

BUILDING 'PROFESSIONALISM' AND 'CHARACTER' IN THE SINGLE-PURPOSE TEACHERS COLLEGE, 1900-1950

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Teacher training, in a variety of forms, is a well-established, integral component of mass schooling. Institutions specifically for that purpose were established in England by the first half of the nineteenth century. They made their first appearance in Australia in the form of Model or Normal schools in the 1850s and as purpose-specific teachers' colleges from the 1880s. For the majority of new teachers in Australia, until at least the end of the nineteenth century, however, training consisted of a form of apprenticeship, either as monitors (around the mid century) or pupil-teachers.

Over the first half of the twentieth century, an increasing proportion of new recruits entered the profession through a teachers' college, although pupil-teacher (and related) programs continued, either as an alternative route, or as part of the preparation for college entrance. Although several of them also enjoyed some form of relationship with their neighbouring University, most teachers' colleges were established and run by state government education departments; the exceptions were the Kindergarten Training Colleges, established and run by Kindergarten Unions in various states. This system lasted, essentially, until the reforms of the early 1970s transformed the teachers' colleges into multi-purpose colleges of Advanced Education, governed by autonomous, largely elected, councils.

According to a number of the histories of teacher education in Australia, the two key aims of most teachers' college programs were to provide a 'general culture' and to develop techniques and skills (Boardman, 1995; Garden, 1982; Hyams, 1979; McGuire, 1999). I argue, here, that these accounts overlook a further, critical, dimension in the

work of these colleges: the identification and development of what I will call here 'personal-professional character' as a key attributes of teachers. I do so by exploring materials from teachers' colleges in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney over the first half of the twentieth century.

The aims of teacher training

In his report on the work of the Adelaide Teachers' College for 1922, Alfred Schultz, the College's long-serving Principal, claimed that the College sought 'the development of the students' minds and characters' (Schultz, 1923, p. 36). 'Character' had often been invoked in texts on education over the previous half-century and more, as a pre-requisite for teaching (Stow, 1854, pp. 320-322; Gladman, 1876, pp. 5-16; Parker, 1909, pp. 338-9). 'Character' in most of these older contexts signified a capacity to convince children of what Gladman (1876, p. 16) had called their 'superiority in every way', and to compel compliance with their will. Education administrators had also been concerned with teachers' character (Vick, 1992; 1994; Theobald, 1989). Their concern was with *moral* character, and with protecting children from potential moral danger, either directly, as in the case of teachers who might prey on them sexually, or indirectly, as in the case of teachers who might present poor examples of personal-social conduct. Schultz's comments point to quite a different set of attributes. His reports repeatedly associated 'character' with such personal attributes or qualities as 'enthusiasm', 'keenness', 'diligence', and the like (e.g., Schultz, 1922, p. 47; 1923, p. 36).

In his 1928 Report, Schultz (1929), abandoned the term 'character', with its links to the older moral discourse, in favour of 'personality', linked to a newer psychological/psychoanalytic discourse. Yet the term 'personality' occupied the same position in his argument as 'character' had in the earlier reports, and to referred to much the same dimension of 'personal qualities'; the two terms appear to function, for Schultz, as equivalents. On this occasion, Schultz spelled out the nature and significance of 'personality' in some detail:

Success in teaching evidently depends on the presence, as an organic unity, of three systems of factors. That 'personality' is the fundamental requirement is beyond all doubt... some of its constituents [include]... a fortunate balance of bodily and mental health and power, varied knowledge yet also 'vision', exact learning yet also the forward reach of mind in alertness and adaptability, together with emotional responsiveness in interest and sympathy, the whole being ennobled by high-mindedness and made effective through quiet strength of will (1929, p. 28).

In addition to personality, he added, a teacher required:

A philosophy... [a] view of the world as a whole... and a knowledge of the constitution of pupils, of appropriate methods and techniques for teaching, all 'irradiated' as it were, with a love of childhood, and stabilized by tact, a sense of humour, courage, cheerfulness and patience.

'Character', or 'personality', then, was not merely one of the three, but played a crucial 'governing' role in relation to knowledge and skills – it 'irradiated' and 'stabilised' them.

