowledge through a school - university and beginning teacher partnership. Overall we are committed to influencing initial teacher socialisation by introducing and affirming alterative conceptions of teacher identity and teachers'work - understandings which extend beyond technical roles and values that align with weak professional subcultures.

The paper has two parts. The first section is contextual, examines the field of mentoring and induction, describes the protocols of registration requirements in Victoria, Australia and details the curriculum design of the two subjects which formed the course experience for the first group of students to complete the Master of Teaching through the induction and mentoring option. The second section points to our key research question: **What supports early career entry?** The first paper is the segue for the remaining two papers in the symposium.

Methods

In 2007 the following design principles was offered as the curriculum design model for the vision of the Master of Teaching, the course which was to replace the 104 year old Graduate Diploma of Education.

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Figure 1: Program design Graduate Preservice Education (Mission 2007)

Visually the model contains the very familiar teacher education trilogy of discipline based studies, professional knowledge and professional practice. The visual representation of the model, a spoke and wheel metaphor creates few expectations for a reformed teacher education agenda. In the haste and pressure to get a new course up and little academic deliberation this is the model that begins to

turn in the early years of the new Melbourne Model. The 'effective teacher' sits at the centre of the elongated flattened wheel. To the critical eye this sign system represents teacher knowledge governed by the literature and practices of teacher education since the 1980's. The 'effective teacher' is a discourse of teacher education that render subjects who enter a course of study as uncomplicated and who will benefit from exposure to expertise now to be further distributed between school and university systems. Issues of graduate professional identity and the scrutiny of teacher effectiveness frame the introductory paper. We come at these questions through 'telling a set of research stories' (Kamler and Comber, 2004, p.131) through discourse and narrative analysis. Research into induction and mentoring across the professions is extensive. Dominated by realist tales of processes and practices, definitions and what works, what Law describes as "commonsense realism" (2005, p.597) and "methodological cleanliness" (p. 595), the burgeoning literature has led to a resurgence of interest and application of mentoring and coaching networks. Such practices are very evident in Victorian education and school systems. With a few exceptions that include some Australian educational research (Martinez, 2004; Chappell, Rhodes, Solomon, Tenant and Yates, 2003; Devos, 2007), the field is theoretically impoverished. A deficit theory of beginning teachers has been noted in the Australian literature (Martinez, 2004; White & Moss 2003). As Martinez indicates, the literature and policy are permeated with a 'unidirectional, structuralist view' of beginning teacher socialization. Problems have been reified and defined only in terms of practice (Martinez, 1994) raising a need for further investigation and analysis within the context of beginning teachers everyday situations.

Frame

As our focus is initial teacher education and the mentoring and induction experience we were particularly interested in determining how the "turning points" may be established through the university course experience. The research data is drawn from the interrogation of the curriculum design for the two subjects and the analysis of ten video based case studies of beginning secondary teachers who had entered the teaching workforce prior to the implementation of the Melbourne Model. We wanted to design and course that would support us to understand how the mentoring and induction relationships were formed and would improve early carer socialisation. Were the relationships 'contrived collegiality' or what the early career teachers saw as the 'perfect match'? What helped or hindered in these relationships? How different are the needs of the early career teachers? These points are conceived in our analysis as uncommon places rather than common places.

Research findings

The lack of common places in these narratives is important to foreground, as early career teachers are required to get to one place in order to attain teacher registration. But more significantly how does the articulation of their uncommon place highlight the construction of early career socialisation and their commitment to critical professionalism? What discourses interrupt these early career teacher narratives? Is mentoring and induction an 'unqualified good'? (Bullough, 2004). Do we learn of 'turn around' pedagogies (Kamler and Comber, 2004) - or is it that these early career teachers detour/dead-end their pedagogies and at worst are becoming disenfranchised and leave the profession? What role can the university play in the reconceptualisation of mentoring and induction?