Great Teachers and Great Teaching always Matter:
So what for My-Our Professional Learning?

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Overview

- Framing

- Some factors that impact on who we are and the what and how of being a teacher, teachers and teaching

- Re-framing

- Parting words
Some ‘Givens’

- Every parent wants and expects great teachers for her/his child/children
- Children are entitled to have great teachers
- Teaching is personally rewarding, can be very demanding and is always in the state of becoming- it is like the horizon- as you get closer it continues to move ‘out there’
- There is no watertight/ ‘profession-proof formulae’ for producing and guaranteeing every teacher will always be a great teacher
- Contexts and relationships are crucial to becoming and being a great teacher; so too is pedagogy and content
“In a very fundamental sense, we are what we pay attention to... Our attention is precious and what we choose to focus it on has enormous consequences. What we choose to look at, to listen to, [to learn, to stand for, to advocate, to privilege, to nurture, to share, to let go...] these choices change the world.”

(Fleischner, 2011, p.9.)
Vision, Premise, Task

Vision
Vibrant, productive rural and remote communities are integral to the long term sustainability of Australia and globally.

Premise
The importance of rural and remote communities is going to increase over the next 4 decades - virtually without exception, rural places and spaces are where most of the world’s food and fibre is grown, energy is sourced, minerals are extracted, water supplies originate, and the natural environment is most abundant.

The Big Task
From knowledge for building the modern world (20th century) to knowledge for sustaining the world (21st century).
A Profession is…..

Some distinguishing characteristics of a profession:

- Systematic theory
- Authority
- Community sanction
- Ethical codes
- A culture
- A body of knowledge and understandings that is continuously reviewed and refreshed
- Privileges relationships and service
- Preferences clients over organisational form and function; improvement over the status quo
- Values accountability and practice expectations
- Other…..

(From Greenwood, 1957)
Some factors/variables and children’s learning

- Much of what impacts on children’s learning is determined outside school contexts and through the influences of others.
- How much in % terms? Varies - estimates of up to 80%.
- “teacher pedagogies and assessment practices [are central] to enhancing student learning, socially and academically, and to improving opportunities for all students.... schools through such practices can make a difference, but not all the difference, given what we know about the stubborn and intransigent effects of student socio-economic background on their learning potentials and outcomes and thus on their life opportunities”. (From Lindgard, 2011, p. 230 with reference to Susan Groundwater-Smith’s work, emphasis added).
“Achievement, well-being and life chances cannot be separated. They are tied together. We know the factors that determine them. We know there are social factors, and personal factors. Each young person, each human being is different. We know there is always a school, whether it is at home or somewhere else; one room or 100. All communities have had a place to educate the young. We also know there are some factors such as gender, disability and ethnicity or race which are influential regardless of circumstance or environment, and therefore we cannot explore them in the same way. Ethnicity is undeniable, because it is the most pervasive factor.”

(Dr George Otero, 2nd Sidney Myer Rural Lecture, 2012)
Our vocation - the cultivation of humanity

Martha Nussbaum (1997) of Chicago University suggests 3 capacities (and more) are essential to the cultivation of humanity:

• the capacity for critical examination of oneself and one’s traditions - for living what, following Socrates, we may call “the examined life”
• an ability [for citizens] to see themselves not simply as citizens of some local region or group but also, and above all, as human beings bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern
• narrative imagination... the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person’s story, and to understand the emotions, wishes and desires that someone so placed may have (pp. 9-11).
Some realities

➢ Teaching is a collaborative and interdependent profession

➢ Contexts - diversity/richness
  ➢ Location - *Mimili to Morphett Vale to Moonta to Mundulla and all places in-between*
  ➢ Organisation type
  ➢ Organisation size
  ➢ Community and student cohort
  ➢ Macro to micro policy settings and priorities
  ➢ Leadership capabilities and opportunities
  ➢ Resourcing
  ➢ Framing - from regulatory to emancipatory
  ➢ Other......
Re-thinking and Re-framing

- Naming
- Space, spatiality and margins
- Place
- Hope
- Emergence
Naming and thinking

“names and machines [processes and structures]... bring certain objects [issues, challenges, opportunities] into view whilst displacing or pushing back the prominence of others...naming brings forth the topography of the world” (Halsey, M., PhD thesis, p.79, emphasis added).

“... Deleuze and Guattari (1987) distinguish ‘rhizomatic’ thinking from ‘arborescent’ conceptions of knowledge as hierarchically articulated branches of a central stem or trunk rooted in firm foundations. As Umberto Eco (1984) explains, ‘the rhizome is so constructed that every path can be connected with every other one. It has no center, no periphery, no exit, because it is potentially infinite. The space of conjecture [of opportunity for professional learning] is a rhizome space’ (p. 57)” (Gough, 2005, p. 3, emphasis added).
A tangle of rhizomes

(Drawing: Warren Sellers, from Gough, 2005)
Space and spatiality

- Soja’s invitation- to “begin to think about the *spatiality* [socially constructed space] of human life in much the same way that we have persistently approached life’s intrinsic and richly revealing historical and social qualities: its *historicality* and *sociality*” (1996, p.2, emphasis in original)

- Soja (1989 & 1996) argues that thinking differently about space and spatiality may result in new insights about problems and challenges like the subject of this presentation- professional learning
Space and margins

- bell hooks (non de plume for Gloria Jean Watkins, academic and social activist) choses/argues margins, marginalisation and marginality are opportunities and spaces for “radical openness” (Soja, 1996, p.12)

- The nature and the power of the place of marginality is, in essence, transformed through the act of choosing rather than having it imposed according to hooks (Soja, 1996, pp.98 & 99)
Place