In contrast to the older concern with teachers' moral character, which was not directly related to their pedagogical performance, character, or personality, was fundamental to their professional capacity as teachers: it was 'a potent force which will

have an incalculable influence for good on the minds and characters of school children throughout the length and breadth of the state' (Schultz, 1923, p. 36). In other words, the character, or personality, of the teacher played a key *pedagogical* role, shaping the character of interactions between teacher and pupil in ways that enhanced or detracted from the quality of the education taking place.

Some of the textbooks on teaching used in teachers' college programs recognised the importance of teachers' personality and character in the ways Schultz was suggesting – as part of the teachers' resources for teaching (e.g., Parker, 1909, pp. 338-9). But there is a crucial difference between the texts' views, and the view Schultz appears to be articulating. In such texts, these attributes are never developed as objects of cultivation or attention, but rather, they are simply taken as 'givens' that come into play in determining a person's suitability for teaching and in facilitating good teaching. For Schultz, they are to be *developed* (1923, p. 36): College does not seek merely to capitalise on 'character' or 'personality' as already-existing attributes in teacher trainees, but to deliberately cultivate them.

Alexander Mackie, Principal of the Sydney Teachers' College from 1906 into the 1930s, used the quite different term 'professional' to highlight the importance of the same personal attributes as Schultz's signified with 'character' and 'personality'. For example, in an address to graduating students in 1934, he reminded them of the importance of 'professional outlook' (Mackie, 1934; my italics). Mackie himself equated it to 'a love of children [and...] a professional interest in teaching'. He explicitly differentiated these attitudes and dispositions from 'techniques of classroom teaching' and 'the skill needed for the successful practice of your craft'. Earlier, in an address to the Education Society, Mackie had spoken of different 'types' and 'kinds' of teachers, distinguishing them not in terms of skills, but of the 'personal culture' which he linked to

their attributes as ‘competent professional person[s]’ (1915, p. 7).

Like Schultz, Mackie was identifying a set of personal attributes, quite distinct from knowledge and skill, as fundamental to the professional equipment of teachers. Like Schultz, he saw these attributes as amenable to cultivation and development. Thus, for instance, he discussed what he called ‘the ethical problem’ of ‘inspiring the teaching body with high ideals and enthusiasm for their calling’ (1915, pp. 12-13). And, like Schultz, he argued, that the cultivation of these attributes was fundamental to the work of the College (1929; 1932).

It is perhaps noteworthy, here, in assessing the weight to be placed on Mackie’s words, that they formed a consistent line of argument over a period of at least twenty years, and in a range of contexts, from formal academic forums (1915), through addresses to students (1934), to negotiations with the Public Service Board and the Education Department over such matters as staffing, workloads, independence from direct supervision by Departmental officers (1929; 1932). It is hardly surprising that he should use such inspirational rhetoric in a farewell address to students. However, one might reasonably anticipate that he would employ quite different – more pragmatic and opportunistic – arguments in difficult bureaucratic wrangles over such things as staff workloads and College autonomy. The fact that he opted, rather, for the more principled pedagogical and professional argument might be taken as an indication of its centrality to his thinking.

Many of Mackie’s staff expressed similar concerns about what I am calling ‘personal-professional character’, in their annual reports to Mackie on the teaching of their subjects. These reports might be considered fairly routine, pragmatic, ‘matter-of-fact’ documents, concerned with identifying strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures, and with recommendations for modifications for the following year’s work; they were not designed for circulation

outside the institution, and they manifest few signs of rhetorical inflation. Staff concerns arose in the context of what they saw as problems in adequately promoting the development of personal-professional character, which they took for granted as a crucial aspect of their work, notably in the Short Course, in which pressures to cram knowledge and skill development across a densely packed academic and practical program were at their greatest. In 1918, for instance, staff in the Short Course commented to Mackie on the difficulties they experience in cultivating ‘ethical and intellectual interests’, and the ‘nurture, clarification and illumination’ of ‘emotional life’ in their students (Report, Hereford House, 1918). The same concerns were still surfacing more than a decade later. In 1932, the lecturer in Economics and Social Science contrasted the Short Course with the longer ‘normal’ course, suggesting that the former could do little more than ‘effectively drill students in how to teach the subject’ (Harris, 1932). Under such circumstances, he said, the course necessarily ‘missed something’, and as a result, ‘students [were] too easily satisfied with mediocre performances’. While ‘mediocre performances’ might be a concern in its own right, the heart of the matter, Harris suggested, was not the performance itself, but that ‘the sort of interest’ that should underlie proper professional development was not able to be cultivated.

