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**Research-Oriented, School Engaged Teacher Education: *Transformative
knowledge exchange***

Michael Singh

A paper presented at the Australian Teacher Education Association's 2010
Conference, Rydges Townsville, Queensland, 4-7 July, 2010

Abstract

This paper is a contribution to the conceptual debates about how the problem of knowledge in teacher education might be approached in this context. The sequencing and pacing of different bodies of knowledge that MEd (Hons) research candidates from China are required to engage involves a multi-fold transformation. The state's ethics requirements have been transformed to give content and sequence to deepening and extending their knowledge of education research, including ethical principles and procedures. The knowledge these teacher-researchers have to acquire about Australian schools has to be transformed to establish what evidence it is possible and feasible to collect or generate. The knowledge the candidates have already acquired in China about research, education, teaching and/or learning (or which they can access via the internet) has to be considered for transformation in their research into stimulating a demand for teaching and learning Mandarin in Australia. This paper's examination of the problem of knowledge in research-oriented, school engaged teacher education raises concerns about how teacher education generally treats knowledge and its transnational flows.

Introduction

While 'knowledge economy,' 'knowledge society' and 'knowledge workers' are key terms much used in government policy, what knowledge entails for teacher education research is open to further debate. Divisions between different kinds of knowledge are a challenge for deciding the content and sequence of teacher education. A neglected study in teacher education is research education, especially the Masters level education of teacher-researchers through research oriented, school engaged teacher education. There are divisions between the everyday knowledge of schooling and knowledge of educational research. However, these divisions are complicated by differences between these forms of knowledge, and knowledge of practices governing the education of teachers and researchers, and the knowledge students have through their prior education, experiential learning or otherwise accessible to them during the course of their studies. There are added complications when dealing with immigrant and international student-teachers.

This paper explores some of the problems of engaging different kinds of knowledge in teacher education through an examination of the Research-Oriented School Engaged Teacher Education (ROSETE) Program, borne of a partnership between the University of Western Sydney, the New South Wales Department of Education and Training, and the Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau (China). The ROSETE Program is addressing these problems at the level of Masters research education by creating a teacher education research curriculum that is sequenced and coherent. To date the 27 candidates enrolled in the ROSETE Program have all been young (mid-20s), recent undergraduates, full-fee paying, full-time (18 months), and mostly females.

The complexities of research education in the field of teacher education

There are now (at least) four ideal(ised) types of knowledge that contend for a place in creating a sequenced and coherent teacher education research curriculum.

Type 1 knowledge is an approach to research education in teacher education assumes that research candidates already have the capacity to construct their own research projects and see these through to fruition. Green's (2005) study identified a range of supervisory pedagogies associated with Type 1 knowledge, namely "cool neglect," "magisterial disdain," "detached indifference" and "corridor supervisory greetings." Kamler (2008) reports that because of the lack of tangible pedagogical support and scaffolding from supervisors means education graduates are reluctant to submit work to international refereed journals and have few strategies for doing so, especially for dealing with the wounds of rejection. Murray, Nuttall and Mitchell (2007) report that much teacher education research in Australia is characterised by investigations which are small in scale and scope, and thus providing a weak knowledge base of program and pedagogical effectiveness.

Type 2 knowledge argues that the experiences of subordinated groups, based on issues of gender, ethnicity and perhaps class, provide a basis for teacher education and schooling. However, Young (2009) argues that Type 2 knowledge neglects both the differences in experiences of students from diverse backgrounds, and the issue of what knowledge they might acquire to take them beyond their experience. Moreover, Type 2 knowledge has made little headway in securing an authorised position in teacher education and schooling.

Type 3 knowledge has emerged to challenge the forgoing by focusing on the technical know-how that is said to be necessary given the rise of an internationally competitive knowledge based economy. This technical knowledge is seen as being instrumental to forming a society with industries and businesses able to engage competitively in this changed global environment (Bridges, 2000). The 'knowledge workers' being produced for this 'knowledge economy' are expected to demonstrate the generic attributes of flexibility and learning-how-to-learn, to be for ever trainable (Barrie, 2007). The generic skills of teachers seem to be conceptually empty, lacking the pedagogic possibilities necessary for developing in teacher-researchers a sense of extended professionalism, developing a higher order knowledge base for in-depth understanding and critique, and an ethical view of their calling.

Type 4 knowledge emphasises teacher education as being integral to the state projects of nation-building and nationalism (Woodhead, 2004). Type 4 knowledge emphasises the role of teacher education in national identity formation; the focus is on knowledge for producing a certain kind of 'educated' or 'civilised' national character. Unfortunately, Type 4 knowledge gives little consideration to the transformation that has occurred in society, for example through the internationalisation of education and what the possibilities for transnational flows of knowledge mean for transformation in teacher education.