“Invoking the import of place, Geertz (1996) comments, ‘[N]o one lives in the world in general’. A multidisciplinary analysis of place reveals the many ways that places are profoundly pedagogical. That is, as centers of experience, places *teach* us about how the world works and how our lives fit into the spaces we occupy. Further, places *make* us: As occupants of particular places with particular attributes, our identity and our possibilities are shaped”. (Gruenewald, 2003, p.621).
Hope

“Hope... [is] a space opened for *something else to begin*... hope lies in the rhythms and the sounds that come to mind when you hear a word or a phrase- it’s the possibilities offered... through exile you realise how necessary but elusive hope is... hope is the other side of despair...” (Zournazi, 2002, pp. 30, 82, 83)

“... hope... that force which keeps us moving and changing- the renewal of life at each moment, or the ‘re-enchanting’ of life and politics- so that the future may be about how we come to live and hope in the present” (ibid, p.274)
Hope- more than optimism

“Optimism is the belief that things will get better. Hope is the faith that, together, we can make things better. Optimism is a passive virtue, hope an active one. It takes no courage to be an optimist, but it takes a great deal of courage to have hope... hope does not exist in a vacuum, nor is it available to all configurations of culture. It is born in the belief that the sources of action lie within ourselves... hope is the knowledge that we can chose; that we can learn from our mistakes and act differently next time...” (Jonathon Sacks 2002, pp. 206 & 207)
Emergence

We don’t need to convince large numbers of people to change; instead we need to connect with kindred spirits... networks are not the whole story... as [they] grow and transform into active, working communities of practice, we discover how life truly changes, which is through emergence.”
Emergence

“Rather than worry about critical mass, our work is to foster critical connections... When separate, local efforts connect with each other as networks, then strengthen as communities of practice, suddenly and surprisingly a new system emerges at a greater level of scale. This system of influence possesses qualities and capacities that were unknown in the individuals. It isn’t that they were hidden; they simply don’t exist until the system emerges... the system that emerges always possesses greater power and influence than is possible through planned, incremental change. Emergence is how life creates radical change and takes things to scale”.

(Margaret Wheatley & Deborah Frieze, The Birkana Institute, emphasis added)
Reframing- Intelligences

- To realise the full potential of schools/centres there need to be interconnected systems where relationships and commitment to high levels of achievement are central to why they exist and how they function.

- MacGilchrist, Myers and Reed (2004) from their research, extensive review of the literature on improvement, and their combined professional experiences, have identified nine intelligences central to a school’s/centre’s capacity to optimise student learning and chart new directions and ways of being a school in, with and for community.
Professional Learning and Intelligences

- “…teachers’ learning and pupils’ learning are inextricably linked” (MacGilchrist, Myers and Reed, 2002, p.92)

- **Ethical Intelligence and My-Our Professional Learning**
  - Justice
  - Respect for persons
  - Inclusion
  - Rights and responsibilities

- **Spiritual Intelligence and My-Our Professional Learning**
  - Search for meaning
  - Transendency
  - Sense of community
  - Interconnectedness
Professional Learning and Intelligences

- **Contextual Intelligence and My-Our Professional Learning**
  - Internal
  - Local
  - National
  - Global

- **Operational Intelligence and My-Our Professional Learning**
  - Strategic thinking
  - Development planning
  - Management arrangements
  - Distributed leadership
Professional Learning and Intelligences

- **Emotional Intelligence and My-Our Professional Learning**
  - Self-awareness
  - Awareness of others
  - Managing emotions
  - Developing emotional literacy

- **Collegial Intelligence and My-Our Professional Learning**
  - Commitment to a shared purpose
  - Knowledge creation
  - Multi-level learning
  - Trust and curiosity
Professional Learning and Intelligences

- **Reflective Intelligence and My-Our Professional Learning**
  - Creating time for reflection
  - Self-evaluation
  - Deep learning
  - Feedback for learning

- **Pedagogical Intelligence and My-Our Professional Learning**
  - New visions and goals for learning
  - Teaching for learning
  - Open classrooms
  - Going against the grain

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Professional Learning and Intelligences

- Systemic Intelligence and My-Our Professional Learning
  - Mental models
  - Systems thinking
  - Self-organisation
  - Networking
RELATIONSHIPS

TRB Registration Renewal

On-going Professional Learning

Theorising Reading Researching Dialoguing Practicing

DOMAINS/STANDARDS

- Professional Knowledge- Grad, Prof, H Accomp, Lead
- Content and How
- Professional Practice
- Environments
- Assess, Feed-back, Report
- Professional Engagement
- Engagement with Others

Adapted from Halsey R.J. (2015), *Reframing the Formation of Rural Educational Leaders*
What Matters?

- Great teachers and great teaching always matter. Integral to optimising this is on-going, high quality professional learning that is designed/initiated, owned and valued by individuals, individuals & colleagues together, organisations, systems and the wider society.

- “the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers” (p.23)

- “high-achieving and high-equity schooling systems typically invest in building quality and capability in school leaders and teachers” (p.107)

- “excellence in teaching, in all schools [centres/services] and at all levels of schooling [and care], is by far the single most important factor in achieving sustained improvements in the performance of Australia’s schooling system” (p.217)

(Quotations from Review of Funding for Schooling, Final Report, Australian Government. David Gonski (Chair), December 2011).
Choices change….

“In a very fundamental sense, we are what we pay attention to… Our attention is precious and what we choose to focus it on has enormous consequences. What we choose to look at, to listen to, [to learn, to stand for, to advocate, to privilege, to nurture, to share, to let go…] these choices change the world.”

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References