Formal curriculum and pedagogy – ‘Prac’

The concerns with personal-professional character identified in accounts of the colleges’ work in forming teachers were paralleled in aspects of ‘teaching practice’. The transactions that took place between trainees and their supervisors, and the ways these might have focused on personal-professional character are, presumably, lost for ever. However, concerns about the personal attributes that might be taken to manifest it were central to the reports on trainees’ classroom work.

The Infant Mistress at Gilles Street (Adelaide) School, for instance, in charge of the school-based 'prac' training of prospective Infant teachers around 1920, recurrently used terms relating to students' attitudes ('anxious to please', 'willing'), personality ('bright', 'happy'), work habits ('thorough', 'punctual'), alongside other personal attributes such as health, technical competencies (discipline, and 'originality' in teaching), and knowledge of subject matter (Marks Book, Gilles Street Infant School, n.d.). These were rather similar to those noted in a student teacher by the District Inspector a few years earlier at the small school of Black Springs in rural South Australia (Inspector's Register, Black Springs, 1935). This inspector, while certainly concerned with students' results, the 'intelligence' with which subject matter had been learned and (by implication) taught, the 'soundness' of the methods also commented on the attitudes, dispositions and deportments of both children and teacher – on children's 'enterprise', alertness and good manners' and on the teacher's 'energising influence' in eliciting such dispositions, and 'thoroughness' in teaching.

At Melbourne Teachers' College, supervisors commented on similar attributes; among the more technical comments on voice, questioning techniques, organization and the like, they repeatedly commented on character and manner ('earnest', 'has an easy natural manner', and 'lively and pleasant manner'), and behavioural characteristics which might be seen as expressions of character ('hard working', 'diligent', 'thorough', 'interested in the work', 'painstaking', 'energetic and lively', and 'conscientious'). Most of these terms appear to have been applied without regard to gender, but a handful appear to have been more or less gender specific: only males were described (in the documents I have examined) as 'industrious', and only females were judged to be 'gentle' (Faculty of Education Record Book, 1910). The same concerns are in evidence two decades later, as Allan Clarke's supervising teacher noted

such things as his 'confidence' and 'poise', alongside more technical comments on his presentation of mercury and aneroid barometers (Clarke, 1937, 18 May). Later again, similar concerns and comments can be found. While noting details of Judith Hilliard's skills and techniques, such as her use of the blackboard and of models, her voice, 'expression', gestures and pauses, her Kindergarten supervisor also commented on her 'happy, friendly manner with the children' (Parkin, 1948).

Such judgements were not confined to teaching practice reports. At Melbourne Teachers' College, from the first years of the twentieth century until into the 1920s, the Principal's half-yearly Reports to the Department of Education in Victoria on students in training in almost all cases devoted some of their 2-3 lines to personal attributes such as care, painstakingness, earnestness, resourcefulness, thoroughness and the like, while one almost gushed over the student's 'beautiful sensitive nature' (e.g., Tate, 1901; Smyth, 1907; 1920). At Sydney Teachers' College, too, staff members' overall evaluations of students in the Short Course at the completion of their studies, from the 1910s, across the 1920s, and into the 1930s, repeatedly used terms such as 'self-possessed', 'has a good manner and acts as a good leader', 'bright and developing, though not of very powerful personality', 'lacks personality', 'very genuine', 'nervous', 'lacks readiness', 'bright and intelligent', 'pleasant manner... quiet', 'desire to improve', 'lacking in personality', 'character unsatisfactory – not reliable – not recommended for appt.', and 'lacking in poise' (Register of Short Course admissions and examinations, 1911; Register of Short Course admissions and examinations, 1920; Register of Short Course admissions and examinations, 1936-7).