The ROSETE Programs constitute of 'program of research' in which researcher educators and research candidates which deliberately uses and builds on a common research focus, related research methods and a common interest in using Chinese concepts to theorise the evidence in order to strengthen knowledge claims. Rather than a single-cohort study, ROSETE Research Program extends over five years (2008-2012), involving 5 cohorts of up to MEd (Hons) 10 candidates in each. Individually, each of the 27 Masters Honours theses represents a small-scale investigation, but they all cluster around a particular subfield, and collectively make a substantial contribution to the knowledge base which provide substantial evidence of the effectiveness of efforts to stimulate the teaching and learning of Mandarin in Australia. In effect each of these studies contributes to a large scale mixed method evaluative and comparative studies of research-oriented, school engage teacher education.

Different kinds of knowledge

The question of knowledge is central to the ROSETE Program. That is to say, what knowledge the MEd (Hons) research candidates from Ningbo (China) have the opportunity to learn and what knowledge they produce are central issues in their education as beginning teacher-researchers. Central to the ROSETE Program is the recognition of the different sources of knowledge these MEd (Hons) candidates have to engage, and the boundaries among these.

Knowledge of research practices

Their theses are organised and disciplined according to established codes, rules and existing knowledge of education research that is specific to the work of (school) teachers and field of (school) education. Teacher education research is about the acquisition and production of credible, specialist knowledge which is distinguished by developing research candidates' expertise and intellectual freedom in a given field of inquiry under conditions authorised by a multi-layered intellectual community.

Knowledge of school practices

The knowledge generated in these MEd (Hons) theses focuses on stimulating Mandarin language teaching and learning in Australian schools. The candidates acquire the primary evidence from the particular schools in which they work as volunteers for 10 hours per week. However, what they learn through their everyday experiences in schools differs from the knowledge they produce as teacher-researchers.

Knowledge of governance practices

There is a range of state mechanisms for governing teacher education, including teacher registration authorities and mechanisms to measure individual and institutional research performance. Therefore, it was necessary to consider the place

of knowledge of governance practices in the structuring and pacing the MEd (Hons) curriculum. The requirements of the University's Confirmation of Candidature (CoC), the National Ethics Approval Form (NEAF) and the New South Wales Department of Education and Training SERAP were identified as key areas of knowledge concerning governance practices.

Chinese knowledge of research and educational practices

The ROSETE Program encourages candidates to use knowledge based on their prior education and experiential learning in China as primary evidence to be formally analysed as part of their research (Singh, 2009; 2010). Thus, candidates are invited to give due recognition in their theses to their prior education and experiential learning in China as a data source. Moreover, they are encouraged to use Chinese conceptual knowledge to theorise the evidence they generate as part of their studies. This provides a vehicle for them using higher order Chinese knowledge as a theoretical tool for analysing and interpreting their data set. This is in a context where theoretical knowledge from outside the Euro-American knowledge economy is often excluded from teacher education (Connell, 2007). A key question is, when and under what circumstances can their prior education and experiential learning in China, or the Chinese knowledge they can access while studying in Australia, be affirmed as part of their research education in Australia.

Re-contextualisation of different kinds of knowledge

To bridge the divisions between different kinds of knowledge, it is necessary to re-contextualise one form of knowledge by transposing it to the context of another. Barnett (2006) suggests that what is required is a process of 'dual re-contextualisation,' whereby professional knowledge is re-contextualised for research or scholarly purposes, and vice versa where the intention is to convert research knowledge into knowledge for professional practice. Teacher education programs generally face the predicament of confronting and making links between different kinds of knowledge and, deepening and extending the identities of program participants. For the ROSETE Program the process involves a multi-fold re-contextualisation of different kinds of knowledge over the course of eighteen months.

First, the *knowledge of governance practices*, specifically the CoC, NEAF and SERAP requirements, have been re-contextualised to give content and sequence to the *knowledge of education research processes*, including ethical principles and procedures, all of which these beginning teacher-researchers are explicitly taught. This includes the Western *conceptual knowledge* of education and research they gain through their university studies, knowledge which is used to frame, analyse and interpret the primary evidence.

Second, the *knowledge of schooling practices* these MEd (Hons) candidates from China have to acquire (within a few short months) about their particular schools and the New South Wales education system has to be re-contextualised to establish what it is possible for them to research and what evidence it is feasible to collect or generate within 6 months. This knowledge includes the everyday *experiential knowledge* gained through their work as volunteer teachers of Mandarin in Australian schools, knowledge which provides the evidentiary archive or data set for their studies.