Formal curriculum and pedagogy – 'theory'

The ‘personal-professional’ attributes of teachers I have identified in Schultz’s and Mackie’s comments occupied a more muted position in both the curriculum and pedagogy of the teaching in College classrooms and textbooks than they did on teaching practice. Much of this teaching focused on developing a knowledge of children and the ways they learned, of the techniques of teaching that might reflect how children learned, and the content of what was to be taught. Teachers as persons interacting with children as persons, as distinct from teachers as instructors, managers and, even, facilitators, relatively rarely came into view. Further, on at least some occasions where teachers and their personal-professional attributes do come into focus), they appear to be taken as acquirements that a teacher *has*, rather than fundamental, constitutive attributes of what – or who – the teacher *is*. And, even where they are taken as aspects of who the teacher is as a person, they are treated as being either present or absent in individual trainees, rather than as something to be cultivated (New South Wales, Department of Public Instruction, 1908, p. 39; Department of Education, New South Wales, 1917, pp. 34, 35; Browne, n.d., pp. 104, 6).

Yet, there are some hints at passing references to the personal-professional attributes – the professional character – of the teacher in the curriculum, either for students’ consideration, or as something to be cultivated as part of the subject. Prescribed textbooks, such as Parker (1909), included discussion of the personal attributes of a teacher. The course in Education for Manual Arts, Commercial and Home Science trainees at Sydney in 1917 explicitly aimed ‘to assist in the development of a professional attitude’ (Department of Education, New South Wales, 1917, p. 57). The Reading Guide for ‘History Method’ at Melbourne outlined what it termed the ‘essential qualities of good History Teacher’: ‘knowledge, enthusiasm, imagination capacity to “see life steadily and see it whole”; balanced judgements; [and] sympathy with pupils and with humanity’, as

well as an understanding of children’s difficulties (Searby, n.d., p. 2). The ‘Educational Problems’ subject at Melbourne Teachers’ College in 1935 talked about the importance of teacher dignity, and advised students to ‘let your personality be felt, yet do not become severe, dictatorial, or repressive’ and, in reference to the closing of the lesson, recommended that trainees ‘leave the impression of a virile personality’ (A Good Rural School Period, 1935). The same subject, dealing with ‘education and culture’, presented the results of a survey of 1935 Dip. Ed. class on ‘the traits of the cultured person’; many of these, as the construction of the exercise around the notion of personhood rather than behaviour makes likely, are most readily seen as personal attributes rather than external possessions (Education and Culture, n.d., [1935/6]).

There are also signs of the cultivation of the sorts of personal-professional attributes Schultz and Mackie called for, in the Colleges’ pedagogy. There is some evidence, for instance, regarding the teaching of the ‘theory’ curriculum. To some extent, lecturers appear to have constructed their teaching around notions of what is now called ‘active learning’, in which students were required to assimilate and actively deploy, as their own, the values their mentors endorsed as signs of professionalism. Mackie, as Principal of Sydney Teachers’ College, appears to have sought to promote the library as a key point in students’ independent learning and wider reading; in 1919 he argued that restrictions to library funding were ‘unfortunate as students should rather be encouraged in every way to make use of the library for both reading and borrowing’ (Mackie, 1919a). Some, at least, of his staff appear to have shared his views. The previous year, the Theory of Education lecturer had claimed that a generous supply of books enabled ‘a greater measure of responsibility [to] be thrown upon the shoulders of students with regard to preparation of work’ (Report on the years work in Theory of Education Session 1918). As a result, he continued, teaching could be

conducted 'less in the form of exposition and explanation solely by the lecturer and more in the form of analysis, review and discussion of the main features in the portion set for preparation by the students'. In the early 1930s, the lecturer in Economics and Social Science argued that 'students need[ed]... to devise everyday applications from the exercises in the textbook,' and suggested that while 'the lack of satisfactory text on teaching method in the subject is a hardship', it was accompanied with the 'advantage' that students were unable to rely on rote learning, implying that they had to actively engage with the subject over the whole of the teaching term, rather than simply '“get it up” at the end' (Harris, 1932). At Adelaide, too, staff meeting discussions, of Methods subjects in particular, stressed the importance of students' written work, and their 'reading and research instead of memorization' (Adelaide Teachers' College, 1948-1964, 15 November 1948). At Sydney Teachers' College the 'independent essay', requiring students to read on an issue and construct an account – *their* account – of it, while at Melbourne, a statement on the Reading Guides in the Bachelor of Education course stated that 'It is not the policy of the School of Education to furnish students with notes or summaries to be memorised for an examination. The aim is rather to help students to develop their own opinions on outstanding education problems of the day' (University of Melbourne, 1935, p. 2). Further, the published outline of one topic in 'Principles of Education in the Primary Course' in Melbourne in 1934 stressed that students should 'examine critically' the ideas they encountered and prescribed tasks that required such critical apprehension – to read a text and make judgements that would allow them to answer the question 'are you convinced by his arguments?' (Melbourne Teachers College, 1934).

Exams occupied a critical place in the colleges' pedagogy. While many perhaps most – examination questions asked students to reiterate information or rehearse

arguments and conclusions presented as beyond debate, at times they also called on students to bring a maturing *judgement* into play. The final examination in second year Education at Sydney in 1916, for example, asked students to 'estimate the gain and loss represented' by the differences between ancient Athenian and contemporary Australian primary curricula (Department of Education, New South Wales, 1917, p. 140). Similarly, at Ballarat Teachers' College one question in the 1927 examination in the subject 'Education' asked students to 'indicate what you consider to be the evidences of good discipline' (Ballarat Teachers' College, 1927).

Other forms of assessment also attended to questions of 'character'. At Melbourne Teachers' College, the assessment of academic work in the 1930s allowed space for what were described as 'duty marks' – marks for demonstrations of professional attitude and disposition (Assessment of Academic Work, m.d. [1937], p. 1). The award of such a mark, especially in the context of *academic* assessment both indicates the attention to character, and constituted a technique for inciting students to display such professional attributes as duty, satisfactory attitude, and appropriate behaviour. Likewise, in the 1940s the more general 'assessment of students' (and note that the reference is to the *students per se*, not to their *work*) incorporated in the calculation of their 'ability as students' such matters as 'inattention to duty', and 'lack of interest' (1943).

Curricular and pedagogical concerns with the cultivation of personal-professional attributes appear to come together in the subject, introduced at Melbourne Kindergarten Teachers' College in the 1940s, 'Introduction to College life and methods of work'. Here, every effort is made to help the student to assume the responsibilities of professional study and group membership in the College. Special techniques for study and the recording of readings and lectures are practised. Each student participates with a

group of others in the preparation of a group report. The students choose the methods by which the study is made and by which the report is given. (Revision Pending Issue of New Prospectus, n.d., p. 7).

The 'extra curricular' curriculum

Although as I have argued, there are evidences of staff working to cultivate desired personal-professional attributes or 'personality' in the formal curriculum, much of the burden of this fell to the informal curriculum – to the various aspects of college life beyond the classroom, prac. school and examination hall. According to Schultz's 1922 Principal's Report (Schultz, 1923), the development of a range of clubs and college activities – sporting teams in internal 'house' competitions (Athens and Sparta!), regular local associations, and an annual 'interstate' competition with Melbourne Teachers' College, the Magazine, picnics and socials – was of 'surpassing importance' in the development of these attributes. Initially, Schultz's reports referred to few such activities, and mentioned them, in passing, merely as 'social activities' with no further comment as to their significance. By the 1920s, they began to suggest that the College had not only 'officially' recognized their existence but taken them up as part of its broader 'unofficial' program; they were 'encouraged'. Again, however, there was no suggestion that they had any special *educative* significance or function. By the end of the 1920s, as Schultz's 1928 Report, cited earlier, indicates, such activities were constructed as playing an integral role in the College's work of forming students as teachers imbued with particular qualities. The activities themselves had become more formalized, more highly organized and, in the form of the house competition, integrated into the organization of the College itself (College Activities, 1930; *Student*, 1938). By the 1940s, many of them had become more or less 'compulsory' and each of such activities had a staff member engaged to exercise a general advisory and supervisory

role, along with the student organizers (Adelaide Teachers' College, 1948-1964, 15 November 1948, 22 November 1948, 21 March 1949).