Third, the *Chinese knowledge of research and education* the candidates have already acquired in China about research, education, teaching and/or learning has to be considered for potential re-contextualisation in their research into stimulating demand for teaching and learning Mandarin in Australia. These Masters research candidates are encouraged to embed *Chinese theoretical knowledge* (they gained through their prior education in China or which they can access during their studies in Australia) in their theses wherever they find it useful for giving meaning to their analyse of the primary evidence. Importantly, this focus on the question of Chinese knowledge reminds teacher educators in the ROSETE Program of the limits of their own knowledge. Young (2008, p. 123) states that universities which promote educational excellence encourage “their students, when possible, to go beyond what is known by their teachers.”

This leads to key question. Do the transnational uses of Chinese knowledge has a socio-historical basis from which all involved in teacher education might learn?

Transnational knowledge exchange

The idea of using Chinese conceptual knowledge in theorising research into Australian teacher education research may seem odd to some. This is especially so if

the assumption is that knowledge flows from Western nations to non-European nations, and that the West's present intellectual supremacy in the global knowledge economy will continue indefinitely. Blaut's (1993) concept of 'Eurocentric diffusionism' can be used to name approaches to Australian teacher education research which adopt this assumption. Currently, intellectual communities of European heritage are seen as the sources of the world's new knowledge to be diffused into non-European countries which have varying capabilities for assimilating and gaining from it (Wendler, Bridgeman, Cline, Millett, Rock, Bell & McAllister, 2010).

However, the assumption that the West is the permanent centre from which innovative ideas will continue to originate, mistakenly assumes that its current differential advantage is going to be sustained. Goody (2010) argues that no one place has been a fixed source of the world's knowledge. The Middle East, South Asia and East Asia have each been among the world's leading centres for knowledge production at different times. The intellectual interactions between Eurasian civilisations have been characterised by 'alternation' (Goody, 2010) whereby first one, and then another place secures sophisticated knowledge systems. This alternation of intellectual advantage occurs as cultures communicate; exchange knowledge in and through products and services, and engage intellectually with each other.

The alternation of intellectual advantage occurs through cross-cultural communication, the exchange of knowledge and intellectual engagement. Let us fast forward to 2010 and consider the internationalisation of education in this process, specifically in the world's dominant centre for knowledge production, the USA. According to the US Council of Graduate Schools (Wendler, Bridgeman, Cline, Millett, Rock, Bell & McAllister, 2010) 24% of research higher degrees candidates are international students (over 100,000 in 2004-05), and 43% of all doctoral degrees were awarded to non-U.S citizens in 2007 (71% in engineering; 57% in the physical sciences; 19% in education). With respect to graduate enrolments across the world, "about one third of international students currently earning doctoral degrees are from China" (Wendler, Bridgeman, Cline, Millett, Rock, Bell & McAllister, 2010, p. 24). Perhaps, more significantly, the "number of international students in China now exceeds the number of Chinese undergraduate and graduate students sent abroad" (Wendler, Bridgeman, Cline, Millett, Rock, Bell & McAllister, 2010, p. 24).

The ROSETE Program provides a model of how the internationalisation of Australian research education could provide a vehicle for effecting multidirectional flows of knowledge between Western and Eastern nations. In the ROSETE Program there are the flows of higher order Western knowledge of practices of research, schooling and governance from Australia to China via the MEd (Hons) candidates. However, in this Program these are supplemented by flows of knowledge from China to Australia through these beginning teacher-researchers use of Chinese knowledge as evidence and conceptual tools. To date four kinds of Chinese knowledge have been used in their research (Singh & Han, 2009; 2010a; 2010b), namely knowledge of: two or more languages; Chinese concepts useful for theorising Australian education; Chinese critiques of Western intellectual hegemony; China's intellectual contributions to the West, and how China engages foreign ideas.

Conclusion

Although the circumstances of the ROSETE Program maybe unique, the problems of engaging different kinds of knowledge in teacher education, the issues about research-oriented, school engaged teacher education and the challenges of the worldly education of beginning teacher-researchers are not. Moreover, through the example of the ROSETE Program and its efforts to foreground the role of Chinese knowledge in the processes of teaching education and researching school teaching and learning, this examination of practices of educating teacher-researchers moves towards developing a model for increasing transformative knowledge exchange between the nations of the Asia Pacific region. The ROSETE program offers the field of teacher education research insights into possibilities critical engagement with, and analysis of the transformative knowledge exchange made possible by the internationalisation of higher education, and now required by transnational and global cultural, economic and geopolitical changes. Accordingly, this paper's examination of the problem of knowledge in research-oriented, school engaged teacher education raises concerns about how teacher education generally treats knowledge, especially its transnational flows.

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