Much the same developing view of the work of College life can be documented at the other colleges. At Sydney, Vice-Principal Cole claimed that 'social activities, meetings, entertainments, debates... exercise a considerable influence upon candidates in preparation for the teaching profession (Cole, 1920). Two years earlier, in fact, Mackie had noted that 'all students have been encouraged to take part in some sport, and playing in the various College teams has been considered part of the Physical Training course (Mackie, 1918). And, at the Kindergarten Training College in Melbourne, the Principal reported to her governing board in the 1940s that 'the activities of college are planned to give students many different types of experience in social living. Academic and practical work includes group work... Staff and students often join together in beach picnics, excursions', while other student activities included 'playing golf or skating with their friends among the kindergarten teachers'. Such activities, she claimed 'are a vital part of the lives of staff and students' (Revision Pending Issue of New Prospectus, n.d., p. 8).

The pastoral role of staff in this was recognized, and integrated, quite early as a crucial ingredient in this work. At each of the colleges, students were organized into small, stable 'groups' under the 'wing' of a lecturer with broad responsibilities for their welfare. In 1915, his colleague, George Fraser reported to Mackie that 'undoubtedly the students greatly benefit from close and constant intimacy with the members of the college staff... The most effective work done by me has been in connection with those students to whom I have lectured and whom I have supervised for a continued period in the schools' (Fraser, 1915).

For students living away from home, either official college residences, or regulated and approved boarding houses kept students – especially female students – under the

watchful eye of a Dean of Women (Adelaide Teachers' College, 1948-1964, inside front cover). At Sydney, Miss Wyse's duties of as lecturer in residence at the College hostel included:

Supervision of social and study interest of students. When present in hostel to be in control of students (this includes granting of leave), Arrange hours of study and assist students in their studies when necessary, Supervise library, Promote and supervise social activities, Encourage outdoor games and sports ... To be, in general, student adviser. (Mackie, 1919b)

This supervisory, pastoral role was not confined to female staff and students, or those in residence. In 1914, Cole, Vice-Principal at Sydney Teachers' College, had reported that 'all lecturers take a part in the encouragement and supervision of one or another of the corporate activities of the students – debates, excursions, clubs, sports, social gatherings, etc.' (Cole, 1914). Nearly two decades later, in insisting on the differences between College lecturers and school teachers, Mackie claimed that staff were 'in sympathetic touch with [the] young men and women' of the college' (Mackie, 1931). Their duties, he insisted, included 'far more than just lecturing', and encompassed 'individual and tutorial work... taking part in various college activities of value to young teachers... eg concerts, dramatics, sports'.

Conclusion

The analysis here suggests a rather different dimension to the work of teacher training from those indicated in existing histories of teacher education, such as those I cited earlier. It suggests that alongside the more 'obvious' work of imparting knowledge and developing skills, teachers' colleges in Australia in the first half of the twentieth century actively sought to undertake the work of changing the 'inner selves' of their students, and developed ways that were calculated to realize this aim.

This analysis invites further historical exploration of practices through which teacher educators thought they might cultivate personal-professional character, and investigation and theorizing of possible effects of such practices, including, crucially, students' own take-up of the values expressed in, and the practices signified by, the concept of personal-professional character. It also raised questions about possible continuities and discontinuities between past and present practices. Does current practice also take 'personal-professional character' and as an object of concern and pedagogic strategy and practice? If it does, how does it formulate 'personal-professional character' itself, how salient is it in the work of forming teachers, and to what extent does it do so explicitly, or implicitly? An analysis of current practice that sought to answer such questions might provide occasion for reflection on whether teacher education in the early twenty first century ought, or ought not, take such an object as one of its proper concerns.

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